



PARLIAMENT
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



Report of the Thirteenth National Youth Parliamentary Debate





**REPORT OF THE
13TH NATIONAL
YOUTH
PARLIAMMENTARY
DEBATE**



*Youth
Parliamentarians
Government*

*Youth
Parliamentarians
Opposition*



Mr. Speaker

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The video of the 13th National Youth Parliament is available on our ParlView YouTube Channel in two parts. Follow the links below to access them

Part 1

<http://bit.ly/13TTYPP1>

Part 2

<http://bit.ly/13TTYPP2>

Foreword by the President of the Senate



**Senator the Honourable Christine Kangaloo
President of the Senate**

It is my privilege, as President of the Senate, to congratulate all the students who participated in the 13th National Youth Parliament which was held on Monday November 9th 2015.

The theme of this Year's debate, "Regulation of Mobile Devices in Schools", was discussed in a spirited yet dignified manner by our young Parliamentarians. It was clear to all who witnessed the debate that the topic as well as the standing orders had been

thoroughly researched and that each participant from the Speaker to the Clerk embraced the role assigned to him.

The hosting of the Youth Parliament annually provides a platform for our young citizens to involve themselves in matters of national interest and to become exposed to the process of democracy. It is my hope that, having participated in this event, our students will be inspired to continue in some form of national service in the future.

This year's debate took place on the eve of the celebration of Divali and reflected, in a special way, the triumph of knowledge over ignorance and showed that in our young people there is much to be celebrated and that there is cause for optimism for our future.

My gratitude is also extended to the staff of the Parliament who invested their time and energy in making this event such a success.

**Joel Kissoon, Minister of Legal Affairs,
NYP 2015 of Presentation College, San Fernando is
presented with a Certificate of Achievement and an award
by Sen. the Hon. Christine Kangaloo
at the National Youth Parliamentary Debate 2015**



Foreword by the Speaker of the House



The hosting of the Youth Parliament is the fulfilment of a duty which any democratic nation owes to its youth. It is an opportunity to mentor future Parliamentarians, but more fundamentally, it provides a grounding for the understanding of Parliamentary practice and procedure and demystifying the process for others who may never serve in the Parliamentary Chamber.

*The Honourable Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP
Speaker of the House*

The success of a democratic society can only be truly measured by the level of the participation of its citizens beyond election day. True democracy exists when every citizen appreciates that he or she has an active role to play in keeping the democracy alive. The engagement of our Youth in the National Youth Parliament is one of the methods to engender in our citizens the requirement for their active participation beyond the casting of a ballot.

The eager participation by our Youth in this Thirteenth National Youth Parliament was no exception in the sense of fulfilment and satisfaction which it brought to the serving Parliamentarians and the staff of the Parliament who witnessed that event. The various contributions by the Members who spoke, the general deportment of the non-speaking Members during the session, the capability, impartiality and demeanour of the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer, the responsibility demonstrated by the Leader of the House and the Whip, the astuteness of the Marshal and the efficiency of the Clerks and ushers evidenced respect for Parliament and the recognition by the participants of the seriousness of the business in which they were engaged. The conduct of the business of the day by the Youth Parliamentarians served as nothing less than a fitting reward for the time and effort expended by their teachers their parents and other resource persons involved in their training and preparation.

Our Youth Parliamentarians must be commended for a well conducted Parliamentary session on a very topical issue that touches and concerns the education system in particular and the wider society in general. It is my hope that the exposure afforded them in October 2015 has not end with that singular event, but shall serve to deepen their individual interest and

encourage them to enlighten their peers in the democratic process to ensure a strong parliamentary democracy continues to thrive in Trinidad and Tobago.

Samuel Dwarika, Speaker of the House NYP 2015 of Fatima College is presented with a Certificate of Achievement and an award by the Hon. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, Speaker of the House at the National Youth Parliamentary Debate 2015





Background

The National Youth Parliament is held under the auspices of the Trinidad and Tobago Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). It is an occasion where students from secondary schools with sixth form, tertiary level educational institutions and youth-based organizations throughout Trinidad and Tobago engage in a mock Parliamentary Debate. For one day the students assume the roles of various Members of Parliament to discuss proposed legislation or motions. In order to remain true to the real debate, students also function in the capacities of Parliamentary staff who assist the elected representatives in their duties.

In Trinidad and Tobago the First National Youth Parliamentary Debate was held in 1987.

The core objectives of the National Youth Parliament are:

- to foster youth development through social dialogue;
- to give young people the opportunity to have their views heard by key decision-makers and the general public;
- to help young people to understand and actively participate in parliamentary processes;
- to assist young people learn how to influence governmental decision-making as active citizens;
- to highlight the importance of helping young people understand how decisions are made and how they can be involved in influencing their worlds.

The Youth Parliament is recognized by the CPA Headquarters as one method of encouraging young people to understand the principles and skills which underpin democracy and civil society. It also seen as a forum for our youth to express their ideas, concerns and expectations with regard to democracy.

Introduction

On Monday, November 09, 2015, the Trinidad and Tobago Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) hosted the Thirteenth National Youth Parliamentary Debate from 10:00 a.m. in the *Parliament Chamber, Mezzazine Floor, Tower D, The International Waterfront Centre, #1A Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain*.

A total of fifty-two (52) students randomly chosen from among the 17-25 age group from the various sixth form secondary schools, youth organizations and tertiary institutions, nationally participated in the debate which briefly focused on a **Government Motion** entitled “***How Can Trinidad and Tobago Better Prepare for the Challenges of Climate Change?***” which was expounded as follows:

“WHEREAS Trinidad and Tobago as a Small-Island Developing State is vulnerable to adverse effects/impacts of climate change;

AND WHEREAS Trinidad and Tobago’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) includes a commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 15% (1.3 million tonnes) by 2030;

AND WHEREAS Trinidad and Tobago intends to embark on the development of a new National Climate Change Policy for the country in 2016;

AND WHEREAS Trinidad and Tobago is the only Caribbean country to have made a commitment to present its INDC at the Conference of Parties (COP21) to be held in Paris in December 2015;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Youth Parliament agree to the appointment of a bi-partisan Committee of Youth Parliamentarians to solicit the views of the youth in this country on climate change;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Committee be mandated to submit its report with findings and recommendations to the National Youth Parliament within six months of its appointment”.

At the end of the brief debate on the above motion, the 13th Youth Parliament agreed to the formulation of a Committee to solicit the views of youth nationally and to submit a report within six months.

The main focus of the debate was a Bill entitled “*The Regulation of Mobile Devices in Schools Bill, 2015*”. A copy of the Bill is attached at *Appendix III*

An invitation was also extended to a teacher to serve in the assistant and supervisory roles to selected students in the lead up to the debate. The strength of these fifty-two youth parliamentarians was displayed on Monday November 09, 2015, as they embraced and portrayed the roles of Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House, Ministers of Government, other elected Representatives, as well as key parliamentary officers such as Table Clerks, Marshal of the Parliament and parliamentary chamber Attendants for a day.

Orientation and Preparation

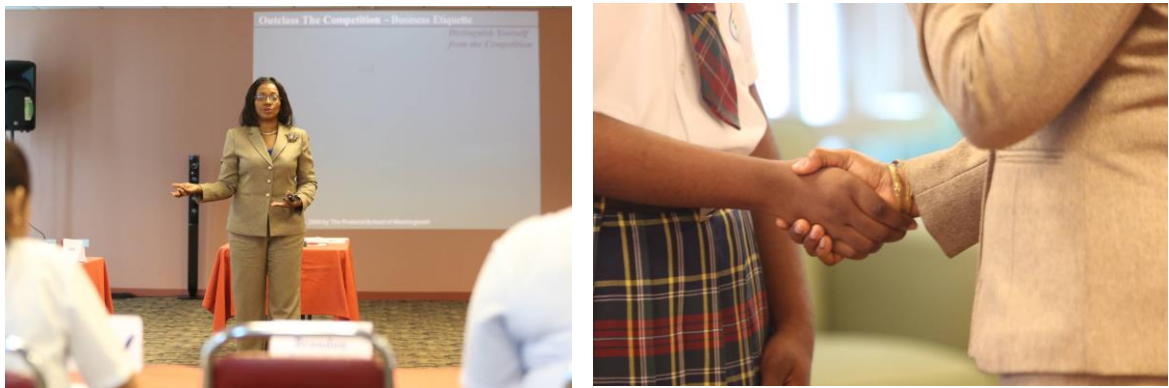
The orientation and preparation process commenced in the month of August 2015 to acclimatize the young people selected to assume the responsibility before them. This process included Workshops in “*Dress, Etiquette and Civility*”, “*Oratory Skills*” and “*Debating Skills, Aspects of Debate and the Standing Orders*”.

Participants were divided into two (2) groups in order for each to have an equal opportunity to involve himself and obtain the necessary attention from facilitators during the sessions. Copies of the Revised Standing Orders of the House of Representatives and the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago were given to each student.

1. Workshop on “*Business Dress, Etiquette and Civility*”

On Monday 17th and Thursday 20th August, 2015 students were invited to attend a workshop on “*Business Dress, Etiquette and Civility*”. Training was received in the areas of dress and grooming, appropriate wear for the Parliamentary Chamber, business etiquette skills such as handshaking, introductions and the value of eye contact, protocol basics, precedence and seating, forms of address and correct use of titles.

The program was structured to ensure that the absolute necessary skills and knowledge were presented to the students to provide them with the tools and techniques which would aid the projection of confidence, competence and authority. This workshop was facilitated by *Ms. Catherine Gordon of the Catherine Gordon’s Institute of Finishing Elements*.



At the “Business Dress, Etiquette and Civility” Workshop with Ms. Catherine Gordon of the Institute of Finishing Elements



Teachers also benefitted from the “Business Dress, Etiquette and Civility” Workshop with Ms. Catherine Gordon of the Institute of Finishing Elements

An overwhelming majority of the participants in this workshop expressed the view that the training received was very valuable and provided much needed clarity and insight into the Organization’s expectations of them and, that the things learnt can be of benefit even subsequent to leaving the institutions in which they are at presently enrolled.

2. Workshop on “Oratory Skills”

The workshops on “Oratory Skills” were held on Monday 24th and Thursday 27th August, 2015. These sessions were facilitated by Mr. Marlene Davis and Dr. Barbara Jenkins. During the sessions students learned breathing and breath control, pronunciation - the manner of articulating vowels and consonants and basic morphology; musical dynamics of the speaking voice – pausing, range and mood; and then to connect speech which includes the value of the senses, emotions and imagination. Additionally, impromptu speeches, preparation of speeches and the delivery of speeches were some of the highlights of these sessions.



Dr. Barbara Jenkins – students choose topics for delivery



Ms. Marlene Davis takes participants through the paces re: “Oratory Skills”.

3. Workshop: *Developing Debating Skills, Aspects of Debate and the Standing Orders*

The Workshop on “*Developing Debating Skills, Aspects of Debate and the Standing Orders*” was held over a period of four (4) days: two (2) day on theory and the other two (3) practical. These sessions were held on Monday 14th and 21st and Thursday 17th and 24th September, 2015. This Workshop facilitated by Mrs. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt of the Personnel Management Services Limited, presented participants with the necessary tools to assist them to debate effectively.



Mrs. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt during the Workshop on “Developing Debating Skills, Aspects of Debate and the Standing Orders”

To observe how participants will apply the tools taught during the Workshop, mini debates were encouraged. Participants were placed in groups of six (6) and given a specific topic for debate and assessment. Students found this approach very interesting as it afforded them the opportunity to hone their skills in public speaking and to practice what was taught.



One of the groups preparing for the mini debate

The Briefing Session

This session chaired by Mr. Atiba Wiltshire, Communications Officer at the Office of the Parliament, was held on Friday October 09, 2015, in the *Grand Room, Level 8, Tower D*. This session was attended by both student representatives and their teachers. At this session students were given a brief overview of the History and objectives of the National Youth

Parliament subsequent to which they randomly selected their parliamentary portfolios and constituencies. In addition, the audience was addressed by Mr. David Small, Independent Senator, Mr. Jason Elcock, the Corporate Communications Manager at the Office of the Parliament and Mr. Johnson Greenidge, Procedural Clerk Assistant at the Office of the Parliament and a former National Youth Parliamentarian.

Mr. David Small, Independent Senator addressing the audience at the Briefing Session



Mr. Jason Elcock, Corporate Communications Manager at the Office of the Parliament encouraging participants of the 13th NYP during the Briefing Session

Mr. Johnson Greenidge, Procedural Clerk Assistant and former Youth Parliamentarian, inspiring participants during the Briefing Session



Subsequent to the above, there was a question and answer period where students were allowed to ask any questions on what they learnt during the training sessions, the Standing Orders and

procedure. Responses were proffered by Ms. Keiba Jacobs, Procedural Clerk at the Office of the Parliament and Mrs. Jacqueline Phillip-Stoute, Parliamentary Clerk II.



Ms. Keiba Jacob, Procedural Clerk responding to a question

Participants were then allowed to caucus in groups, that is, Government and Opposition. Each group was given further guidance by Procedural Clerks.

During the additional days assigned for training, Youth Parliamentary Officials were taught about their roles and responsibilities in preparation for the upcoming debate. Mr. Youth Speaker, Samuel Dwarika of Fatima College met and received instructions from Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, Speaker of the House; Youth Clerks-at-the-Table were assisted by Ms. Candice Skerrette, Procedural Clerk; Youth Marshal of Parliament and the Youth Parliamentary Attendants were advised and guided by the Mr. Brian Caesar, Marshal of the Parliament and all other Members of the 13th National Youth Parliament were given guidance by Procedural Clerks of the House and Senate.



Youth Parliamentarians taken through the process

The final days of training were *Thursday October 29 and Saturday November 07, 2015*. On these two (2) days, all youth parliamentarians attended rehearsals of the actual proceedings in preparation for the live debate. Members of the Planning Committee of the National Youth Parliament, Procedural Clerks and the Broadcasting and Communication Units were also present. Broadcasting was encouraged to attend these session so as to assuage any anxieties participants would have about live coverage of the debate.

Overall, students were extremely receptive and attentive, displaying a high degree of participation and efforts in all areas training. With training concluded and with a renewed sense of confidence in their abilities, it appeared certain that the debate ahead would be both interesting and entertaining.

The Day

At 10:00 a.m. on Monday November 09, 2015, all members of the National Youth Parliament from the Government and Opposition benches as well as the Parliamentary Officials assembled in the Parliament Chamber, Mezzanine Floor, Tower D, The Port of Spain International Waterfront Centre, #1A Wrightson Road, Port of Spain.

Upon the announcement of the Honourable Youth Speaker of the House (*Mr. Samuel Dwarika of Fatima College*) by the Marshal of the 13th National Youth Parliament (*Ms. Cassie Ransome of Siparia West Secondary School*), all persons within the Chamber stood and bowed. The National Anthem was played on the National Instrument of Trinidad and Tobago, the *Tenor pan* by a Member of the Opposition/Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, *Mr. Shakeem Jack of Goodwood Secondary School in Tobago*. Subsequently, the Youth Parliament prayer was read by the Speaker.



