

CROSSTALK

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12th NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Young people from across the country show that they are ready to take up some of our nation's key leadership positions.

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12th NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT

WRITTEN BY ATIBA WILTSHIRE

Young people from across the country show that they are ready to take up some of our nation's key leadership positions.



Since our nation's independence in 1962 we have seen Prime Ministers coming from various parts of our twin island state and representing constituencies in North, South and Central Trinidad and also Tobago. However we have never had a Prime Minister representing a constituency on the eastern-most tip of Trinidad. Well, this became a reality when the National Youth Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago held its 12th sitting at the Parliament Chamber on October 27th, 2014. At this installment of the National Youth Parliament the role of the Prime Minister was played by Ms. Precious Blackwell of the Princes Town Secondary School who was the Member of Parliament for Toco.

The 12th National Youth Parliament saw 56 young persons representing 28 schools and organisations engage in a debate on the topic of corporal punishment. The motion for debate was moved by the Leader of the Opposition, Alyssa Garcia of Cowen Hamilton, Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, and read as follows:

WHEREAS in 1991 Trinidad and Tobago ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

AND WHEREAS Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that "parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s),

legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child";

AND WHEREAS it is the responsibility of the Government to establish the appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational structures to protect our nation's children from persons who would do them harm;

AND WHEREAS it has been proven by several studies that many youths who commit violent acts are themselves the victims of violence, abuse, neglect or maltreatment;

AND WHEREAS corporal punishment can also be considered a form of violence;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Parliament declare the continued use of corporal punishment in schools in Trinidad and Tobago a violation of Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government indicate clearly its policy positions in relation to alternative methods of dealing with indiscipline and delinquency and for protecting this nation's children.

(By the Leader of the Opposition)

The sitting began promptly at 10:00 a.m. with the singing of the National Anthem which was led of by Youth Parliament Speaker, Amy Ramiksoon of the Waterloo Secondary School. After the opening prayer and the laying of the Report of the Eleventh National

Youth Parliamentary Debate, by the Minister of Justice Hon. Olubusola Chung of St. Francois Girls' College the debate commenced. The debate was led off by Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, Alyssa Garcia of Cowen Hamilton. During her contribution Ms. Garcia told the Youth Parliament that "The Opposition will demonstrate in the House today why this Parliament should declare the continued use of corporal punishment in schools in Trinidad and Tobago, a violation of our children's rights."

The responses that followed showed that the youth parliamentarians were intent on not following the tradition of "towing the party line" in that each Member contributed to the debate and voted based on his or her conscience and not based on the position of the side to which he or she belongs.

In reiterating her support for the use of Corporal punishment in schools the Youth Parliament Prime Minister, Precious Blackwell, in her contribution to the debate, said that "This Government is a Government of action. Corporal punishment used as a last resort when all other alternative methods have not yielded the result that we need, will be used because it is going to give us immediate change."

Giving her response to the Prime Minister's statements Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, Alyssa Garcia, said that "The logical facts that contribute to crime do not include corporal punishment but rather the impact of foreign media that glorifies violence, the influx of illegal immigrants, the economic recession of 2008, the drug trade, political uprising, corruption in the police force, not corporal punishment."

At the end of the debate the Youth Parliamentarians voted on the motion and, when the votes were counted, it was defeated having received 18 Ayes and 28 Noes. A panel of three judges was appointed to decide which Youth Parliamentarian was the best debater during the sitting. As such, following the debate the head judge, Independent Senator Anthony Vieira, revealed to those gathered and those tuned in whose debating skills topped those of his or her counterparts.

As convincing as the contributions of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the other Members may have been the title of "Best Debater" for the 12th National Youth Parliament went to Xavier Richardson of St Mary's College who was an Opposition Member and MP for Fyzabad. During his contribution Richardson told the members gathered in the Chamber that "Many may seek to argue that our parents were subjected to corporal punishment and even our grandparents were subjected to corporal punishment and they turned out successful, so why change what is working? Well, I will tell you why. Because a Kingswood was a good strong car in its day and because a dirt oven made good bread, does this mean that we should stick to them?"