The Marshal of the 13th NYP arriving with the Speaker

The sitting commenced with the Leader of the House and Minister of Housing and Urban Development (*Member for Tabaquite*), (*Mr. Chad Salandy of Fatima College*) tabling the Report of the Twelfth National Youth Parliamentary Debate of 2014.

Thereafter, *Hon. Karina Nanan, Prime Minister and Member for Tobago West (University of the Southern Caribbean (USC))* piloted a motion entitled **“How can Trinidad and Tobago better prepare for the challenges of Climate Change?”** Considering the arguments put forward by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition Mr. Jabari Lynch of the same institution as the Prime Minister, it was evident that they were knowledgeable of theme and thus ideas were thoroughly thought out prior to taking the floor. At the end of the debate on

the motion, both the Government and Opposition agreed to the establishment of a Committee to solicit the views of young people and interest groups nationally on climate change. The committee was mandated to submit a report with findings and recommendations to the National Youth Parliament six months subsequent to its appointment.

Subsequently, debate started in earnest, beginning with *Hon. Anaiah Jeffery, the Youth Minister of Education and Member for Diego Martin Central of the El Dorado East Secondary School* who piloted a Bill entitled “*The Regulation of Mobile Devices in Schools Bill, 2015*”. The students were versed in the recently revised Standing Orders and well prepared to debate the subject matter before the House.



The Big Day

As anticipated, the public gallery was packed with an appreciative audience comprised of teachers, parents, students and members of the public who thoroughly enjoyed the informative and lively debate. Members of the media were also present to cover the event. All present including Parliamentarians were treated to a number of well researched, high quality contributions by participations.



Cross-section of the Public Gallery

At the completion of the debate, a short ceremony followed the Honourable Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP, Speaker of the House, Honourable Christine Kangaloo, President of the Senate, Honourable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP, Mr. Esmond Forde, MP, Deputy Speaker, Senator Nigel De Freitas, Vice President of the Senate, Senator W. Michael Coppin, Senator Wade Mark, Senator Kadesha Ameen and Mr. Barry Padarath, MP addressed participants and invitees in the public gallery, and presented commemorative plaques and certificates of participation to each youth parliamentarian. *See images below.*



Photos: Award Ceremony

A panel was selected for the sole purpose of selecting the Most Outstanding Debater from among those who made contributions. The panel was comprised of Independent Senator Anthony Vieira, Mrs. Lila Rodriguez-Roberts and Mrs. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt. As a consequence, an award was presented to *Mr. Joshua Ramjohn, Minister of National Security and Member for Caroni East of Naparima College* by the Speaker of the House, the Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, MP. *See photo hereunder.* Subsequently, Senator the Honourable Christine Kangaloo, President of the Senate moved the vote of thanks.



*Mr. Joshua Ramjohn receives the award for
“Most Outstanding Debater”
from the Speaker of the House*

Presidential Reception

Following the debate, the Youth Parliamentarians, officials, parents and teachers were invited to a reception at the Guardian Building, West Moorings, where they were hosted to delicious cocktails by His Excellency, Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, SC, ORTT, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Mrs. Reena Carmona.



At the Reception at the Arnold Thomasos Room

Conclusion

The Trinidad and Tobago Branch of the CPA is indeed proud to have hosted the Thirteenth National Youth Parliament. The Youth Parliament was designed to provide an experience of the parliamentary process and to demonstrate the way in which Parliaments are able to:

- Make legislation;
- Debate matters of national and international concern; and
- Make and enforce their own rules of conduct.

The Youth Parliament also provides an opportunity for participants to eloquently express their opinions while operating within a parliamentary setting.

The Local Branch of the CPA wishes to commend all persons involved in this Thirteenth National Youth Parliamentary Debate. Special thanks go out to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of National Security.

The Trinidad and Tobago Branch is of the view that the Youth Parliament remains thankful to members of the Planning Committee, the Procedural Clerks, the Office of the Marshal inclusive of the Food and Beverage personnel, the Parliament Security Unit, Hansard Unit and the Corporate Communications Unit of the Parliament as well as the teachers and parents of the participants.

It is hoped that the National Youth Parliament will continue to grow in stature and will serve to dispel any doubts that the future of our democracy is in safe hands.



List of Participants

SAMMUEL DWARIKA

Fatima College
Speaker of the House

GOVERNMENT

CHAD SALANDY

Fatima College
Minister of Housing and Urban Development/
Leader of the House
(Member for Tabaquite)

KARINA NANAN

University of the Southern Caribbean
Prime Minister
(Member for Tobago West)

ARNALDO CONLIFF

Presentation College, San Fernando
Attorney General
(Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara)

INOOL NABBIE

ASJA Boys College, San Fernando
Minister of Finance
(Member for Chaguanas East)

JUSTIN A. PAUL

St. Stephen's College
Minister of Health
(Member for St. Augustine)

SHAMEEKA SHEPPARD

Scarborough Center for Youth Development
Minister of Works and Transport
(Member for Couva South)

SALIYAH ALI

ASJA Girls College, Charlieville
Minister of Tourism
(Member for Point Fortin)

KANICA PHILLIP

St. Stephen's College
Minister of Public Utilities
(Member for Moruga/Tableland)

SABRINA OUTAR

SERVOL South Zone
Minister of Social Development and Family Services
(Member for San Fernando East)

JOSHUA RAMJOHN

Naparima College
Minister of National Security
(Member for Caroni East)

DAVE MICHAEL INNISS

Youth Training Centre
Minister of Communications
(Member for St. Joseph)

KNESHA NOEL

Open Bible High
Minister of Community Development, Culture and the
Arts
(Member for Diego Martin North East)

KASSANDRA GEORGE

University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)
Deputy Speaker
(Member for Couva North)

KADESIA WILLIAMS

Point Fortin East Secondary
Minister of Energy and Energy Industries
(Member for Manzanilla)

ANAIAH JEFFERY

El Dorado East Secondary
Minister of Education
(Member for Diego Martin Central)

KASHIEF CAMPBELL

Point Fortin East Secondary
Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries
(Members for La Brea)

ROHAN RAGBIR

Presentation College, Chaguanas
Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs
(Member for Tunapuna)

JEANILE NANTON

El Dorado East Secondary
Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs
(Member for Naparima)

NARISHA ARMSTRONG

Shiva Boys Hindu College
Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development
(Member for Tobago East)

SADÉ GRANNUM

Siparia West Secondary
Minister of Trade and Industry
(Member for Maloney)

TIFFANY SUPERVILLE

Toco Secondary
Minister of Planning and Development
(Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West)

SAVIO KEITH

Presentation College, Chaguanas
Minister of Public Administration
(Member for St. Ann's East)

KRISTAL JACKSON

St. Joseph Convent, San Fernando
Minister of Rural Development and Local Government
(Member for Laventille East/Morvant)

JOEL KISSOON

Presentation College, San Fernando
Minister of Legal Affairs
(Member for Princes Town)

OPPOSITION

SIDDIQ MANZANO
St. Mary's College
Opposition Chief Whip
(Member for Siparia)

JABARI LYNCH
University of Southern Caribbean (USC)
Leader of the Opposition
(Member for Cumuto)

AYESHA MOORE
ASJA Girls' College, Charlieville
Opposition Member
(Member for Toco/Sangre Grande)

DYLAN MAHARAJ
Couva East Secondary.
Opposition Member
(Member for Barataria)

MALIK LEWIS
Shiva Boys Hindu College
Opposition Member
(Member for Oropouche West)

DENISHA BALLANTYNE-SMITH
St. Joseph Convent, Port of Spain
Opposition Member
(Member for Pointe-a-Pierre)

VARUN RAMADHAR
Naparima College
Opposition Member
(Member for San Fernando West)

DENNIELLE GOPAULSINGH
Open Bible High
Opposition Member
(Member for Chaguanas West)

ABAYOMI MUNRO
St. Mary's College
Opposition Member
(Member for Arima)

TRAVIS BEHARRY
ASJA Boys College, San Fernando
Opposition Member
(Member for Arouca)

BRANDON WOODS
Presentation College, San Fernando
Opposition Member
(Member for Caroni Central)

ALISHIA-JAE ROUGIER
St. Joseph Convent, San Fernando
Opposition Member
(Member for Fyzabad)

PRISCILLA LESLIE
Toco Secondary
Opposition Member
(Member for La Horquetta)
ANIQA BEHARRY
Lakshmi Girls' Hindu School
Opposition Member
(Member for Oropouche East)

SHAKEEM JACK
Goodwood Secondary, Tobago
Opposition Member
(Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West)

KATERINA HANSRAJ
St. Joseph Convent, Port of Spain
Opposition Member
(Member for Diego Martin West)

MICKHELA ALEXANDER
ASJA Girls College, San Fernando
Opposition Member
(Member for Talparo)

KRISTIAN TAYLOR
SERVOL South Zone
Opposition Member
(Member for Laventille West)

JOSHUA OTTLEY
University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)
Opposition Member
(Member for Mayaro)

WINSTON QUAMMIE JONATHAN
Youth Training Centre
Opposition Member
(Member for Port of Spain South)

STAFF

MYESHA SANIFORD
Couva East SEcondary
Clerk of the House

MEGAN MUNGALSINGH
Lakshmi Girls Hindu College
Assistant Clerk

CASSIE RANSOME
Siparia West Secondary
Marshal of the Parliament

JESSICA ANKATIAH
ASJA Girls College, San Fernando
Deputy Marshal

JOULIZE LEANDER
Scarborough Center for Youth Development
Parliamentary Attendant

MIKHAIL DORSET
St. Stephen's College
Parliamentary Attendant



Verbatim Notes

YOUTH PARLIAMENTARY SITTING

Monday, November 09, 2015

Commenced at 10.00 a.m.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PAPER LAID

Report of the Twelfth National Youth Parliamentary debate, 2014. [*The Leader of the House/Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Mr. Chad Salandy)*]

REGULATION OF MOBILE DEVICES IN SCHOOLS BILL, 2015

Bill to provide for the regulation of the use mobile devices in schools and for related matters [*The Minister of Education*]; read the first time

Motion made: That the next stage be taken later in the proceedings. [*Hon. A. Jeffery*]

Question put and agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIANS

(UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE)

The Prime Minister (Hon. Karina Nanan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name.

Whereas Trinidad and Tobago as a Small-Island Developing State is vulnerable to adverse effects/impacts of climate change;

And whereas Trinidad and Tobago's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) includes a commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 15 per cent by 2030;

And whereas Trinidad and Tobago intends to embark on the development of a new National Climate Change Policy for the country in 2016;

And whereas Trinidad and Tobago is the only Caribbean country to have made a commitment to present its INDC at the Conference of Parties (COP21) to be held in Paris in December 2015;

Be it resolved that this Youth Parliament agree to the appointment of a bi-partisan Committee of Youth Parliamentarians to solicit the views of the youth in this country on climate change;

And be it further resolved that this Committee be mandated to submit its report with findings and recommendations to the National Youth Parliament within four months of its appointment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to present today. Trinidad and Tobago is one of the wealthiest nations in the region in terms of our GDP per capita where we have benefited from decades of economic growth, fuelled primarily by its profitable energy sector. According to a document entitled *Working for Sustainable Development in Trinidad and Tobago*, which is published in 2012 by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. It stated that the Government and the citizens were questioning the progress and success in making Trinidad and Tobago a low carbon, resource-efficient and socially inclusive nation

Trinidad and Tobago ranked 139 out of 146 countries that was studied in the Environmental Sustainability Index, because of its ability to protect the environment over the next several decades. The same study went on to suggest that this is largely the result of poor petroleum production with cheap energy prices which in turn leads to a large Green House gas production per capita.

Mr. Speaker, in order for Trinidad and Tobago to have stability in the economic and environmental sectors, it is with great significance that we look at various conservative efforts. We must distinguish the importance of sustainable development as a key component in this country's development path as we are a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), with a fragile ecosystem, limited land space and finite natural resources. Trinidad and Tobago is vulnerable to external environmental and economic shocks.

Mr. Speaker, given our geographical location and geology, we are vulnerable to several natural hazards, including hurricanes, floods and earthquakes. The country's past economic pathways have tended to emphasize economic and social stability, sometimes to the detriment of the environment. Gas reserves are not limitless, and the more conservative estimates based on the current and available gas reserves, excluding untapped and unexplored reserves, suggest a limited period of continued supply.

As the Member for Tobago West, I would like to briefly share some insights on the effects on Tobago based on the national climate change policy in July 2011. They projected the climate change for the temperature increase and precipitation decrease for Tobago as they generally tend to be more extreme than those for Trinidad. The approach to climate change that we have taken, according to an excerpt from 2015's global change legislation study, shows that in 1992 Trinidad and Tobago signed the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol as a non-annex 1 country. In 1990 the Trinidad and Tobago Government established the working group to determine the implications of global warming, climate change and sea level rise. They consist of representatives from the relevant Government Ministries, NGOs and private sectors, and is currently chaired by the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), which is a statutory board under the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

Trinidad and Tobago does not have a law dedicated to carbon reductions. However, there is the recognition of the importance of climate change issues, and there are a number of measures in place to mitigate and adapt to climate change. One of them being the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) where its objective is to oversee the climate policies and provide administrative and legislative framework for climate change mitigation, guidance and adaptation for low carbon development in the country as it was approved by Cabinet in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, you may propose to question, why the youth parliamentarians? Mr. Speaker, in an article presented by the Guardian UK it entitled young people asked about the affairs and hopes on the climate change. It captures the views of youth around the world between the ages of 17 to 24, where they all hoped that the relevant Government and authorities make changes and set legislations in place to eliminate this threat to our ecosystem. As a young person myself, I strongly recommend that this Motion be taken up by the youth committee to do the necessary research to find improvements for our ecosystem, as there is a rise of problems that occurring in our agriculture, human health, coastal zones and marine life

and water resources because of these avid climate changes. We are the voices for tomorrow, therefore this is our responsibility.

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Jabari Lynch (*Cumuto*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great joy that I can stand in this honourable House and speak about the Opposition's great desire to agree and to move forward with this Motion, with the creation of this bipartisan committee.

Mr. Speaker, the reason being that we have found ourselves now in the 21st Century with a bit of a problem. That is a light way of putting it. Climate change is an issue not only for us in Trinidad and Tobago, but it is an issue for the entire human race. Specifically, three things stood out to me when the Prime Minister made her contribution, and these three concerns are what my contribution would highlight today.

Firstly, sustainability. A little history lesson about Trinidad and Tobago is that we began in some ways in terms of our modern economy with a sugar-based economy. From there we moved to cocoa and other crops, then to oil-based, and now we are a natural gas-based economy. Natural gas accounts for almost 40 per cent of our GDP and almost 80 per cent of our exports, and we realize the great importance of the oil and gas industry to our economy. How can we then mitigate the need to roll back on the greenhouse emissions with our need to develop as a nation? This is one of my concerns going forward, and I will continue to pilot this, and my team as we go forward speaking about the issue of our development in the face of climate change. There is a need, of course, to go green, but how can we go green and also develop our nation which so heavily dependent on the oil and natural gas-based products and manufacturing.

Mr. Speaker, please, help us in understanding the importance of this. It is the graveness, the great, grave pressure upon us to develop new ways of dealing with climate change. The only greater form that can eclipse this is the great hope that we have for tomorrow. A tomorrow where we can see climate change as a thing of the past. It is a gift and a burden that we will pass on to the generations to come.

My second point is that of continuity, in terms of giving this gift and this burden to the younger generation, the generations who are not here. The analogy I will use is that of a table filled with food, both sour and sweet, and we are all inhabitants, we are all partakers, but there is an empty seat, and that empty seat belongs to the generation that will come after us. We must ensure that that table is fitted with more sweet than sour. We must ensure that we put things in place today and that we re-socialize the generations to come to understand the importance of not only the preservation of our country, but the preservation of our environment, and by extension, of the world.

Mr. Speaker, my third point centres around the assistance and the aid that the larger countries must give to the smaller countries such as ourselves. France, the European Union America and the UK as a larger body, we must look to them to offer not only words and conferences but also resources in our aid to move away from natural gas into a greener form of production, in terms of greener forms of manufacturing and development, Mr. Speaker.

10.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great joy, as I said before, that we will work together with the Government and that we will put forth what we need to put forth concerning these things and we will put it forth in a manner that will bring together all the points, like the agricultural sector. Climate change will affect the cycles of crops, it will affect the health, of course, with heat wave strokes increasing over the time period and, of course, I think about Trinidad and Tobago, especially Port of Spain with the reclaimed land that can be taken back by nature if we do not take care of her.

Mr. Speaker, the old-time saying of, “God is ah Trini” can no longer stand. We must take action. We must move now. We must do what we can as young people, as older people, as experienced people. We must move in concert, Mr. Speaker, to handle this issue before there is not an issue to handle as we have lost our humanity and our environment. Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister (Hon. Karina Nanan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to take this moment to say that I agree with the Opposition Leader and therefore we shall go on.

I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Youth Parliament agree to the appointment of a bi-partisan Committee of Youth Parliamentarians to solicit the views of the youth in this country on climate change;

Further Resolved:

That this Committee be mandated to submit its report with findings and recommendations to the National Youth Parliament within four months of its appointment.

REGULATION OF MOBILE DEVICES IN SCHOOLS BILL, 2015

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anaijah Jeffery): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to provide for the regulation of the use of mobile devices in schools and for related matters be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your appointment to this esteemed position and I would also like to extend congratulations to all the recently selected Members of this honourable House. Mr. Speaker, today, I have the honour of speaking to you as the representative for Diego Martin Central and the Minister of Education on the Regulation of Mobile Devices in Schools Bill, 2015. The purpose of this Bill is to effect regulations regarding the use of mobile devices in primary schools and secondary schools. This Bill comes amidst growing concerns about the current school age population and the educational development in this technologically advanced era.

Mr. Speaker, owing to the rapid increase in technology, and it is prevalent in our society, has become more technologically dependent and this has impacted the way we live, the way we think and the way we learn.

Mr. Speaker, as Trinidad and Tobago strives to stand as a First World nation among all other developed countries we need to encourage our youth, particularly those in primary and

secondary schools, as well as our educators, to embrace all new technologies. This however, must be done in a manner that augment educational environment and is non-disruptive. In this context, it is appropriate that we regulate the use of technology in schools and more specifically mobile devices.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago is not unique in seeking to regulate the use of mobile devices in schools. I would like to say that the State of New Jersey, in the United States, in 2014 implemented regulations to these mobile devices in schools, and this was in response to an observed 88 per cent increase in the number of students with mobile devices which contributed to an increase in the academic failure rate of students. As a consequence, Mr. Speaker, a policy was developed, implemented by the Haworth Board of Education, File Code: 3515.1 which was used to eliminate the disruption within the school; prohibition of the use of mobile devices during class time for students, outlining certain processes to be followed; and providing for teachers selective use of these mobile devices. The State of New Jersey found that this implementation of this policy resulted in a 65 per cent increase in the success rate of students' academics. May I repeat, a 65 per cent from a 55 per cent decrease, to a 65 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, I will now go through all the clauses of the Bill. Clause 1 provides a short title for the Bill which is:

“...Regulation of Mobile Devices in Schools Act, 2015.”

Clause 2 defines the terms that provide for the interpretation of the Bill, and, Mr. Speaker, clause 2, the definition of mobile devices as stated by the Bill means any:

“...mobile telephone or any other device which performs an interactive communication function by transmitting and receiving data, but does not include a personal laptop computer provided by the Government.”

Mr. Speaker, these laptops are allowed because of the IC teams that the Ministry of Education have put in place to maintain and address the concerns of these students. There is also software installed to monitor the usage of these laptops, and since the Ministry of Education has a duty to protect our children from any explicit content and to ensure that the laptops provide for only educational use.

“Interactive communication function includes-

(a) sending or receiving oral or written messages;”

For example, the voice note or a text message.

(b) “sending or receiving facsimile;

(c) sending or receiving still or moving images; and

(d) providing access to the internet;”

These are what we consider as the offences that will have consequential actions.

Mr. Speaker, in order to be effective in promoting good education we must ensure that these rules are put in place and are followed, and as I mentioned before there are no exceptions to the rules.

“Prescribed”—refers to the—“regulations made under section 6;”—which I will go in depth later on, and:

“Principal includes Vice-Principal or any person acting...”—at the time of incident.

This person will be responsible for reporting incidents where students are found to be in breach of this Act.

“Minister”—refers to myself as I am the Minister of Education with the—
“responsibility for education...”

Clause 3 proposes the total prohibition of the use of mobile devices in primary schools. Mr. Speaker, while this may seem drastic, the Ministry of Education has set out the primary school curriculum and has provided the necessary textbooks to support all topics to be covered by the respective teachers in order to ensure fair and effective learning. In addition, in most primary schools there are computer labs provided for those without these resources—may be requested by the Ministry of Education. We understand that security is a great concern for parents and guardians, and the surety of the safety of their child or ward is the main objective for issuing these mobile devices. Parents want to stay in contact with their children in the event of an emergency, Mr. Speaker, but we assure provisions have been made for such occurrences. In the event of an emergency at school or another matter, a child will be allowed to call his parent from the school’s administrative office.

Clause 4 provides for the limited usage of mobile devices in secondary schools. Mr. Speaker, in a representative survey done in 20 secondary schools completed by myself, it was discovered that nine in 10 students have mobile devices on their persons at all times. Six in 10 students use their devices freely, but four in five teachers say that the devices hinder effective learning during classroom sessions. It is duly noted, however, that in secondary schools mobile devices assist students with research and similar educational pursuits.

Consequently, the use of mobile devices will be prohibited only when class is in session. Meaning, when a teacher is in front of a student or any educational purposes going on. Where mobile devices have been allowed we have provided provisions of cell towers to be provided which the students are to leave their device powered off upon entering the school compound. They are not allowed to take these devices unless they are leaving early, in the leave of a parent or guardian or permitted to do so by a teacher or higher authority.

Clause 5 sub-clause (1) provides for the notification of parents upon breaches of clause 3 and clause 4 by the student by any investigation by the principal. So this ensures that the parent will be informed of their child’s misdemeanor and refusal to comply with these rules and regulations. The principal will have discretion using the suspension of attendance from school to a maximum of seven days depending on the severity of the offence. It should be noted that suspension is not the only form of punishment. The principals can be guided by the National School Code of Conduct under: “Standard Use of Mobile Handheld Electronic...Devices in Schools and Technology and the Internet”.

Mr. Speaker, the necessary amendments will be done to the National School Code of Conduct so that it does not contradict this Bill. For example, in section 2 we will include the use of cell towers and in section 4 subsection (2) the use of mobile devices provided by the Government will be added. Principals will be required to use the recommended consequences for breaches by students. If it is determined that suspension is necessary due to the seriousness of offence, the principal must notify the supervisor of the school who will notify myself, as the Minister of Education, who will refer any suspension for further determination

by myself, and that will be deemed as final. Clause 6 provides for the Minister to make necessary regulations to tag along with the Bill and give effect for the provision of this Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear from the foregoing that this legislation seeks to provide for the embracing of new technologies in our primary and our secondary schools in a manner that allows for enhanced effective educational environment, therefore, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Mr. Jabari Lynch (*Cumuto*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great honour that I stand here to make my contribution on the Regulation of Mobile Devices in Schools Bill, 2015, and it is also a great honour and privilege that on behalf of the Opposition we can say that we are willing to work with the Government going forward to ensure that this Bill can touch and better the society as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, there are still some concerns, and my contribution will touch on these, so please indulge me as I wax philosophical on two points, for I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill promises to give Trinidad and Tobago a great opportunity, not only in terms of its governance, but also in terms of how our society can be restructured.

Firstly, we have to see how we can allow our students to be more disciplined. The watchwords of our country given by the late Dr. Eric Williams are: “Discipline, Tolerance, and Production”. But where is the discipline? Where is the tolerance? Where is the production, Mr. Speaker? If every time you are given a responsibility there is someone behind your back looking to see what you will do, when you will do it. Perhaps, responsible adults do not just spring up from thin air, but perhaps they come from the primary school level, from the kindergarten level as responsible students, as responsible young people.

Mr. Speaker, we have here the opportunity to restructure and resocialize our country as we can put a new understanding of what technology means. What does the smartphone, what does the mobile device mean? Is it an entertainment nexus or is it an opportunity to enable learning, to prosper, innovation. Please, Mr. Speaker, allow me to help you all to see what lies in this Bill.

Second of all, it is great for us to come together, the Opposition and the Government in unison to show, not only the citizens of this country but of the entire world—that because we are on the other side does not mean that we have to oppose one another, that we can pass the Bills that are necessary for the betterment of our country and not for petty agendas. [*Desk thumping*]

That being said, we should not go into the knee-jerk reaction of prohibiting. Mr. Speaker, in America, an April 2010 study by the PEW Internet & American Life Project and the University of Michigan, they did a tally, a study, on students from schools, some schools that allowed cell phones and mobile devices. They said that 71 per cent took advantage of that, Mr. Speaker. In the schools where it was allowed but not in classrooms, 65 per cent took advantage of that and with the schools where it was totally banned, a whopping 58 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] Does that mean that we cannot totally remove cell phones and mobile devices from schools? And if that is the case why not embrace the benefits, Mr. Speaker, of such technology.

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, in Singapore there is a village in Yang Chiang, where kindergarteners and primary schoolers are given mobile devices to augment their learning. They spend time taking videos of the teacher, texting one another about the school. Of course, there will be times when technology can be misused, but according to the Education Minister of Barbados, 250 miles north-east of Trinidad and Tobago, they are wishing to repeal the ban on mobile devices in schools because they realize that the same laptops they are giving out, a mobile device has the same capacity, has the same apps. So what is the difference? Perhaps this will cut the cost if everyone is given, for example, a Government-issued smartphone—a smartphone—to make smart students, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, please—please indulge me as I speak about the cost efficiency. Less paper for books, as books become digital—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, in accordance with Standing Order 45 your time limit has now expired. I will give you approximately 10 seconds to wrap up.

Mr. J. Lynch: Mr. Speaker, let us not say that we took the easy way out, but let us say—let it be recorded in the *Hansard* that we were mavericks, that we were pioneers, that we were visionaries.

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

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

The Minister of Communications (Hon. Dave Michael Inniss): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will firstly like to acknowledge that the Government did, and still do understand the many opportunities and benefits that these mobile devices present for our nation's students in schools. However, the Ministry of Education had no doubt that such use of devices by school-age students needed to be regulated to ensure inoffensive and responsible use after many reported matters pertaining towards the misuse of these devices were made throughout the seven educational districts in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, in January of 2007 the Ministry of Education published Handbook 8, also known as the guidelines for mobile handheld electronic communication devices with the intent of the Ministry to regulate—not ban—these devices from schools or school-related activities. So you can see, Mr. Speaker, the Government did take steps towards taking alternative methods instead of permanently banning these devices which has obviously been proven to be useless, as students will obviously find ways and means to get their devices on person, in schools, even though they have to pass through security checks, searches or however you would like to put it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as 5.2 of the Handbook clearly states, that all MHECDs be powered off while entering a school compound has proven to be ineffective, such as students found that they can easily elude detection by teachers or staff at the school by using small, easy-to-hide compact devices. Mr. Speaker, while the teacher is teaching on the board, I am posting up Hashtag board. [*Laughter*] Yes. Or when Miss is facing the blackboard I am taking out a “selfie”: Me in class. Me and my friends. This is the new modern classroom that teachers are facing these days.

I will also like to point out that these devices aid, not only as educational tools—if

there is to be conflict amongst the students in school these devices aid as a form of communication to call for reinforcements. Recently there were people found scaling the school fences to ambush students because of an altercation during recess. These are the same devices that we are calling for, for them to use in emergencies, yet they are using them as a tool of war. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this is not what we want for our nation's students. School is a place for education, the happiest days of your life; create moments to remember forever. Take it to carry with you forward, not to be put in a position to make conscious decisions whether you should put on this today or you should go with this tomorrow or "meh phone en charge, ah ha tuh charge it". No, no, no. "Yuh books in yuh bag, yuh lunch in yuh lunch kit and yuh going." [*Desk thumping*]

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, my esteemed colleagues will further elaborate on the misconduct of students with these devices at class and at school. I will, however, like to advocate on clause 3 of the Bill where it is proposed to prohibit the use of mobile devices by students attending primary schools while at school.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to advocate on this clause of the Bill because these devices tend to have a greater impact on these young minds. Yet, as you can see, these young minds lack the knowledge to fully comprehend right from wrong—[*Desk thumping*—with reference to explicit and violent videos, games, TV shows that would be downloaded onto these devices. And whether they are viewing these acts on a personal device, a device of a peer or an irresponsible adult, while at school, they will obviously be curious to attempt some of these acts, and school is not a place for this. I am sure everyone can agree with me. [*Desk thumping*]

Maths class turning into WWE SmackDown? No, no, no. And then, as the Minister of Education clearly stated, everyone will rush to call for ambulance. If one person has called for immediate emergency response, and other persons call after, there will be a congestion in the response of the emergency unit. Not so. [*Desk thumping*] That is why these things are to be left to the relevant authorities: the authorities of the school, the staff, the teachers, the principals—mainly the principals.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, by passing this Bill we are not putting our students at a disadvantage nor are we sending them back to the Stone Age. We are teaching them that there is a time and a place for everything—[*Desk thumping*—and at school, Mr. Speaker, these devices have proven to be far too much a distraction, as most of these devices serve a multipurpose purpose. Am I not right? They are educational tools, but you have to also consider that they can search the internet, social media, and these things tend to draw their attention far away from education, with these students. It has happened. Many reports have been made by teachers. They have complained "bout right thru dey texting. Ah writing on de board, dey doh want tuh take on". Children are becoming less recreational. They prefer not to interact in physical activities.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has expired. I will give you 10 seconds to wrap up.