Speaker of the House, The Honourable Wade Mark, MP, congratulated those who participated in this the 12th National Youth Parliament on the way that they represented the views of the nation's youth within the Parliament Chamber. The Speaker reminded the Youth Parliamentarians that "Politics is a noble profession" for which Parliamentarians need to exercise wisdom and compassion. He also paid tribute to the job done by his youth counterpart, Amy Ramkisoorn, for the way in which she executed her duties as Youth Speaker and upheld the Standing Orders.

President of the Senate, Senator the Honourable Timothy Hamel-Smith, who gave the vote of thanks, commended the Youth Parliamentarians for their outstanding performances and thanked them for speaking out "on something that perhaps you young people could speak better to... the issue of corporal punishment"

Following the prize giving in the Parliament Chamber the Youth Parliamentarians were escorted to Guardian Building in Westmoorings where they were hosted at a function put on by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona SC, ORTT.



“Madam Speaker is on her Legs”

“ The Best Debator ”



“ The Youth Speaker is congratulated by her adult counterpart ”



“ The Leader of the Opposition ”





The Art of Diplomacy, Protocol & the Courtesy Call

WRITTEN BY LORRAINE BERAHZER

Does the thought of meeting someone new fill you with anxiety? How about the idea of meeting someone new AND important? Does that fill you with trepidation?

That would be the daily life of a diplomat if not for standard guidelines on diplomacy and protocol. Protocol and diplomacy are guides to one's actions and the foundation of long term relationships.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states and non-state actors. Diplomacy is an art, not a science; it is about persuasion, not coercion in most instances and is the ultimate tool of a diplomat.

The development of diplomacy spans centuries and is one of the oldest professions in history. As long as man has interacted with each other there has been the mediating factor of diplomacy. Diplomacy is vital to inter-cultural communications and amicable interactions; knowing the do's and don'ts of sovereign nations, monarchs and tribes is necessary to ensure international peace and the promotion of good will.

Certainly one wants to neither embarrass his country nor bear the mark of shame for speaking out of turn. These inaccuracies are scoffed upon and are the reason for the existence of protocol and diplomacy.

The Diplomat must understand the geo-political climate in which he/she is serving. In diplomatic practice, a formal introduction to the state is required and must be done at the beginning of the posting. This principle is enshrined in traditional international law. Article 10 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations states that "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the receiving State, or such other ministry as may be agreed, shall be notified of the appointment of members of the mission, their arrival and their final departure or the termination of their functions with the mission:..." Essentially, this is the purpose of a state visit.

The visit acknowledges that the diplomat or dignitary is within the national borders. In parliamentary democracies, heads of state may issue and accept invitations from other states and dignitaries, which can be the benchmark of increased interstate relations and the signing of memoranda of understanding, which can be mutually beneficial.

The Courtesy Call

In diplomacy, a courtesy call is a formal meeting in which a diplomat or representative of a state pays a visit, out of courtesy, to a head of state or state representative (a Prime Minister, a minister of government or a diplomat). Everyone in the diplomatic and consular community understands the value of networks and allies. Therefore, it is perfectly acceptable to invite new acquaintances as well as individuals one wishes to meet. The twenty minute affair is usually of symbolic value and rarely involves a detailed discussion of issues outside politics and business.

The courtesy call begins with proper planning and an agreed date and time. Traditionally it is a morning event but, in some cases, the courtesy call can be done in the afternoon or evening. Regardless of the time, protocol must be followed and an itinerary is drafted and executed. The success of the courtesy call depends on protocol, the ABC's and the Do's and Don'ts. The plan must be fool proof and details what must occur from the period of arrival to the time of departure. Protocol dictates that the majority of official activities and events for one state must be predictable. As such visits will be identical to demonstrate equality, regardless of the visiting country's size, economy or political leadership. This makes life a lot easier knowing that all official activities are predetermined. Protocol is a component of diplomacy and is the art of creating a distraction free

environment that permits the free and open exchange of information to resolve issues and build relationships in international business and global diplomacy.