Hon. D. M. Inniss: I would just like to say, Mr. Speaker, it has been an honour speaking this morning and I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Siparia. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Siddiq Manzano (Siparia): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good day to you all. Now, to begin my contribution, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Government for being selected and for their strenuous work and effort put into the construction/drafting of this Bill. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, to jump right into the situation, Mr. Speaker, clause 3 states, and I quote:

“No student attending a primary school shall use a mobile device while he is at school.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, at a glance, the phrase, “while he is at school” is quite confusing. It stood out from the rest. I am simply trying to understand what the Government’s intention was. Now, “is being at school” on the school compound, during the school hours of the day, or anything of that manner? I am confused first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, on the realization that that side is leaving little—sorry—no room for emergency, no room for flexibility, no room for—to put into better words—unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the course of the day.

I do not mean to come across aggressive, but I am simply confused. The Ministry of Education, and the Minister of Education, I am sure they recognize that the world is moving steadily towards a combination of mobile computing and electronic technology. From an educational perspective, Mr. Speaker, the question that begs is: how are these mobile devices and technologies going to affect the learning environment, the school environment, school life and pedagogy?

Now, according to the Journal on Ed Tech Research and News written by David Nagel, one-third of the United States students use mobile devices within their classrooms. Mr. Speaker, if we want to be more specific, it was found that half the number of students between the grades of three and five utilize smartphones. Sixty-two per cent utilize laptops within the class and 58 per cent possess tablets. Among all elementary students in the United States, Mr. Speaker, 33 per cent are permitted, and are using these mobile devices within the classroom. Why does the Government insist on depriving our future leaders of our country of a higher level learning experience? That is my question to you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am speaking solely on the basis of moving from a developing country, as the Prime Minister quoted, to a developed country like the United States. Now, there can be little doubt that the use of such devices must be regulated—and I repeat, Mr. Speaker, regulated—in order to ensure responsible and inoffensive use. I am not saying that that side’s intentions were vacuous; that they had no basis, that they had no purpose. All I am trying to say is that this side, the Opposition, is willing to assist them in the places where they may have slipped up because we are for one moving towards a better nation together. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the other side believes that omitting these devices in our schools will be an easy task, that they will be beneficial. Now, I am confused. How could we guarantee the omission of these devices in our schools if we cannot guarantee its omission in our prisons, Mr. Speaker? [*Desk thumping*].

With retrospect to a matter concerning national security, I remember the sole incident where I was a victim. Mr. Speaker, as a child attending Rosary Boys' RC School on Park Street, Port of Spain, there was one day where I really feared for my life. A miscommunication between my parents and myself resulted in them believing I was travelling home and believed I was being picked up. With the error of lack in technology, obviously I did not have a mobile device. Mr. Speaker, three o'clock, four o'clock, five o'clock, I stayed on my school compound unable to contact my parents. Now, I am certain this problem could have been avoided if, one, mobile devices were implemented and developed throughout our country and our schools and, two, if the school had proper measures put in place for such an incident. Now, I can assure the Member for Diego Martin Central that the administrative office was closed at that time.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote an article written by Michelle Marquez from the *New York Amsterdam News*, dated July 21, 2011: An 8-year-old boy by the name of Leiby Kletzky was abducted by a stranger in his neighbourhood of the school in Brooklyn, and was then sadly murdered a week later. Mr. Speaker, the parents of the community blamed the New York City schools' ban on cell phones and mobile devices as its main cause for such an incident. Mr. Speaker, let us not wait and pay the price for such a tragedy.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Chaguanas East. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Inool Nabbie): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the recent years the education sector has indisputably received the largest, or one of the largest budget allocations. But, is the Government, and by extension the nation, getting value for money? Mr. Speaker, the budget allocations for the education sector over the past four years are as follows: In fiscal year, 2012/2013, the education sector was allocated \$9.1 billion. In the year 2013/2014, the allocation increased to \$9.8 billion. Mr. Speaker, the education sector was allocated a whopping \$10.1 billion in the year 2014/2015. This means in just four years the Government would have spent over \$30 billion on the education sector. [*Desk thumping*]
Can we see where mobile devices in schools have been even remotely considered or regulated in these budgets?

Mr. Speaker, according a local newspaper, the *Newsday*, printed on August 09, 2015—note the present date as I quote:

“Educational consultant, Dr. Lennox Bernard says the people of Trinidad and Tobago are not getting value for the hefty allocations that have been pumped into the education sector over the years.”

Mr. Speaker, respected colleagues, young people can easily become distracted with their studies and because they may have a mobile device, makes it easier for them to lose focus. If they become bored with the class material being provided, it is easy for them to take their cell phones to play games or go on social media. How can you expect a child, or a teen, to absorb the knowledge they need if they are not even paying attention in class, Mr. Speaker? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, if mobile devices are allowed in the classroom, the use of Wi-Fi would be mandatory for effective learning.

Wi-Fi would then have to be provided for each and every school in Trinidad and Tobago. But at what cost to our taxpayers? Is this cost worth it? I think not. [*Desk thumping*]

10.45 a.m.

As a result of this, it can be more challenging for an IT department to manage the bandwidth required to ensure everyone is connected and all running smoothly. New hardware and software would have to be implemented. Their integration into the education settings requires significant planning and preparation. Mr. Speaker, having done my exhaustive research, I now have the breakdown of cost, after consultations with IT technicians and other IT specialists, as follows:

- The provision of new hardware and software for the implementation of Wi-Fi for one school is equal to \$100,000.
- The total cost for over 450 schools will equal to \$55 million.
- The cost of training teachers and technicians amounts to over \$50,000.
- The maintenance for the software and hardware per annum for one school will equal to \$25,000.

That amounts to a total of approximately \$12,500,000. The cost of Wi-Fi would be \$4,800,000; security features, \$1,500,000. This amounts to a total of \$72,050,000 per year. [*Desk thumping*] How unrealistic can this be, considering our budget allocation! Mr. Speaker, some may say that the implementation of mobile devices will cost the Government more than the textbook rental programme, but I am here to say this is not true. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Peter Cohen, the Chief Executive Officer of the U.S. curriculum for Pearson said and I quote:

“When you add up the cost of your mobile device, the cost of your bandwidth...the cost of your professional development, et cetera, you’re going to spend more money on an annual basis than we spend for paper...”

Mr. Speaker, the selection and deployment of technology on its own will not automatically result in learning gains to students. If the implementation of mobile devices in schools is so costly, how much more so will the regulation of such devices be. [*Desk thumping*]

Be advised, my esteemed colleagues, we are not advocating for a total ban of mobile devices and technology. In fact, every school has been allocated IT labs, AV rooms, and technicians, to regulate such use. However, budgetary allocations, in my humble opinion, are unrealistic in terms of regulating the use of mobile devices. Mr. Speaker, let me bring you up to date. This morning on the news, up to this very morning, CNN reported a sexting scandal in the school in Idaho where students would have been caught exchanging hundreds of photos with themselves during class time.

As I wrap up this presentation, I wish to take the opportunity to thank you for your undivided attention. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Denisha Balantyne-Smith (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, I am going to cut right to the chase. I am sure that everyone present in this Chamber can agree that technology has become an integral part of our everyday lives and this includes mobile

devices. Now, this Bill, I understand, seeks to eliminate some of the negative aspects of these mobile devices. However, I want us to note that developed countries such as the United States of America and Europe have found ways to integrate these devices in their classrooms despite the negative aspects.

Firstly, I want to start off by a quote from the CEO of Interpublic's Advanced Marketing Services, Larry Weber, who has said:

Today's youth market is focused mainly on their mobile devices. Therefore, getting to them on the way they like to view information is the right way to do it.

A clear example is that the Caribbean Examinations Council has now made available electronic copies of CAPE and CXC past papers and other resource materials. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, regarding clause 3, I am going to assume the Government believes that IT labs provide enough interaction with technology the students need. However, my question is this: why must we restrict the learning to a subject called IT? Why is it that teachers cannot call on students to use their mobile devices to make any subject for that matter more intriguing?

A study done by Grunwald Associates found that students in schools where mobile or portable devices are required as part of the curriculum are even more positive about the learning and educational potential than children whose schools banned such devices. A study done by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in California showed that students using iPads so their math scores increased by 20 per cent in one year than students who use traditional textbooks. All I am asking is that we harness the power of these devices for our every aspect of our nation's school curriculum. [*Desk thumping*]

Secondly, I want you to ask yourself: who are we really blaming for the poor usage of these devices? Are we blaming the inanimate objects themselves? Are we blaming the children? Or are we blaming the adults who have not taught the children how to use these devices in a productive manner? [*Desk thumping*] Rather than try to control them, why not try to teach them the productive and positive aspects of these devices. We are all aware that there have been an increasing number of inappropriate videos coming from secondary schools in our nation. Now, clause 4, if I think about it abstractly, tries to address the situation. However, I am not sure the Government is aware that when classes are not in session and students can use their phone, inappropriate video-taking can still occur. Mr. Speaker, we can just tackle the problem head-on by teaching students to address the source of the inappropriate behaviour and to view the mobile devices as an educational, productive tool rather than a recreational item.

Now, I want everyone to finally take a step back with me from just the educational aspect of these devices. Integrating ICTs and mobile devices in schools can be one step toward further development of Trinidad and Tobago information technology sector. As of today, ICT companies only contribute to an estimated 3.5 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago's economy, in the areas of telecommunication and professional and technical services. Mr. Speaker, I want to see this number grow. Mrs. Vashti Maharaj, Head, Legal Services at the Ministry of Science and Technology said if properly harnessed, ICT has the potential to develop sustainable growth and development. Mr. Speaker, if the schools can properly

harness the power of mobile devices, we can see a significant growth in the education and productive levels of, not only our classrooms but of our nation as a whole.

In closing, I want to make sure the Government does not misunderstand us by thinking we want free use of these devices because that is not the case. We agree that there should be certain consequences when these devices are used in a negative manner, which is what I can see the Government tried to do. However, rather than labelling these devices in a negative manner as a hamper and a distraction, let us, both the Opposition and the Government, work together to see how we can use these devices positively for the betterment of our nation to our nation's advantage. I do believe that the Bill should be reshaped with a clear vision in mind; a vision that will take our country further. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Health (Hon. Justin Paul): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We agree that mobile devices are beneficial but regulation is needed in schools. The health of our students is just as important as the need to educate our students. This Bill seeks to protect the youth and as the Minister of Health, I fully support this Bill.

It is common knowledge that mobile devices emit radiation. However, what is not common knowledge is this radiation has been—there is a proven link between the radiation and male infertility according to mayoclinic.org. The radiation affects sperm count, sperm mortality and sperm function, which after it takes several years to correct itself. High doses of this radiation can severely affect production permanently. In Trinidad and Tobago, we are currently dealing with an ageing population. Do we want to aggravate the problem we are already dealing with?

Children are more vulnerable to the effects of this radiation as they are mentally and physically still developing. If we allow these mobile devices into the schools, the results would be different, as they would have longer exposure to the radiation their whole lives. Do you want us to be one of the last generations to pass through this Parliament? Be mindful that there is no evidence of what will occur if a human being is exposed to this radiation from a tender age to death. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe we should make our students guinea pigs; we should not experiment with our future. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Joan Portello for *Time* magazine speaks about how the distance of these devices are held to the face and how it results in short-sightedness. The mobile devices are held about no more than nine inches from the face so it is evident that short-sightedness will occur. This would mean higher budget allocations to health in order to provide glasses for these students.

Mr. Speaker, we know the position one adopts when on these mobile devices. The head is tilted and pressure is increased on the spine. It has become so popular that scientists have coined a term for this “text neck”. Every inch the head is carried forward, the pressure on the neck doubles. If we allow these mobile devices in schools, the children will need spinal care earlier in life which, again, spells higher budget allocations to health. [*Desk thumping*]

The text neck effect is comparable to bending a finger all the way back and holding it there for an hour, according to the American Physical Therapy Association, Private Practice Section, Ex-President Tom DiAngelis. The high frequency of this mobile device use has negative effects on the stress levels. The constant ringing, vibrating alert and reminders can

put the users of the mobile devices on edge.

Research at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, found overuse of mobile devices are associated with stress, sleep disturbances and depression in both men and women. Overall, excessive cell phone use can be a risk factor for mental health issues of our students. Because of this, researchers suggest that we should limit the interaction with these mobile devices. Who are we to disregard the advice of qualified professionals? [*Desk thumping*] Education is important but in the process, we must ensure that health is not neglected or compromised. Precautions must be taken to ensure both educational and health needs are met. This is what this Bill seeks to do.

If that means not allowing mobile devices in primary schools and only allowing secondary school students to use these mobile devices outside of school, that is what this Government is willing to do to protect our most cherished resource, the youth. The onus is upon us to keep the youth healthy as they are the ones who will be keeping this nation moving in an upward trajectory towards development. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Alishia-Kae Rougier (Fyzabad): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, I would just like to address some of the things that the Ministers have said. So for the Member for Chaguanas East, laptops were provided by the Government. Now, if we want the implementation of these laptops and we want them to be used in the curriculum—not so?—would you not have to still implement all these regulations and Wi-Fi and would it not come to the same cost? [*Desk thumping*] Just because mobile devices will be an addition does not mean that Wi-Fi should not be provided to students. And also, you asked the question: are we getting the value for our money in the education system? And I believe we are not, without the implementation of these mobile devices. Also, to the Member for St. Augustine, can they not get these neck issues from their own laptops as well? They cannot? Are you sure? [*Desk thumping*]

Now, I would just like to add to what my fellow colleagues have said. A lot of studies have been done to prove that mobile devices are an addition to the educational system and can improve academic performance of students. Now, I am wondering if it can be done over there, why can it not be done over here. Because students may take the initiative for themselves to find ways to use these mobile devices to their advantage and come back to school and teach their fellow students. And with the guidance of their teachers, I believe that they should have the ability and opportunity to share this benefit that they have found and discovered with their fellow classmates. And also, mobile devices can cause the classroom to have a more intimate feel and increase the level of interaction among student to student and student to teacher. And also, it can develop their minds as they begin to develop skills such as multitasking and in the fields of technology, as well as multiple intelligences.

Now, I am representing, Fyzabad, that is my constituency. And in Fyzabad Secondary School, there is an IT lab. However, this IT lab cannot be accessed during class time. It can be accessed during lunch, however, only for a maximum of 15 minutes per student. And they have a library that has computers. However, there are only six computers and each of these computers work very slowly and are very inefficient. So, for the students that do not have the benefit of these laptops—either they do not work, they are inefficient or they are the current Form 1s and the current Upper 6s—should we just disregard them from this entire thing

because if this Bill is passed, it will affect them as well.

So, I believe that I am speaking on behalf of each Opposition Member when I say that we should find a way to regulate these mobile devices and use them to the advantage and the benefit of our students and the teachers as well. [*Desk thumping*] Because regardless of what you think, believe, say or do, the advancement of technology is inevitable. So why should we not use these devices to our advantage and why should we not let the teachers have the responsibility, as well as the students helping them, to find ways for these mobile devices to benefit them in that specific subject area and not just IT?

Now, I would just like to give this analogy. Mobile devices are like the seasoning to food. Hear me out. They add to the flavour of the dish and in this case, mobile devices would add, alongside textbooks and notebooks, to the curriculum and the students will be able to learn how to balance the two and find the benefits of each to them. And I would like to just close with this: remember, the education is the food; the salt, I believe, would be the teachers, the textbooks and notebooks that they have received, but the seasoning is the addition and the thing that gives it that little extra oomph that makes the meal worthwhile and enjoyable. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Saliyah Ali): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let it be known that this Government is indeed aware of the beneficial factors that mobile devices have. But we believe the full-time usage of these mobile devices in the classrooms is non-essential. The other side makes it seem as if mobile devices are the silver bullet to education. However, I would like to believe that they are the contributors to the problems that are happening in schools today. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, these problems are starting from as early as in primary schools where we placed devices into the hands of underdeveloped minds, so that we can facilitate multiple intelligences? As that may seem as a good thing, too much of a good thing can amount to a bad thing. [*Desk thumping*] I will elaborate on this by quoting a study that was done in the *Huffington Post* by Dr. Cris Rowan, a paediatric occupational therapist. Her work expounded on the effects of hand-held devices on children under the age of 12 and I quote:

“Stimulation to a developing brain caused by overexposure to technologies...has been shown to be associated with executive functioning...attention deficit, cognitive delays, impaired learning, increase impulsivity and decreased ability to self-regulate...”

Mr. Speaker, is this what we want to lead to? I agree development is a key and we want to move from a developing to a developed nation. However, are we willing to put our future generation at the risk of these mobile devices in the classroom [*Desk thumping*] and in turn, hamper our development level? As the saying goes, what we plant now, we will harvest in the future.

In my last point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add that students are not the only ones affected by these mobile devices. What about the teachers? How can they compete with such advanced technology in the classroom? Mr. Speaker, we are in an era where there is a one-way lecture, from a teacher who is considered sage of the stage is now fading. Are we now letting these mobile devices takeover our teacher’s jobs? What will happen to our teachers? As Steve Jobs famously said and I quote:

“...the problems facing education need more than technology to be fixed. Competent, engaged teachers are more necessary than ever in the Information Age...”

In conclusion, it appears to me that we need more stringent methods to be put in place in order to control these mobile devices in schools and in the classroom, as it can hamper the learning environment for the student, as well as the teacher, as it contributes to the misuse of the device and as it being a disruptive force to the classroom. Mr. Speaker, this Bill must be initiated because I believe if there were not any problems presented by this, this Bill would not have been brought forward today in this House. [*Desk thumping*] I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Katerina Hansraj (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I could not have said it more eloquently than my colleagues on this side who saw the value and the benefit of technology, and who saw that to withhold the use of mobile devices in schools would be to deny the child the opportunity to have immediate access, 24/7, to educational resources in a 21st Century learning environment.

As my colleague, the hon. Member for Joseph, said there is a time and place for everything. Why can that time and place not be in the classroom? Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to concur with the Government by saying that yes, we understand mobile devices can be a distraction in schools but distraction is not limited to mobile devices. Students can find distraction in textbooks, in doodling, in daydreaming. You do not need a mobile device to play tic-tac-toe. [*Desk thumping*] So why have we not yet banned pen and paper? We have not yet banned pen and paper, so why restrict the use of mobile devices to a certain time and a certain place?

Moreover, if we only focus on the negative aspects of these mobile devices, we will never be able to overcome the obstacles and the challenges that it proposes, and we will leave the students of this nation unequipped with the knowledge on how to properly manage and balance the use of these mobile devices, in conjunction with the learning avenues that the Government has provided, being the textbooks and the laptops. And if the school is supposed to be a microcosm of society, why are we not integrating the use of mobile devices which the students will then need to use in society, in the wider society when they grow up?

This is why, we, as the Opposition, intend to propose amendments to clauses 3 and 4 in order to regulate, not prohibit—but regulate the use of these mobile devices by referring to the National School Code of Conduct as a guide to show how students should use these mobile devices positively. And if we remove the negative stigma attached to these mobile devices, students will not use them as an active rebellion or as an active negative recreation, but they will use them in a positive manner to foster education and innovation.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to point out that mobile devices are a great avenue for personalized learning. It has been proven that students learn differently. Students can learn visually, orally, through reading and writing, body kinaesthetically and mobile devices facilitate these different learning styles. The traditional way of education whereby teachers spoon-feed students, notes, and expect them to regurgitate them verbatim, in order to pass an exam, has not worked for every student and will not work for every student. Therefore, mobile devices can facilitate these different learning styles where the traditional form of

education may lack to do so.

Also, assistive devices can help those who have a hearing or a speech or a voice or a language disorder or different ability. I do not believe that Trinidad and Tobago has reached the stage where every school, both primary and secondary, has the capability to facilitate students who may be differently abled or who may be incapable of certain senses such as hearing or sight. I do not believe that there are textbooks in braille available in every primary or secondary school [*Desk thumping*] and mobile devices can make up for these where the traditional forms of education lack.

In terms of health, cell phones emit radio frequency energy and radio waves, yes, but it is a non-ionizing form of radiation which does not have a detrimental impact to a person's health. Ionizing radiation, yes, has a detrimental impact, but, non-ionizing radiation, the only biological effect of non-ionizing radiation is heating. However, not so significant that it raises the temperature of the human body. Therefore, mobile devices have virtually no impact on a person's health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Sabrina Outar): I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to be in this House today called upon to contribute to this Bill. First, let me start by saying that there is now a huge pressure to have the latest mobile device with the latest technology and design in this 21st Century with young people getting hung up on the extremes of continuous contact. Social development is then affected as persons tend to ignore those around them once a mobile device is placed in their hands. They become emotionally attached to these phones to the point that if they were to be allowed to have them in classes, they would always want their device to be within hearing range should they receive an alert and constantly using it to just say, as an excuse, to check the time even though there may be watches or clocks available.

Mr. Speaker, when a person who owns a phone or a mobile device—as we are calling it in this Bill—loses it, it is as if a baby has been lost. For a lack of a better word, they panic, they are frightened at the fact that they have lost it, that they are not seeing it within their eyesight. Cell style is our life and for some, it would be imbedded bionically if it were safe. Young adults need to find their way through these feelings because of who they are and not what they have. Remember, as a student, a mobile device is necessary only outside the classroom. It will be disgraceful if your teacher caught you fidgeting with your phone in class since it is not accepted, as we have it in this Bill here, to be inside the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I present an argument that there should be a good balance between regular life and the digital world. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Abayomi Munro (Arima): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, before I start my contribution, I would simply like to state that though I may be a Member of the Opposition, it is not my goal today to attack or be against the Government. I am simply hoping that by giving my contribution, I may be able to assist the Government in moulding this Bill to perfection so that it can fully benefit our nation's youth. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to start with a quote by Bill Gates and I quote:

“Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is...most important.”

My first point. Allowing students to use mobile devices in specific classes while being supervised can help them to develop a sense of responsibility and by being slowly weaned to use mobile devices in a positive way, not only will they benefit positively, but their digital literacy will also be increased.

Now, this term “digital literacy”, according to the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Research Library, is the ability to use digital technology, communication tools or networks to locate, evaluate, use and create information. Now, as I go to my first source, I would like to state that I am not, by any means, comparing our beloved twin-island State to any country or other nation. I am simply looking at what has worked and what is working for countries who have gone before us in development as we are a developing country, and extracting from this certain aspects that can be used to gauge the best part to carry our nation forward.

I go to my source. A Futurelab Handbook published by the National Foundation for Educational Research in the United Kingdom entitled “*Digital literacy across the curriculum*”.

“This handbook is aimed at educational practitioners and school leaders in both primary and secondary schools who are interested in creative and critical uses of technology in the classroom.”

11.15 a.m.

According to this Handbook, Mr. Speaker, the skills, knowledge and understanding of digital literacy are becoming indispensable as young people grow up in a society in which digital technology and media play an ever more important role. Rather than preventing our young people from engaging creatively with technology, a focus on digital literacy in the classroom can help them to expand and extend their use of technology for creativity and self-expression and to develop a greater understanding of the complexities of what they are doing.

Now, self-expression, Mr. Speaker. Self-expression has a good side and a bad side. The good side would be poetry, drama, literature, debate. The bad side would be, especially with technology, cyberbullying. However, it is my belief that in an environment as controlled as the classroom, with someone like a teacher there who is trained by the Ministry, the teacher should be able to guide the student away from cyberbullying and teach them how to deal with a cyberbully if they ever encounter one. Mr. Speaker, this would be an example of the teacher working to assist the students to use mobile devices which will in turn assist the teacher in teaching these very students. Also, Mr. Speaker, education systems need to help young people to understand and benefit from their engagement with digital technology and digital cultures.

Fostering digital literacy in the classroom provides one way in which to make many subjects learning relevant to a society in which growing technology use is changing the way that both adult and children represent and communicate information and meaning and participate in cultural life. This basically says, Mr. Speaker, that it is our duty as the leaders of our country to ensure that our children are allowed to benefit positively from these mobile devices, from technology, as the culture of the world is becoming technological [*Desk thumping*] and as the country attempting to develop in this world, we have to adjust and adapt.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to end with one point. As much as we may not want to allow our children to use these mobile devices because of risk, we must continue to look at the positives whilst we keep our eyes on the negative. Mr. Speaker, do we advise a person against taking life-saving radiation therapy because there is a chance of side effects? So, Mr. Speaker, do we prevent our children from positively benefiting from advancements in technology because there are some negative side effects? Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Jeanille Nanton): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, I saw it incumbent to really look at how effective the regulation of mobile devices in schools would be for our future leaders.

With major technological advancements and the world becoming a global village, things that were not as easily and quickly accessible are so now. This is the age of technology and it would be hypocritical, if you will, of us to deprive our youngsters of being a part of this advancement. However, this Bill makes provisions for these advancements whilst accommodating it under certain regulations, which I believe is a fair give and take. [*Desk thumping*] The hon. Member for Diego Martin West mentioned balance. This is balance.

The use of mobile devices is common in all institutions and I think it is safe to say that it sort of snuck up on us, in terms of time not permitting the pleasure of being proactive, in terms of educating persons on how to really handle these devices, and prior instances and even presently, show how persons misuse these devices, how they manage their time on it, how they use it for all forms of individualistic satisfaction all because there is not an appreciation for its primary purpose. Yet, we as a society are embracing technology without understanding or considering the long-term ramifications of this decision. [*Desk thumping*] We are constantly seeking out short-term gains and improvements without having critical thought on how this would affect our future generation.

Now, on the matter of youth development, I would like to articulate that technology does not allow a person to learn faster, it just provides different methods of teaching and it allows convenience and comfort in the classroom and students' learning process. Technology is more convenient in the classroom than it is required. So, are we then creating a young population that wants everything easy and at their fingertips? [*Desk thumping*]

There is a widespread belief among teachers that students' constant use of technology is hampering their attention spans and ability to persevere in the face of challenging tasks. According to a survey that was done among teachers in the USA, Hope Melinda Porter, an English teacher at Troy High School in Fullerton, California noted a marked decline in the depth and analysis of students' written work. She also wondered if teachers were adding to the problem by adjusting their lessons to accommodate shorter attention spans. From this school of thought one can deduce that this is in no way helping out our future leaders. If teachers have to move from what is applicable to the constant use of technology, just to accommodate students, then we are developing a generation that only acts upon convenience.

With the high dependence on technology, we as a society are putting all of our eggs into one basket and we are not considering what will happen 10 to 20 years from now.

And, finally, it should be any nation's priority to develop a reliable, productive and

well-developed workforce that will make a sustainable contribution to a country's economy. With constant engagement in technology, it is possible that one's individual growth and creativity can be hampered. We are looking at utilizing a tool that was created by an innovative person and at the same time hampers innovation amongst our youths. Countless hours being spent on these devices can take away from productivity, creativity and innovation. And I am of the firm view, Mr. Speaker, that innovation is key for sustainable development. Therefore, it is our duty as a society to encourage innovation amongst our youths, for them to keep coming up with new implementations and thinking of how to improve systems. If we do not do this Mr. Speaker, our future would be in jeopardy. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Varun Ramadhar (*San Fernando West*): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I begin, Mr. Speaker, I wish to join with my colleagues in dispelling the perception that the main objective of the Opposition is simply to oppose the ideas put forward by the Government. [*Desk thumping*] We instead aim to identify and rectify the shortcomings of the Government and work together with them to make this beloved country of Trinidad and Tobago the kind of place we want it to be.

In Trinidad and Tobago, I understand the need for legislation to be put in place to regulate—regulate—the use of mobile devices in schools. But, Mr. Speaker, I must admit that the Bill put forward by the Government is fundamentally flawed. [*Desk thumping*] Is this the framework that will take us into the future? Is this the framework that will take the children of today and mould them into the leaders of tomorrow in such a technological era? [*Desk thumping*]

As of late, it is no secret, and the Opposition does not deny the fact, that mobile devices, coupled with the improper use of social media, poses a threat and is making headlines for all the wrong reasons. But Mr. Speaker, is this Bill not a temporary solution for a permanent problem? Is it not our duty to teach our kids the responsible ways to use their technology? Keeping them safe by refusing to expose them to the technology that is available is very irresponsible of us. And when I say expose them, I mean expose them in the setting of the classroom, not to be confused.

I now draw your attention, or take you back to the contribution made by the hon. MP for Chaguanas East, where he baffled us with some huge numbers. He said, and I quote, correct me if I am wrong: “the cost to put infrastructure in place would be \$55 million”. Is that not right? But when infrastructure is put in place this is not an annual fee. When you build a building you do not need to build the building every year. The building is already there. [*Desk thumping*] Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the cost per annum would amount to less than \$20 million, according to his statistics. Do you have any idea how much money we spent on textbooks over the last four years?—\$249 million, Mr. Speaker! When we compare this to less than \$150 million, if we go according to the statistics provided by our Minister of Finance, we see such a huge difference and then they say textbooks are financially sustainable, or will sustain our economy. Would it really?

My second point, well I would also like to draw reference to some points made by the Minister of Health, the MP for St. Augustine, and I could not agree more, these devices, and you list several illnesses, short-sightedness, text neck, mental health. But, Mr. Speaker, are

we solving this problem? Are we stopping these health problems by saying we are banning or we are prohibiting the use in our schools? Are we? So when the student goes home from, let us say around four till whatever time they go to sleep, they use their phone, would they not suffer the same consequences? [*Desk thumping*] I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is our responsibility to teach them. The Minister of Health knows all these illnesses but these children, they do not know and as such it is our responsibility to teach them, to show them how to properly use this device to take care of their health. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, I would like to reiterate that we are in a technological era and as such we need to implement 21st Century thinking as we construct our legislation. That will govern our country properly.