For more information and helpful tips on Diplomacy be sure to read "Satow's Diplomatic Practice" by Sir Ivor Roberts and The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy.

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Parliament Apprentice Season 2

by Melissa Griffith.

It's that time again... in 2013 we launched the first ever Parliament Apprentice (a televised mini-series where three energetic students were chosen to represent their schools and learn about the Parliament). In the end, Shalini Ali of St. Augustine Girls' High School was announced as the winner after captivating the audience with her dramatisation of "Legislation" and the process by which laws are made. So what could Parliament do to "top" last season? The masterminds were hard at work...then it came to us, why not have the students stay a week longer at the Office of the Parliament with a "twist" as their final challenge.

But before we give away all that took place during the second season of Parliament Apprentice let's take a look at how the Apprentices were chosen?

It was quite similar to the selection mechanism that was utilized during the first series of Parliament Apprentice: That is, on the heels of the Parliament Schools' Outreach Programme, principals were asked to nominate students who could be suitable candidates for the Apprenticeship programme. Of those students nominated, each was asked to submit a video detailing why they should be chosen for the Apprenticeship programme. From those videos submitted, an internal panel of judges reviewed the videos and narrowed down the field to four candidates; Michael Joseph of Holy Cross College, Debbie Ann Ashby of Holy Faith Convent and Saskea Lynch and Sumita Balkaran of ASJA Girls College.

Let the games begin!!

The Corporate Communications Department went full steam ahead and filmed the second season from August 5th, 2014 to August 15th, 2014. This apprenticeship programme afforded the opportunity for the students to learn about the role and functions of Parliament. During that period, the students were based in the Corporate Communications Department and observed first-hand how the core functions of Parliament (legislation, representation and scrutiny) are incorporated into public education programmes. The week's activities included presentations by different departments, meetings and discussions with Members of Parliament and/or Senators and various challenges (quizzes and brief written assignments) just to name a few.

Want to know more about what took place during the second series of Parliament Apprentice? Stay tuned to our Facebook page www.facebook.com/ttparliament and our YouTube channel, youtube.com/theparliamentchannel for more information.

THE BUDGET Brief

WRITTEN BY KIMBERLY DE SOUZA

Did you know that this country's budgetary process begins in April? Or that, in addition to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Planning and Development is important to the overall preparation of the budget? Most citizens are aware that the budget is presented and debated in Parliament each year, and that it is done to allocate the country's funds to various Ministries and departments. But, many are unaware of the phases that are undertaken before the budget is debated and passed in Parliament, and why the budget needs to be 'read' in Parliament, before monies are appropriated. Since the budget affects the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago we at Crosstalk thought it necessary to educate you, the public, about its importance. Below are several facts about the budget: the officers responsible, the budgetary process and Parliament's role in the entire procedure.

What is a budget?

- A budget is a plan of the financial activity of the Government for a fiscal year outlining all planned revenues and expenditure for the budget period.
- The budget process in Trinidad and Tobago operates under a fiscal year cycle that is twelve months in length, beginning on October 1st and ending on September 30th of each year.
- Some sources of government income include direct and indirect taxes and income derived from investments and commercial activities.

What documents comprise the budget?

- The Budget Speech- which outlines the Government's strategic directions, priorities and plans for the year ahead.
- The Appropriation Bill
- Public Sector Investment Programme- which sets out Government's programmes, projects and allocations for each sector.
- Social Sector Investment Programme- which details the annual performance of Ministries and facilitates strategic planning and collaborative programming for the social sector.
- Review of the Economy- which gives an overview of the country's economic performance over the last year.
- Draft Estimates and Expenditure and Draft

Participants in the budget process

- The Minister of Finance- after the commencement of each financial year, he estimates the revenues and expenditure of the country, no later than 30 days after the commencement of said financial year, according to Section 113 (1) of the constitution.
- The Ministry of Planning and Development- also charged with the preparation and monitoring of the Capital Budget.
- Parliament (also known as the Legislature) - examines and authorises the budget
- The Auditor General- conducts audits of government accounts in order to ascertain whether the budget, as authorised by the Legislature, was implemented.
- Non-Governmental Organisations- Civil society groups communicate their views and recommendations to the Minister of Finance.