The dangers and pitfalls of mobile devices and this technology; they are not ever going to go away but it is our responsibility, as the leaders of our country, as the people our youth look up to, it is our responsibility, to guide the leaders of tomorrow along the path which will not only benefit them but again make our beloved country of Trinidad and Tobago the kind of place we want it to be. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Chad Salandy): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sensing a lot of apparent tension. I must say that everybody looks very dashing in their suits.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that the Opposition, while they are making very important contributions, they are not actually looking at what the clauses list out. I would like to refer us to both clause 3 and clause 4. Clause 3 prohibits the use of mobile devices by students attending primary schools while at school.

Now, you all must understand that we are not endorsing the concept that mobile devices should be fully prohibited nationwide. In primary schools, for example, at the tender age of let us say seven or six, we must ask ourselves: Do we really think that these primary schools students are going to take the initiative and decide to further their educational purposes or instead opt to play games, you know, socialize with their friends, entertain themselves? That is the question we must ask ourselves and that is why we have the stance—

[*Interruption*]

Miss Beharry: Would the hon. Minister give way?

Hon. C. Salandy: Sure.

Miss Beharry: Are there not games that they can play that would help them education-wise?

Hon. C. Salandy: That is a very good question, and yes there are games, but I would presume that they should utilize these games when they are home, instead of at school because, they have not come to school to play games. They came to school to learn. [*Desk thumping*] And that is why we have the stance that they should prohibit the use while at school.

Clause 4 states it would prohibit the use of mobile devices by students attending secondary schools during class time. Now, we are all privy to the explicit content, inappropriate videos and such, that make the headlines, as suggested by the Member for—he is acting—San Fernando West.

Now, we are not saying that they cannot use their mobile devices when they are at

school. Surely they can use it. I myself use my mobile device when I am in the library, when I have free periods. I use it for information to work on my assignments. But during class time, the interpersonal relations between teacher and student must be had [*Desk thumping*] and this is only possible through the face-to-face communication of teacher and student.

Now, my final point would take more of a holistic and, I must say, or philosophical approach. Albert Einstein once said:

“I fear the day that technology would surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots.”

Now, this is a very controversial statement. It has a very negative connotation. But we must ask ourselves: Have we reached this state? Have we truly reached this state where teenagers and kids alike come together to hang out but are fully engulfed in their mobile devices such as their phones? Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, and with grave despair, I think we have.

This poses one serious question to myself: Would we want to implement this technology in our classrooms, the one place where human interaction must flourish? [*Desk thumping*] Would we let it stagnate our own nation’s human interaction in the classroom? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Priscilla Leslie (*La Horquetta/Talparo*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, although I agree that there has been an increase in the negative use of mobile devices, my question to you is: Where in this world, or what country do you know of that this problem does not exist? And, for you just forbidding it and sweeping it under the rug, will this problem be solved? No, I do not think this problem will be solved. I think forbidding the students from using these mobile devices will in fact increase their curiosity.

Now, before there was a *Student’s Companion*. Now, I think we need a student companion of a 2.0. [*Desk thumping*] Now, I would like to appeal to the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister from La Brea. Nowadays adults, as well as Government see that students are not interested in agriculture. I wondered why that is. They limit the students to books and pencils and pen and if you do not, well, do well in this, what else is there? I think that instead of just giving them the mobile devices that you give them, the laptops, and you still limit their use to that laptop, you should give devices like telematics. This is a map which you can pull up on you mobile device or phone, which shows where all your vehicles are operating and their fuel levels, as well as how much product has been applied or how much crops have been harvested and even if a piece of equipment would be broken down at any minute. I think that if you introduce this type of technology to the students in a classroom, they will be more interested and they will not be bored in a classroom as many of you may say.

Now, I would like to address some of the responses made by some of the hon. Ministers. The Minister from Chaguanas East mentioned that there are IT labs in the schools. Now it breaks my heart to see that the Ministers do not know what the programmes they are putting in school are for. But that is why we are the Opposition. We are here to enlighten and assist where you lack knowledge. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, an IT class, before the laptops were introduced five years ago, an IT class existed where they teach you: what is an output device? What is an input device? What is a

hardware? What is a software? It does not necessarily teaches you the responsibility, the correct responsibility, of a mobile device. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, the Member for Chaguanas West also mentioned that the students may easily be distracted by a mobile device in a classroom. Now, where some students may be able to function better in a quiet environment, not every student learns the same way. Some students could listen to music “hard, hard, hard” and they can study. So I think that that point that you “bring” forth is invalid and should be removed.

Now, the point made by the hon. Member for St. Joseph, where he said the students use their mobile devices to take selfies. I would like to say that the teachers do the same. I have experienced where I am in a class and the teacher pulled out her phone while teaching to say “yeah gyal ah in ah class now.” Is that the example that you are setting for a student in a class? And you the teacher is supposed to tell the student that they cannot use their mobile devices? I think not.

Now, I know some from the Government may have some worries like the devices being stolen. So a teacher’s device cannot be stolen? The laptops that you provide for the students cannot be stolen? Well I have to tell you that in 2003, around July there, in Sangre Grande Secondary School all the computers that were recently given to the school by the Government were stolen at night, all of them. So why this cannot be done to a teacher’s phone? You are trying to prohibit the students from bringing their mobile devices to school when the teachers’ devices can be stolen as well.

The Government may be worried that, to make these mobile devices may be harmful to the environment. Hmm, that is funny. Because, even if the Government bans the use of mobile devices in school, how is this stopping the production of the companies that created these mobile devices in the first place? “How that stopping it?” No, no, no, I do not think that would stop it. So, to me, you should be able to compromise and not be pig-headed. Compromise, educate the students. Give them technologies that could help them, that could inspire them, that could give them a taste of what they could be, Minister from La Brea, what they could be. Give them these technologies, as I mentioned. People may say that there is no money in agriculture. There is nothing they can learn in agriculture. I think that this technology that I mentioned is very important and they could learn.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time limit has now expired. Would you like 10 seconds to wrap up?

Miss P. Leslie: Thank you. I am very honoured to have shared this information with you today. Nothing further. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Hon. Kristal Jackson): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, may I take this opportunity to thank all the Members of this honourable House for permitting me to speak on behalf of this Bill and by extension, on behalf of our blessed Government.

Now, down to the meat of the matter. The Member, the MP for La Horquetta spoke at length about how mobile devices can be used to track trucks for harvesting on the fields. But if I am not mistaken, this Bill speaks about how mobile devices can be used within a classroom setting [*Desk thumping*] for students.

The MP then goes on to speak at length about how teachers misuse their mobile devices in the classroom and how they can be lost. Is the Member asking for us to regulate teachers' use of mobile devices as well? Because we can do that. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would like to do is to thank the hon. Minister of Finance for his really, really quite eloquent contribution on the cost-effectiveness and the cost that will be attributed to facilitating the implementation of these devices in the classrooms. Why? Because if we were to move along with what the Opposition is saying and to provide these mobile devices in the classrooms, and the Finance Minister has quite plainly said that the Government cannot facilitate these devices in the classrooms is because we cannot afford it, then who is going to pay these costs, Mr. Speaker? [*Desk thumping*] I will tell you who is going to pay these costs; the public. And this is not a cost that every person in our country can face.

Mr. Speaker, this is an option that I am strongly against because not only is it not cost-effective but it also contradicts the rights of a child to an equal access to education. [*Desk thumping*] This is because, Mr. Speaker, not every student will have the financial stability to be able to not only afford these devices but to maintain and repair these devices as the years go by.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just make reference to the laptop programme, which the Government had implemented in our country in 2010. On May 24, 2011, the past Minister of Education, Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, has been quoted in the *Guardian* saying that that year \$10 million was allocated for repair and the maintenance of these laptops, Mr. Speaker, and if the Government is saying that we are taking these costs from the public, we would provide these laptops, I do not understand why the Opposition is saying that we should force this cost on the public. Really and truly, if we are giving it to you, why take it away from them? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I stand here as not only the Member of Parliament for Laventille East, but also as the Member and the representative for all rural communities, for every single undeveloped town or village and every family whose income level makes it so that they cannot afford the actual school necessities at this moment.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say in constituencies such as Laventille East, where the family-type is mostly single-parent, where the mother is the head and the sole income earner of the family and where the family consist of, at times on average, three to four children, in such a case a mother cannot be able to afford such devices for each of her children and she will have to, if we implement what the Opposition is saying. [*Desk thumping*] She would have to implement what the Opposition is saying because whereas with the purchasing of textbooks, a mother would have the option to either photocopy other textbooks or to, as we all know the hand-me-down system where you have an older sibling and the book “tear up, it rip up” but you still have to use that book “and it working, it working well”. [*Desk thumping*]

However, if we were to make it so that these mobile devices are mandated in the schools, these students will no longer have that option because if it is I have an older sibling in Form 4 and I am in Form 3, I cannot now take/reuse their laptop because if it is we are confining the education system to these laptops, the Form 4 student needs to use this laptop as

well, and therefore the mother has to provide for the Form 3 as well as and would have to provide for every other child that she has. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we stand here as not only representatives of the Government or of the Opposition, but we represent our constituencies. We represent the people of our constituencies, and as such we are supposed to be representing the concerns and the issues and we are supposed to be passing legislation which match these concerns and issues of our constituencies and I—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Would the hon. Member give way?

Hon. K. Jackson: No, I am quite sorry.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has now expired.

Hon. K. Jackson: As you can see, my time has expired, so I cannot take your question right now.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that, yes, as the Government we can understand the Opposition's attempts at improving our education because we are doing that as well.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has expired.

Hon. K. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

11.45 a.m.

Mr. Malik Lewis (*Oropouche West*): [*Desk thumping*] Today, Mr Speaker, it is not my intention to create any inherent antagonisms or divisiveness, but merely to expound on the fact that the usage of mobile devices in schools should not be prohibited, but regulated and just to reiterate “reg-u-lated”. Mr. Speaker, mobile devices are playing an increasingly important role in student's academic lives. Devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, connect users to the world instantly, heightening access to information and enabling interactivity with others.

So what makes mobile devices so appealing in a classroom setting? First, the mobile approach can encourage student engagement with the content. For example, students can answer polls, tweet questions, and look upon information during classes, [*Desk thumping*] in addition to finding real-time information. An App can also provide the student with a convenient study tool considering the fact, that there are a number of publishers now putting their content online, meaning the student can leverage course content on the go.

My brothers and sisters, mobile devices today are introducing exciting possibilities when it comes to digital learning. When I mention mobile devices, I am largely referring to smartphones, tablets and laptops. In an April 2010 study by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project and the University of Michigan found 60 per cent—and I repeat, 60 per cent—of faculty thought that students were motivated by classes that incorporated mobile devices. I implore you not to be misled by any propaganda and machinery [*Desk thumping*] set forth by my Government counterparts.

Mr. Speaker, they went about within their contributions stating stuff like—as I quote the Minister of Education, the Member for Diego Martin Central, she said: “We should embrace the technology”. If we should embrace the technology why does clause 3 state:

“...would prohibit the use of mobile devices...”

Is that your insight of embracing the technology, prohibiting it? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, she also stated that software is installed to monitor the use of these laptops provided for the students. But are not these laptops or the students finding some way or the other to hack and breach these codes whereby they cannot monitor them anymore? This point put forward is invalid. Just to continue, the Member for St. Joseph, he said: “Taking selfie in class”—me—“in class right through dey texting”. But because one or two individuals misuse the technology that means that a macrocosm should pay for it? [*Desk thumping*] It is evident—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Inniss: Would the speaker give way?

Mr. M. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, it is evident [*Laughter*] that my colleague apparently he does not understand what is going on.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has now expired, but you have an extension of two minutes.

Mr. M. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, in my closing, I will just like to reiterate what my colleague from Pointe-a-Pierre said, we on the Opposition are not here to bash the Government, but to work hand in hand with them. And as the old adage once said: “What binds us together is greater than what drives us apart”. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Rohan Ragbir (The Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, thank you. So while cell phones are good, we do not deny that. We are not trying to prohibit it. We are trying to regulate it. “Read de Bill nah, “...regulation of mobile devices...” [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Would the hon. Member give way?

Hon. R. Ragbir: You say that you are not coming here to bash us, but that is exactly what—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Would the hon. Member give way?

Hon. R. Ragbir: No thank you. I just started. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] There is a lot more to come so—the mere fact that we are debating this Bill in Parliament right now, means that there an issue to be resolved. This issue of mobile device usage in schools by students needs to be addressed, which is why this Bill seeks to address the usage or to regulate the usage of mobile devices in schools.

So, as Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, today I am coming with regional, local and international examples on while phone usages are good, it needs to be regulated in schools today, so as to facilitate learning without distractions and increase academic performance, while giving a holistic development of students.

So to quote laws in the Montgomery County of Maryland State in the USA, it states that:

Students that possess these devices in schools during the day must take them off and must not use them during class time.

So is that not exactly what we are trying to say in this Bill today? The similarities of laws in the US and the similarities of the clauses in this Bill show that while we are not a developed nation as yet, we try to mirror those and to become like one of them.

So according to the guardian.com statistic now, schools that ban phone usage during

class time—which is what the Bill is stating, “regulation”, sees an improvement to academic performance up to 15 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] Yes, according to the MP for Oropouche West, these students are more intrigued by these mobile devices, but clearly they do not work, because if you take them away and regulate them, they improve. Research done in Birmingham, London, Manchester, all pointed to the fact that the regulation of these devices is a good thing, and while persons may argue that phone usage would reduce inequality through the use of technology, it was in fact the direct opposite.

So following from what the Member for Laventille East/Morvant stated: To allow the phone usage or allowing the phone usage calmed the lowest achieving students and the lowest income students, which is fostering inequality. This is giving to the haves and taking away from the have-nots, which is what we are trying to mitigate, through this legislation [*Desk thumping*]

Yeah, there are benefits, Mr. Speaker, but these mobile devices and technology must be introduced through correct measures not just any student bring any old device to class. It must be introduced through the Ministry of Education by the Minister herself, and not through any old thing, for equality and good academic performance to be achieved.

So while the Government is not advocating for a reversion or backward progression to the Stone Age, a return to the Stone Age, no we do not want that, which is why we are using this legislation to go forward, to become a developed nation through facilitating proper usage, so that these mobile devices could only be used when the teacher says so. So there will be no distractions, no inequality, and better results. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Joshua Ottley (Mayaro): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to open by stating an old proverb: “You give ah man ah fish and he will eat for a day; you teach him how to fish and he will be set for life.” This is what I have seen the Government done, but unfortunately it has been done in a halfway method. They have been giving the technology to the students, but unfortunately they have not taught the students how they should implement the use of this technology, these mobile devices within the schools.

They always say do not blame the device for what is going on in the schools, but to blame the students. My question is, what are the teachers doing? What is the purpose of the teachers then? Is it that the teachers are simply to implement information, to distribute the information? Or are they also supposed to stand to be a symbol of order within the classroom? I say if this is the case that they are simply to implement information, then you can remove the teachers from the classroom, place a recording device and the lesson will still be implemented. However, I see this as being very detrimental to its use within the classroom.

We are now in an era of student-centred pedagogy. We are in a student-centred pedagogical environment. I want to quote a famous philosopher Dr. Paulo Freire and he believes in going against the banking system of education, where, and I quote, the student is not a spectator, but a participant. We want these students to be participants within the classroom. We want these students to be able to build themselves properly. How can we do that if we are restricting their use of the mobile devices?

I want to also point out to our watchwords: Discipline, Tolerance and Production.

Nowhere within this do we see punishment as a part of our watchwords. So why is it that in clause 5 we are speaking about punishing the student? Should we not be implementing methods to discipline the student and be giving methods, Mr. Speaker, that we can help the child learn how to use these devices? They can develop their own sense of discipline.

I want to close by saying this: our environment is continuously advancing. We are advancing more technologically, that is the inevitable. We should now be implementing methods to control and not remove these methods. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Joshua Ramjohn): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I count it an esteemed privilege today to amply elucidate how the passing of this Bill will severely succour the security and safety services offered in our schools today, which will not only affect our students, but it also affects our wider community since their parents and teachers are involved.

The hon. Member for Siparia said: the Government is leaving no room for emergency or unforeseen circumstances. However, it has been proven that the use of mobile devices in schools does not ameliorate these emergency situations, but actually exacerbates these situations. [*Desk thumping*] The hon. Member also gave us an intriguing anecdote whereby he said: that he was left in school to a late time in the afternoon, and he was not able to contact his parents since the administrative office was closed. However, I can assure you, as the Minister of National Security, that each school has a 24-hour security guard in its presence at all times. [*Desk thumping*]

Then, Mr. Speaker, I wish to tell you that these ubiquitous devices cannot prove to be more helpful in these situations of crisis. For instance, if we have 900 students in a school, and if each of these students were to call their parents or any form of relevant authority in the time of emergency, then these cell phone signals would become jammed, thereby leading to a system overload, this thereby stymies the administration from contacting the relevant authorities.

Additionally, if these students were able to get through to their parents, a flock of parents would come to the emergency site thereby increasing traffic congestion around the scene, [*Desk thumping*] which would impede responder vehicles. This also stymies parent/teacher reunification processes and hinders the lockdown and evacuation processes, as well allows for a great amount of chaos to ensue around the site.

12.00 noon

Additionally, it can be seen, Mr. Speaker, that if these students are allowed these devices liberally that some students may be persuaded to “thief” these devices thereby leading to pilferage, and I ask the hon. Members of this House: if such pilferage begins at such a young age, does this not then paint a cataclysmic picture for the future of the society? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, it is also evident that these mobile devices can be used or misused rather during academic exams, which undermines the integrity of these academic institutions and the safety and security of our students.

Mr. Lynch: Will the Member give way?

Hon. J. Ramjohn: I am sorry, I would not be able to give way at this time. Thank you, though.

Mr. Speaker, I then come to a point of paramount importance which is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying has been defined as when the Internet cell phones or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. In an article published in the *Trinidad Guardian* on Monday, June, 27, 2011 and written by Geisha Kowlessar, the present president of the National Parent Teachers' Association, Mrs. Zena Ramatali, expressed her views on this polemical topic of cyber-bully. She said and I quote;

“Based on our reports, cyber bullying is on the increase because every other day you are seeing something on-line.”

She then added:

“...stemmed from primary school since pupils were allowed to carry cellphones to school. Upon leaving the primary schools and entering into the secondary school system, the problem spiralled...”

Therefore, hon. Members, I tell you that this Bill is the platform on which we can assist and mitigate this issue of cyberbullying. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members, I then come to a grave threat of our students which is allowed or facilitated by the use of these liberal use of these mobile devices in school. It can be seen that students can be invaded, and there may be offence of their personal privacy which undermines the security and safety of all of our students, and this term which was brought up by hon. Members of the Opposition termed “sexting”.

Sexting involves taking sexually explicit pictures of one selves or others and sending them to friends or, in this case, other students. There is the greater possibility of this happening if we allow our students to have liberal use of these cell phones, thereby if we cut down or we remove the medium effectively, we can then efficaciously remove this threat to our school students. [*Desk thumping*] Then, hon. Members, I leave you all with a quote from the National School Safety and Security Offices in the United States of America which can be easily apply to our situation in Trinidad whereby they say, and I quote:

“Changing policies under the guise of cell phones being a crisis tool for student safety is...a knee-jerk reaction and is not ‘the answer’ to school crisis preparedness that some may believe it to be.”

Therefore, I believe it is in this House's best interest to pass this Bill so that we can combat all of these issues listed above which are of concern to me as the National Security Minister and the Member for Caroni East.

I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for La Brea. [*Desk thumping*] Sorry, I made a mistake. We are actually going to suspend for lunch, and we will resume at 1.30 p.m.

12.04 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Kristian Taylor (*Laventille West*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to present my contribution. Before I begin, I would like to commend the hon.

Minister of Education, the MP for Diego Martin Central, for her sight, you know, on realizing that this country is faced with a terrible epidemic, and it surrounds, Madam Deputy Speaker, the improper usage of mobile devices in our schools. I would also like to further commend her for realizing that, as my colleague put it, realizing her shortcomings. I believe when he mentioned the word “shortcomings”, I believe he was referring to the fact that the Bill is fundamentally flawed, and which we are going to further address these flaws at a later time.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, what I am here to point out and what I would like to point out to the House, is that the both sides of this House are basically in coherence and basically in convergence with this Bill. We both have the same sight, we both want the same things to take place, the same changes to be made to the Bill. It was also brought to my attention that there is a bit of mix up, and I would like to apologize on the Opposition’s behalf for this, for I do not believe we clearly stated our stance on the Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we agree with the Minister wholeheartedly, yes, something needs to be done, but only to a point. As I mentioned before, the Bill is fundamentally flawed and because of that flaw, Madam Deputy Speaker, we were misguided as to her intents.

Now, it is evident that we need to take hold of the situation. As the Minister mentioned before, the punishment or the disciplinary action of suspending someone “off the bat” for merely pulling out their phone for a couple seconds to look at a time when a clock is unavailable, Madam Deputy Speaker, or to check a message that he or she received from his or her ailing grandmother in the hospital, the consequence of suspension because of that act is simply too harsh, and should not be implemented. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would now quote clause 5(2) which states:

“Where a Principal of a school is satisfied that a student has acted in breach of section (3) or (4), the Principal may suspend from attendance any student whose attendance at school is likely for any serious cause to have detrimental effect upon the other students...”

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would now like to propose a question to the other side and that question is: what would you say would be the detrimental effect of looking at the text from your grandmother? I would like to ask, Madam Deputy Speaker, what if I look at this text that I received from my grandmother and that caused another pupil, my colleague, to look at my phone for a minute, is it then that I would be suspended because I was concerned about my grandmother’s physical or mental well-being? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, going back to the point of being coherent with the Government, I would like to point out something that the MP for Point Fortin said, and I quote:

“Too much of a good thing amounts to a bad thing.”

Now, the House might ask: where did we agree with this? I must say something similar to it was quoted earlier when the Member for Fyzabad said, “We need to find the right balance of the seasoning.” [*Desk thumping*] Madam Deputy Speaker, forgive me if I am wrong, but it is my belief that these two things are basically intertwined.

I would also like to touch on a point that the Member for Tabaquite made where he proposed the question saying that are we to give the youths, even from preschool, at such a

tender age where their minds are developing, the mobile devices to use. I say, yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. Why? Because the intent of the Bill is not to prohibit them or deter them from using the mobile devices, but to teach them the correct way to use the mobile devices. I say to him, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to this House that at that tender age their minds are easier to mould, easier to take the things that we are giving them and use it throughout their lives. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to draw into reference to highlight my point— [*Interruption*].

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has expired, I would give you 10 seconds to wrap up your contribution.

Mr. K. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. My point is that there is a saying that goes, bend the tree while it is young. If you bend it while it is big, while it has grown, it will break, it will surely break, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I thank you for the time. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Hon. Kashief Campbell): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I sat in my chair for the hours that we have been in this honourable House, and I listened to the contributions made and I need to say reading and understanding is very important. [*Desk thumping*] Members of the Opposition repeating over and over that we want to ban technology, but if they read the Bill, because like some of them did not read past the title of it. [*Desk thumping*]

Approximately five weeks ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, the *Express* newspaper carried an editorial from the Barbados Nation entitled: “Remove cellphone mystique, promote education”. In the article, the author acknowledged the need for drafting a set of guidelines as a precursor to allowing the ever present devices on school campuses in the hands of pupils.

Madam Deputy Speaker, today we have a huge responsibility in debating this Bill in Parliament, because allowing students to carry their mobile devices brings with it a number of disciplinary and administrative challenges not properly addressed in the Education Act. Our job here today is crucial, and I would quote again from that same article, a local one I would like to reiterate and it states:

“It is therefore understandable why teachers and their unions would have concerns, and why some principals might be cringing at the thought of having to manage nearly 1,000 cellular phones in a confined space.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, this legislation remains crucial. Let us face the facts, whether we agree or not, the mobile devices like a smartphone is, and I would quote again:

“A critical communication device with multiple constructive functions and if properly managed”—and I want to stress on the words ‘properly managed’—“can be a most effective tool in the teacher-learning process.” [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, but we need to be realistic too. Anything used irresponsibly or recklessly without supervision will be to the detriment of an individual. This same concept can be applied to the mobile device.

1.40 p.m.

Our society has witnessed first-hand the adverse effects of the irresponsible use of

mobile devices, and has been further exacerbated by the failure of many parents to comply with teachers and school administration when they try to instil discipline.

As Members of the Opposition keep reiterating, especially the Member for San Fernando West, to ban mobile devices will be an ignorant move on our part, akin to the actions of the Jesuit monks to stop the spread of Protestantism during the Counter Reformation, when books and pamphlets were destroyed and burnt. [*Desk thumping*]

The Government Bench recognizes the tremendous benefits of mobile devices, and so we are not afraid to step outside of our comfort zone to try to treat with the issue, because it is the issue, lack of proper regulation, that has caused the mobile device to be an arch nemesis to the education system. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Laventille West is saying that we are being too harsh, with reference to clause 5 subclause (2), the disciplinary matrix clearly states:

The misuse of technology, cyber bullying, bullying, creating, uploading, downloading, posting or forwarding abusive, threatening or obscene, derogatory personal comments, graphic contents, repeated offences, suspension—referral to law enforcement.

So how are we being harsh? Madam Speaker, the future of our generation is no longer in the book bags, but it is in the pockets of our students; and since we live in a technological age, I would like to see the mobile device become—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Member for La Brea, your time has now expired.

Hon. K. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to end with a quote from the OpEd:

As unobstructive as a book in the hands of pupils, minus the fighting attitude and the mystery of drama that now appear to fuel deviants...

Thank you very much.

Mr. Shakeem Jack (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to contribute in today's debate. I would like to start with a quote by David Warlick:

"You need technology in every classroom and in every student and teacher's hand, because it is the pen and paper of our time and it is the lens through which we experience much of our world."

We must not see mobile devices as an add-on, but as a tool to carry students forward.

In the past and up to today, we have seen our schools participate in student exchanges with International schools, where we have students coming from Latin American schools, schools from the USA and even as far as Japan. These students in their countries have been exposed to the use of mobile devices in the classrooms from a young, tender age. On their arrival to our shores, should we not provide them with those same technological advances or those same mobile devices which they use in their countries?

I will go on to read an excerpt from a periodical called *THE Journal* in an article written by David Nagel on August 05, 2013, where he said that most elementary and secondary school students in the United States are using mobile devices in their classes, in their studies, either in homes or in schools. The study was conducted with students grades one through 12, ages eight to 18.

Mr. Nagel also went further on to say that significant chunks of the school population are using less traditional methods of learning. That goes clearly to show that the majority of students utilize mobile devices in their studies and have seen tremendous increase in their academic performance.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Cumuto, please refer to Standing Order 53(1)(e), where no Member should be speaking when another Member is giving a contribution.

Mr. S. Jack: Madam Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, when these students arrive on our shores they must be greeted, as I said before, with the same technological advances in their education as here in Trinidad and Tobago.

We are competing in a global world, and every chance we are given we should use that to make a strong and definitive impact, to show those other countries that our educational system here is very developed, which leads me to my next point, where I would further reiterate on what the hon. Member for Laventille West was saying, that not having mobile devices in schools would hinder student creativity and development, because in today's world there are students who are able to create or innovate.

An example of such a student is one by the name of Arthur Goddard of the Goodwood Secondary School in Tobago. He entered a competition entitled the Science Innovation and Invention Competition, which is hosted by the hon. President of Trinidad and Tobago, where he was required to develop and create an educational network to help students academically. He created a programme entitled The Seeker. It was a programme used to help students develop their skills outside of the classroom which can be used to help them further study on their own, utilizing mobile devices. He was able to utilize these mobile devices in school to create this programme. Keeping in mind, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this young man is only 15 years old, he placed third in a competition with over 500 applicants. [*Desk thumping*]

To close, I agree that we must be careful how we look at this Bill and the uses of mobile devices in schools. At no time should we consider totally eradicating or banning mobile devices in schools. I would leave the Government with something to ponder on: How can you build a house with no windows? Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Keith Savio (St. Ann's East): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Opposition has stated that they are here today to highlight the shortcomings of the Government, however, allow me to highlight their shortcomings.

The Member for Siparia stated that the effect of clause 3 is that it leaves no room for emergencies or unforeseen circumstances; however, as stated by the hon. Minister of National Security, when students are allowed to use these mobile devices freely in cases of emergency, it exacerbates the problem when it arises, because it causes system overloads and jams the networks. [*Desk thumping*]

According to the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, developed countries have integrated technology in classes, despite its negative effects and uses IT in all classes. As stated by the hon. Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, when mobile devices are removed from classrooms it increases student performance—[*Interruption*]

Miss Beharry (Oropouche East): Standing Order 44(10), Member is reading from his speech. [*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Can we have some order, please. Member, you are not allowed to read from a speech. You did not say that you were going to before; you did not address the Speaker in that sense. Therefore, please do not read from your speech.

Mr. K. Savio: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As stated by the hon. Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, when mobile devices are removed from classrooms, it increases the performance of students in this case. While mobile devices bring about a benefit, let us say at this level, [*Mr. Savio gesticulates*] according to what the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs said, when we remove the mobile devices and use the more old school way of teacher and student on a one and one basis, mobile devices are here, [*Mr. Savio gesticulates*] the benefits of the latter are here. So it shows that when we remove mobile devices, it outweighs the advantages of mobile technology. [*Desk thumping*]

According to the Member for Fyzabad, the implementation of Government laptops still incurs costs; however, I urge you not to fall victim to this myopic way of thinking, because this short-term cost brings about a long-term advantage to the nation. According to the Member for Diego Martin West, the radiation produced by mobile devices is non-ionizing and does not have a detrimental effect. But while it may not have a physical effect as she claims, there are psychological implications of these mobile devices such as addiction, which takes away from the learning of students.