The Budget Process

- Drafting- The first stage of the process involves all Ministries submitting draft estimates of expenditure to the Ministry of Finance by April 30th each year. When all inputs have been analysed, the budget is finalised and approved by the Cabinet. The Minister of Finance then announces, in the House of Representatives, the date on which the Budget Speech will be delivered.

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- **Approval** - After the Appropriation Bill has been presented in Parliament, it is debated consecutively among three entities: The House of Representatives, the Standing Finance Committee* and the Senate. When the Appropriation Bill is passed in the House of Representatives and the Finance Committee, it is then introduced in the Senate to be debated. After this process is completed, the bill is passed and assented to by the President of Trinidad and Tobago. Only then is authorisation given to have monies appropriated, to the various Ministries and Departments, for the delivery of services and programmes.
N.B- Releases of funds are done by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and are made on a quarterly basis and are based on the monthly projections of the Ministry or Department and their performance in the previous quarter. A review is undertaken within a six-month period to ascertain whether supplementation and/or variation of funds appropriated by Parliament, is required, or if there is need to limit or suspend expenditure.
- **Audit**- The Auditor General's job is to carefully examine and verify the public accounts of the country, in addition to all state enterprises owned or controlled by, or on behalf of, the State. Within seven months after the end of the financial year, the Auditor General should forward its findings, in the form of a Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance forwards the Report to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President of the Senate, and they are laid in both Houses of Parliament. The Speaker then refers these documents to the Public Accounts Committee.
- **Scrutiny**- The final stage of the budget process involves the work of the Public Accounts Committee, which provides an oversight function over the monies which have been allotted to the various Ministries. The committee

also assists the Parliament in holding the Government to account for the use of public funds and resources, in order to ensure the effectiveness of programmes in achieving their objectives and whether the citizenry obtained adequate goods and or services in accordance with the monies expended.

**It must be noted that, thanks to the revamping of the Standing Orders for the House of Representatives in 2014, the proceedings of the Standing Finance Committee are now open to the public.*





When the Fifth Session of the Tenth Republican Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago opened on Monday August 4th, 2014 it did not see the traditional ceremonial opening of the Parliament which would usually include an address by His Excellency, the President, accompanied by the pomp and flair that has become synonymous with this event. The opening of the Fifth Session did, however, see the introduction of several changes to the Standing Orders that govern the proceedings of the House of Representatives and the Committees of the Parliament.

Since the Standing Orders (orders made by either House of Parliament for the government and regulation of its proceedings and declared by that House to be standing orders) for the House of Representatives were first published in 1961 there have been minor amendments made to them over the years. 2014, however, saw the first time that such comprehensive alteration of the Standing Orders has been made.

One such change to the Standing Orders of the House was the introduction of Prime Minister's Questions. Here Members may pose questions to the Prime Minister relating to matters of national interest or to the performance of the government.

Below is an excerpt of Standing Order 26 as is written in the updated Standing Orders:

Standing Order 26

(1) *During the second sitting of the House each month there shall be Prime Minister's Question Time at the time designated in the Order of Business.*

- (2) *During Prime Minister's question time, questions may be put to the Prime Minister relating to current matters of national importance or on the general performance of the Government and Government agencies.*
- (3) *The Prime Minister's question time shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes.*
- (4) *A question to the Prime Minister shall not exceed fifteen (15) seconds in length, must be asked without argument or opinion, and shall not address more than one matter of general government policy.*

This new practice is one that has long existed in the Parliaments of Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. In the UK Parliament Prime Minister's Questions are held every Wednesday from midday. In Trinidad and Tobago, Prime Minister's Question Time occurs during the second sitting of the House of Representatives in and calendar month.

In the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament the first instance of Prime Minister's Questions took place on Monday August 11th, 2014 where Prime Minister, Kamla Persad Bissessar, answered questions from Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, Opposition Leader, Dr. Keith Rowley, and Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, Paula Gopee-Scoon. The questions posed to the Prime Minister related to issues concerning the construction of the Carenage Fish Market, the Petrotrin oil spills in La Brea and Marabella and a High Court ruling on land at Invaders Bay. (The official hansard report of this sitting is available on our website www.ttparliament.org under "Publications").

Prime Minister's Questions will be treated as an "Urgent Question" (Standing Order 27) and, as such, the procedures that govern such questions would apply.

Standing order 27 (a) and (b) state that:

- (a) any Member desiring to ask a question on the ground of urgency in the public interest shall submit to the Clerk a copy of the proposed question marked "urgent question" at least one (1) hour prior to the commencement of the sitting.
- (b) the Speaker shall approve the question if the proposed question relates to a matter that is urgent and has arisen suddenly and he considers it to be one which requires immediate response in the public interest;

This means that any member desiring to pose a question to the Prime Minister during a particular sitting must ensure that his/her question is submitted to the Clerk at least an hour before the sitting and that it is up to the Speaker to decide whether that question would qualify for answer by the Prime Minister during Prime Minister's Questions.

Another point to note is that questions posed to the Prime Minister also qualify as "urgent questions". The procedure governing the posing of urgent questions, as outlined in the Standing Orders, is as follows.

27. URGENT QUESTIONS

- (1) *There shall be a fifteen (15) minute period for urgent questions at the appropriate stage in the Order of Business at each sitting of the House which shall be subject to the following rules:*
 - (c) *the Speaker shall call upon the Member to ask the question at the appropriate stage in the Order of Business;*
 - (d) *an urgent question shall not exceed fifteen (15) seconds in length and must be asked without argument or opinion;*

- (e) *answers must not exceed two (2) minutes in length and must be relevant to the question asked;*
 - (f) *the Speaker may permit the Member asking an urgent question to ask no more than two (2) supplementary questions; and*
 - (g) *a Minister may decline to answer a question if, in his opinion, the publication of the answer would be contrary to the public interest.*
- (2) *The Speaker shall instruct the Clerk to immediately inform the relevant Minister personally, if practicable, as well as by other means of communication, of the urgent question as approved.*

The introduction of Prime Minister's Questions is just one of several new additions to the Standing Orders of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In the next issue of CrossTalk we will explore another such alteration to our Parliament's Standing Orders.

ଘଣ୍ଟିକଲେ ତଠାପା!

WRITTEN BY JOHANAN THOMAS

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Couva is a unique slice of Trinidad & Tobago; rich in historical heritage and culture and located in Central Trinidad to the south of Caroni. Couva rests approximately 15 kilometers from the bustling city of San Fernando, 15 kilometers from Chaguanas and just about 40 kilometers from our nation's capital, Port of Spain. A rich history is just one of the things that makes Couva unique and worthy of highlighting. Its name can be traced back to the Colonial era where Spanish and British World Powers were re-discovering the New World.

The author of "Towns and Villages", Michael Anthony, hints to Couva's past when he refers to a local river known during Spanish occupation as "Rio de Cuba". Spanish phonology would yield a pronunciation closer to "Rio de Couva" hence the modern name Couva River. This body of water would be one of the first landmarks of what is now referred to as Couva. The area is divided into two constituencies; Couva North and Couva South. The main marker used to separate these two areas is the Southern Main Road which runs in a southerly direction through Shashamane towards San Fernando.

The Member of Parliament for Couva North is the Honourable Ramona Ramdial, MP who was elected on Monday May 24, 2010. Before her, Former Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday, was the representative for Couva North from 1976. The area that is now named Couva North was long known as one of the oldest sugar producing areas on the island. In the late 1800s most of the area was nothing more than cane fields. Chiefly characterized by indentured East Indian laborers with a small percentage of Africans, the entire population of Couva North was less than a few hundred people back then.

One of Couva North's key landmarks is Sewdass Sadhu's Temple in The Sea located in Waterloo, north of Orange Valley going along the Waterloo Road. It is a well-known site of worship for Hindus as well as a beautiful tourist attraction. Sewdass Sadhu, an indentured laborer who came to Trinidad in 1907, first began construction of the Waterloo temple in 1947. The temple was later demolished in 1952 because it was built on land owned by a local sugar company. It was later rebuilt by the State in 1994 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of East Indians to Trinidad and Tobago.



“ HANUMAN MURTI ”

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Another well-known religious site in the area is the Dattatreya Temple located near the Orangefield Hindu Primary School. It hosts on its premises the magnificent murti of Lord Hanuman which is widely considered the tallest statue in the Caribbean. The impressive religious site is a highly visited tourist destination because of its astoundingly beautiful and detailed paintings and carvings seen throughout the temple.

It would be tragic to visit the various historical and religious features of Couva North without driving southward to visit the constituency of Couva South. If one were to head south from the Freeport Flyover onto the Solomon Hochoy Highway everything on the western side is considered part of Couva South until encompassing Rivulet Branch Road where one travels south-east through Indian Trail proceeding westerly through Tambu Trace. If one were to head north along the Southern Main Road, to Roops Junction, then head due east along the Southern Main Road, everything on the southern side of the Southern Main Road belongs to Couva South. If one were to continue along the Freeport Mission Road due east until approaching the Solomon Hochoy Highway, everything on the southern side of the Mission Road is considered part of Couva South until one reaches the Freeport Flyover which provides a boundary. The MP for Couva South is the Honorable Rudranath Indarsingh who was elected to represent the constituency on Monday May 24, 2010.

While Couva North is characterized by wide plots of agricultural land, Couva South is defined by a scattered formation of businesses and energy industry leaders. Companies like Briko Air Services, Power Gen and the National Energy Skills Centre are all located within the boundaries of Couva South along with part of the Industrial Estate which is home to Nitrogen processing plants and MHTL Production Facilities.

Other Landmarks worth mentioning are the St. Madeline Sugar Factory and the Sugar Heritage Village and museum located within Brechin Castle/Esperanza.

Reference:

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3. <http://www.indocaribbeanheritage.com/index.php>
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“ SEWDASS SADFHU’S TEMPLE IN THE SEA ”





Current Work of Committees.

WRITTEN BY KEIBA JACOB

The Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago has three main functions: Representation, Legislation and Oversight. The work of Parliamentary Committees embodies the third function mentioned above, which exists to supplement the work done by the Houses in a more investigative and detailed way.

Committees fall under three main categories:

1. Those of a general nature concerned mainly with the organization and powers of the House;
2. Those assisting the House in its legislative and policy-making functions; and
3. Those which act as “watch dogs” over the Executive.

The Committees of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago are comprised of members from both the Government and Opposition from both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Independent Senators also make up these scrutinizing groups, which usually range from 6 to 12 members and meet as often as every week to conduct their business.

Under the General Committee category falls Sessional Select Committees, which are:

1. the Standing Orders Committee;
2. the House Committee;
3. the Committee of Privileges; and
4. the Statutory Instruments/Regulations Committee.

The second main category of Committees our Standing Orders allow the Parliament to create is the Special and Joint Select Committees. They consider issues that may be legislative, financial or investigative in nature.

The final category, which will be looked at more closely in this article, is the Watchdog Committees, responsible for the examination of the appropriation accounts of moneys granted by the Parliament to meet public expenditure. The committees charged with this duty are the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Public Accounts Enterprises Committee (PAEC).

While the PAEC oversees the expenditure of public sector projects, the PAC examines the audited accounts of Government Ministries and Departments.

The Public Accounts Committee decides at its earliest convenience at the beginning of every parliamentary session, which entities will be examined, after which, the financial statements of the chosen entities will be examined. The committee works closely with parliamentary officials who serve as Secretaries to these Committees and are responsible for all administrative and research activities. In conjunction with Parliamentary staff, the committee members of the PAC examine and investigate the records submitted and prepare for a meeting with the entity, which is held in public (Broadcast live on the Parliament Channel and aired on Parliament Radio and the public is invited to attend) At these meetings, chaired by a member who is always from the Opposition, the PAC members ask questions of the entity seeking clarification on matters they observed in the financial report or any other current matters that they find relevant. After the meeting, the PAC sends questions on

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any topic that needs further clarification and the entity is required to submit answers. From this point, the committee can either recall the entity for further public scrutiny or finish the process by laying the report in Parliament. The Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission was the first entity that appeared before the PAC in the 4th session. After returning once after their first meeting, the committee made recommendations and the report was laid in the House.



St Lucia Parliament

WRITTEN BY DANIELLE WILLIAMS

The beautiful island of St Lucia is located in the eastern part of the Caribbean and belongs to the Windward group of islands. With a population of 180,870 (2012) people, the economy is heavily dependent on tourism and the island is well known for events such as the St Lucia Jazz and Arts Festival and the St Lucia International Fisherman's Feast. It is also known for one of its main tourist attractions- the mountain peaks known as the Pitons.

In spite of gaining independence from Britain in 1979, St Lucia has a Monarchical System and is represented by a Governor-General appointed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The island's parliament essentially subscribes to a bi-cameral system; however it is described as being made up of three components: Her Majesty, a Senate and a House of Assembly. As of 2011, St Lucia's Prime Minister is Dr. Kenny Anthony, who is the political leader of the St. Lucia Labour Party, the Leader of the Opposition is Dr. Gale Rigobert of the United Workers Party and the Governor-General has been Dame Pearlette Louisy since 1997.

The Senate is quite small and made up of only eleven senators, six are appointed by the Governor General in consultation with the Prime Minister, three are appointed upon the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and two are selected by the Governor General after discussions with various religious, economic or social bodies/ associations. The present House of Assembly consists of seventeen elected members representing as many constituencies. Similar to what takes place in Trinidad and Tobago's House of Representatives, the St. Lucia constitution makes provision for the Speaker of the House of Assembly to be chosen from outside of the elected membership.

St Lucia's elections are generally held every five years and, as with most Caribbean territories, the minimum age for electors is eighteen but one must be twenty-one in order to be elected or become a legislator.

Notable facts about St. Lucia

1. St Lucia changed hands several times between the English and the French.
 - 1500: approximate European discovery
 - 1605-1638: initial attempts by the English to colonize
 - 1650: a settlement with the Caribs by the French from Martinique
 - 1664: Thomas Warner the son of the governor of St. Kitts regained the island
 - 1667: restored to France by the Peace of Breda
 - 1674: claimed by the crown of France and made a dependency of Martinique
 - 1722: talks between English and French frustrated and island declared neutral
 - 1743: France regained possession until 1748
 - 1748: again declared neutral
 - 1762: recaptured by the British
 - 1763: given back to France under the Treaty of Paris
 - 1778: surrendered to the British
 - 1782-1803: back and forth between both countries
 - 1803: back to the British

- 1814: ceded Britain by the Treaty of Paris
 - 1979: St. Lucia finally achieves independence and remains a parliamentary democracy within the commonwealth
2. Native language: St Lucian Creole French
3. Notable St Lucians:
- Derek Walcott- poet, visual artist and playwright, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1992
 - Sir William Arthur Lewis- economist, winner of the Nobel Prize for economics in 1979
 - Dunstan St. Omer-artist, designer of the St. Lucian national flag, recipient of the nation's highest award, the St. Lucian Cross

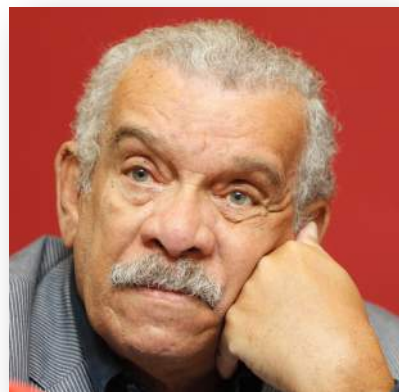
<https://www.ethnologue.com/country/LC/languages>
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/517673/Saint-Lucia>
<http://www.mls.lc/realestate/History.aspx>



" SIR WILLIAM ARTHUR LEWIS"



"DUNSTON ST. OMER"



"DEREK WALCOTT"



The Media's In the House!



WRITTEN BY ATIBA WILTSHIRE

It is well known that the media plays an integral role in the formulation of public opinion on just about every subject, from what foods we purchase to what political party we vote for. As such the role of the media in its reporting on any matter of national importance can never be taken for granted. Here at the Office of the Parliament we have been fortunate enough to have had a very healthy relationship with the Trinidad and Tobago media over the years. The fact that there is a section within the Parliament Chamber (the Media Gallery) dedicated for media personnel in addition to our Parliamentary sittings and Committee meetings being broadcast live on our Parliament Channel 11 is a testament to the value that we place on media involvement in the operations of the Parliament.

During sittings of the House of Representatives and the Senate members of the electronic and print media are allowed to come in, set up their recording equipment, follow the proceedings and take notes and/or recordings for their news stories. It is a regular thing to hear the sound of cameras snapping, to see journalists writing in their note-pads and video cameras being adjusted to find the right camera angle or lighting setting during a debate. One may even notice a member of the media

sending a written note (through the Parliamentary attendants) to one of the members.

CrossTalk took time out to chat with a few reporters who regularly cover proceedings at the Parliament to get an idea of what they think of their functions. The general consensus among journalists who cover Parliamentary proceedings seems to be that their role is especially important since most of the general public would not have an interest or awareness of what takes place in the august Chamber without the media.

Geisha Kowlessar, a senior reporter attached to the Trinidad Guardian Newspaper, and with 10 years' experience, told us "I think it's a very important role in terms of relaying information to the public because, a lot of issues that are put on the table and are discussed, the general public is not aware. For instance the ordinary man on the street, perhaps, doesn't even know what a Joint Select Committee is about and it raises a series of questions.... Issues relating to different sectors ranging from what rights a consumer may have to national security. I think the media is that bridge between the parliamentarians and the general public."

Clint Chan Tak, a political reporter with the Trinidad Newsday, with 16 years' experience, shares the same sentiments as his Guardian counterpart in that he says "It's an important part in getting information out to the public, a lot of members of the public don't really understand what goes on in the Parliament so our role is a very important medium in which to communicate the very important deliberations of both Houses of Parliament to the public."

When asked about the level of privilege that the media enjoys in the Chamber Chan Tak said "We do have a particular privilege and a responsibility in terms of how we conduct ourselves and how we relay the information. I think there could be a little more cooperation on some fronts, I think some other officials we share the space with maybe don't understand what we do or how we do it and I think there needs to be a little bit clearer definition of the boundaries and so on."

Regardless of what the status of the relationship between the media and Members of Parliament might be at any given time we here at the Office of the Parliament are ever grateful to always have a media presence and media coverage for every event that we host.

Thanks Guys!!!





We Miss You Suzanne!

Former editor-in-chief of the CrossTalk and ParlBuzz magazines produced by the Office of the Parliament, Ms. Suzanne Salandy, passed away on Sunday May 4th, 2014 after a long battle with cancer. Suzanne was also the Director of our Corporate Communications Department.

In spite of the position of seniority which she held within the organisation, Suzanne stood out as a leader because she understood that she alone did not have all the answers. During departmental meetings and meetings of the editorial team Suzanne always left herself open to suggestions on how things should be done. She never saw her opinions as being the be-all and end-all of how the department or magazines should be run.

Though she was a very private person Suzanne always kept a pleasant and optimistic disposition and never hid the fact that she was battling a life-threatening illness.

She will be dearly missed by all of the members of the editorial team and by the rest of the Parliament staff.