According to the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, she stated something about agriculture, and there are apps in mobile devices which help to locate trucks and tractors; however, I must say that it is unfortunate because this is irrelevant to the Motion which seeks to regulate the use of mobile devices in schools. [*Desk thumping*] According to the Member for Oropouche West, we need to regulate the use of mobile devices.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to applaud the hon. Member as he agreed with us in saying that we need to regulate the use of mobile devices, as I stated before, as said in the title of the Bill the regulation of mobile devices—I repeat, the regulation of mobile devices. So thank you, my hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

According to the hon. Member for Mayaro, he put forth a philosophy where the student is not a spectator, but a participant, and this is achieved when we use mobile devices and technology. Madam Deputy Speaker, tell me, have you ever heard of a class where the teacher asks no questions, where there are no assignments, no tests and so forth? If, yes I would just like to ask you to liaise with the Minister of Education, because I can assure you that this is not what a classroom is. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for St. Ann's East, your time is now expired. You have three seconds to wrap up your contribution.

Mr. K. Savio: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Brandon Woods (*Caroni Central*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Ladies and gentlemen, my contribution today will be one very brief, concise, mostly reiteration solely for the purpose of the consolidation of points which were put forth so eloquently by hon. Members of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

As stated before, again by other Members of the Opposition, we have agreed that the

Bill as it stands is fundamentally flawed, and we agree that amendments need to be made, which I assume will be done at committee stage. But for now, the point which I would like to discuss is on clause 3, which states, and I quote:

“No student attending a primary school shall use a mobile device while he is at school.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, keeping in mind the definition of the words “an accident”, which is an unexpected or unplanned event, which I believe can happen just as much to a primary school student as it can to a student of a secondary school, a student at tertiary level, so on and so forth. I also believe that in the event of these unforeseen situations occurring to these students, that they should be able to readily communicate to give some sort of assurance to their parents, that, “Okay, my well-being or my whereabouts are not compromised in my way”. For example, Bob was not feeling well in a primary school, Bob should be able to say, “Okay, I will use my mobile device”, granted the fact that permission has been given to do so prior to the usage of his device.

I hope the Government can see that we are not here as the Opposition to disregard your concerns, because I assume the main concern which stood out is the distraction involved with these mobile devices being used in school. We as the Opposition have taken into consideration those concerns and have incorporated them into what I hope would be the amendments in the committee stage.

1.55 p.m.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, addressing the Minister of Finance earlier today, Member for Chaguanas East, he threw some astounding figures, right, of millions of dollars, billions even, that was spent behind education for the development—education wise—for the students. My question for you Minister of Finance and by extension the entire Government is: how can you, how can we as leaders of today put a price tag on an investment such as the educational development of the leaders of tomorrow? [*Desk thumping*] As stated countless times before by the Opposition, and I would like to believe also, by the Government, we are in an age that is technologically advanced, and that is why I can say today, without a doubt, that technology is something that has entered into our lives and it is not to go, but to stay and develop as the years goes by. [*Desk thumping*]

What I think that the Government has misunderstood, or I hope that they have not misunderstood, is that the youths of today are the leaders of tomorrow and those are the students that we will pass the baton on when we are too old to work. And in an age, as I said previously, we are in a technological age that will only continue to advance as time goes on, and we cannot allow the students to be only exposed within the margins of laptops that have been distributed by the Government. Right? I believe that these mobile devices should be implemented. And as I said again previously, regulated to ensure that abuse will not occur with the students.

In closing, I would like to point out the Member for Tunapuna and Member for La Brea were making such accusations to say that we as the Opposition did not read pass the title of the Bill. [*Desk thumping*] Now while I know that the Explanatory Note—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your speaking time has now expired.

Mr. B. Woods: All right. I will have to cancel that for now. Mr. Speaker, do I have any additional time to wrap up?

Mr. Speaker: I will give you 10 seconds.

Mr. B. Woods: Ten seconds. All right. Well in closing I will like to leave you guys with a quote which says and I quote: “A wolf in sheep’s clothing is still a wolf”. So why should we accept prohibition disguised as regulation? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member—[*Crosstalk*] Order. Members, Members. The hon. Member for Princes Town.

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Joel Kissoon): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start my contribution saying that in my humble opinion I do not believe that the Bill is flawed, but instead I think that what is fundamentally flawed is the understanding of the Bill by my Opposition Members. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we the Government understand the benefits of using technological devices in the classroom. We see the benefits of having it integrated in our education system. For this reason, it has been ensured that every single school, primary and secondary, have been outfitted with IT labs and a vast majority of secondary school students have been provided with laptops for their use.

Most of the arguments put forward by the hon. Members of the Opposition seem to suggest that the use of mobile devices in the classroom gives a sort of advantage to the students. As the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, I believe, pointed out, different students learn differently which I agree with. While these arguments may be valid, one must recognise that there is very, very little difference between a mobile device and that of the laptops that have already been provided.

You can use a mobile device to look at diagrams, say in science or videos, as you can with the laptop that has been provided. You can use the mobile device to listen to recordings of foreign language speakers, for example, as foreign language students, as you can do with a laptop. You can use a mobile device to store eBooks, as you can use the already provided laptop. So why then should we provide mobile devices when we have already provided the technological devices that are required in the laptops? [*Desk thumping*]

Although the hon. Member for Oropouche West repeatedly stated in his contribution that his idea of a mobile device included a laptop, I would just like to point out that we are not going on personal opinion of a definition, but we are going by what is stated in the Bill. [*Desk thumping*] And if I may quote, clause 2 of the Bill where a mobile device is defined:

A “‘mobile device’ means a mobile telephone or any other device which performs an interactive communication function by transmitting and receiving data, but does not include a personal laptop computer provided by the Government;”

And to avoid ambiguity just let me repeat:

“...but does not include a personal laptop computer provided by the Government.”
[*Desk thumping*]

Therefore if these laptops can be used in classrooms there is no real need to have a mobile device used in classrooms since their functions are practically identical. [*Desk thumping*]

That being said, we do see the benefits of having the mobile devices in terms of

communication and safety which is why the Bill does not seek to ban, but seeks to regulate the use of mobile devices in classrooms in schools. [*Desk thumping*]. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Aniqah Beharry (*Oropouche East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To begin I would like to commend the Government on the hard work that they have devoted to this Bill that, I think, would contribute great value to the youth and by extension the citizenry of our country, [*Desk thumping*] if of course, they agree to our amendments. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Point Fortin said, and I will quote that she believes that if there were no problems we would not be here today discussing this Bill. We are yet to hear cogent argument from the Government for this Bill being brought forward today. Is it because mobile devices are a distraction during school? Mr. Speaker, most schools successful in academia actually have mobile device policies. In fact, Lakshmi Girls' Hindu College, recipient of a President's Gold Medal this year in 2015 has a mobile device policy. [*Desk thumping*] In a study conducted by the Ministry of Health, 2,200 students were suspended for a seven-day period in 2012. Subsequent to that, approximately 700 had to have extended suspensions. The disciplinary measures of suspension and expulsion are archaic and have no place in the modern world. [*Desk thumping*]

On the note of the Minister of Education's assumption that there will always be a teacher with a communication device around, Mr. Speaker, this is no time to assume. There are possible cases where the public or perpetrators enter the compound and during lunchtime or break time—I “doh” think the teachers sit down in classes. Do they? [*Desk thumping*] Not only that, but do the security officers patrol onto the top floor of the school every lunchtime?

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, mobile infraction is not very similar as the Government makes it out to be. Additionally, transferring the child is not going to indoctrinate good conduct. What qualifies which school would take in students with such infractions? Those schools and the innocent students already attending them then become labelled. And what happens to the problem? Is moving the child to a new school going to solve the problem? Are they just going to stop using their mobile devices in class because they moved to a new school? Think about that for a second. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, expulsion is not just unnecessary, tyrannical and absolutely counterproductive, but it is in violation, infringing on the universal declaration of human rights. [*Desk thumping*] Article 21(2):

“Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.”

Article 26(1):

“Everyone has the right to education.” [*Desk thumping*]

There is a plethora of punishment that can be implemented without having to utilize expulsion. Community service—put them to work instead of expelling them [*Desk thumping*] which could lead them down the wrong path. Detention, Mr. Speaker, if they want to get away from their work by using their mobile devices—give them more work. [*Desk thumping*]

To reiterate the contentions that my colleagues have said, Mr. Speaker, there are many benefits to using mobile devices in classrooms as a teaching aid, pedagogy, a means of teaching those with learning disabilities, cost effectiveness—I am doing applied math. I did applied math. There is a textbook for US \$60. There is an eBook that is free, [*Desk thumping*]

communication means and developing responsibility.

Finally, I would like to ask God to “Bestow on them thy judgment wise. To rule our land aright.”

Mr. Speaker, we are all after the same goal, the betterment of society and the youth of our blessed country, and this Bill can be invaluable if our amendments are taken when implemented, and if there is a balance—as the Member for San Fernando East wants.

On that note, I would like to remind the Government that our decision today should be based on what is fair and just for society. The amendments we are putting forward are what are best for the youth, the future citizens, the future teachers, the future national youth parliamentarians and the future parliamentarians. [*Desk thumping*] After all, Mr. Speaker, to quote from Dr. Eric Williams, contrary to the hon. Member for La Brea—the future of the nation lies in the children’s school bags. Let us mould our society from now to become what we aspire to be, a developed state. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Attorney General (Hon. Arnaldo Conliff): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I will immediately begin with the reputation and/or justification for pertinent points propounded upon by the Opposition.

Now, the hon. Member for Cumuto, he said that, you know, responsible adults do not just appear from thin air; and I agree. Responsible adults were groomed. And in the era previously, if we watch responsible adults today, they were groomed in a generation where there was effective corporal punishment and there was a notable absence of this advanced digital technology or mobile devices. So is that to say, the error we have now, this generation, we are lacking something? Because we tend to want to put all the discretion into the hands of the youth; and what do we see?—misuse.

Now listen well. What if we were taught in schools the knowledge of morality, the functional convictions and the cognizance of time’s value which the era of responsible adults, right now, have. If they were taught in schools these things we would not have 95 per cent of the problems we have arising from the misuse of mobile devices. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Will the Member give way?

Hon. A. Conliff: Yes. No. I will not give way. Sorry. I will not give way.

Now, the hon. Member for Fyzabad and the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre spoke of limiting the learning of the various capabilities and simplicities of mobile devices to an IT classroom or to the library or computer labs. Now, I want them to listen well and realize this. The laptops issued by the Government since 2010 could be used in any classroom at any point in time to record notes, [*Desk thumping*] to search anything on the Internet. You can use your laptop in the classroom, any sort of class. [*Crosstalk*] They are allowed to use it. Okay?

Now anything edifying to education we will propose to the Minister and we would have that spread throughout the education system in the land. The learning feasibility, as well as the ease of learning stream is accomplished by implementing digital technology mobile devices.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin West went on to say that they are distractions, even with pen and paper, doodling and so on. But that arises from the misuse of the equipment issued for a specific purpose.

2.10 p.m.

The regulation of digital technology would be the laptop. The laptop regulates the usage of digital technology by the students. Allow me to expound. The software, once again, protective and regulatory. What we do not want happening is a situation where we cannot control, that is why we prohibit the usage of their personal mobile devices within the classroom. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Would the Member give way? Would the Member please give way?

Hon. A. Conliff: To wrap up, to wrap up, to wrap up, they can use their laptop. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, please allow the hon. Attorney General to finish his speech. He has 10 seconds to finish.

Hon. A. Conliff: Now, for four years he spoke about the cost being \$249 million for text books, divide that by four, you get \$61.9 million, annually. Now, annually it costs \$72.052 million for digital technology or mobile devices to be implemented within the education system, \$10.2 million more annually.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Attorney General, your time has now expired.

Hon. A. Conliff: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anaiah Jeffery): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would first like to address the Leader of the Opposition in his suggestion that we leave our children to learn how to use the mobile devices on their own. But I personally— [*Interruption*] yes, you did—simply cannot see [*Desk thumping and laughter*] me putting in the hands of my six-year-old child an iPad that has free access to the Internet. If I click on a link, seven other pop-up tabs also pop up with it. And what are on these tabs? Hmm, might I continue? [*Laughter*]

People are saying that, you know, children are curious and in order for them to be innovative we must introduce other ways for smartphones created and we need to know how to use them, I think. But, I want to know, they also say curiosity killed the cat, [*Desk thumping*] but, according to the old saying, a cat has nine lives. How many lives “does” our children have? [*Interruption*] How many lives does a child have? How are they to destroy their reputation and then get another life? There is no second chances in life. You just go on as it please.

Miss Pointe-a-Pierre, we know that it is a benefit that they provide for the children. But, it only takes one opportunity to destroy that chance. It takes one opportunity to destroy that chance.

Laventille West, you say that we have the severity of the punishment. But, I want to state where a principal of a school is satisfied that a student has acted in breach of clauses 3 and 4, the principal may suspend from attendance of any student whose attendance in school is likely for any serious cause. I would like to repeat [*Desk thumping*] serious cause, to have detrimental effect.

I would like to wrap up as most of my Members have already addressed most of the points of the Opposition Members, and I would like to say, we therefore see that there is a need for this Bill to be passed and the fate of our youths stands in our hands. The fate of our

youths stands in our hands.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3.

Question proposed: That clause 3 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Woods: Mr. Chairman, I would like to propose that clause 3 be amended by inserting at the end of it the following:

“...during the school day except if permission to do so is obtained in accordance with the National Schools Code of Conduct as prescribed.”

My reason for doing so is, again, similar to my contribution earlier, an accident which is an unforeseen or unexpected event which can to any person at any time, I believe that should these events happen to any student, whether he/she is in primary school, secondary school and so on, that they should be able to readily communicate with their parents, given the fact, again, that permission has been granted to do so prior to the usage of the mobile device. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: The question is that clause 3 be amended as follows:

“No student attending a primary school shall use a mobile device while he is at school during the school day except if permission to do so is obtained in accordance with the National Schools Code of Conduct as prescribed.”

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

Question proposed: That clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairman, I would like to propose that clause 4 be amended as follows:

At the end of the clause after the words “are in session” please insert the words “unless permission to do so is obtained in accordance with the National Schools Code of Conduct as prescribed”.

My reasoning for wanting to do this, Mr. Chairman, is as I mentioned earlier, the National Schools Code of Conduct it addresses all the concerns of both sides, the Opposition and the Government, and I believe that it is the way forward in addressing the concerns of the regulation of the mobile devices in schools.

Mr. Chairman: The question is that clause 4 be amended as follows:

“No student attending a secondary school shall use a mobile device while classes are in session unless permission to do so is obtained in accordance with the National Schools Code of Conduct as prescribed.”

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5.

Question proposed: That clause 5 stand part of the Bill.

Miss Gopaulsingh: Mr. Chairman, I propose that clause 5(2) be amended:

After the words “the Principal may”, we would like to insert the words “use their discretion to assign a suitable punishment as prescribed in the National Schools Code of Conduct.”

Mr. Chairman, my reason for doing so is that in the National Schools Code of Conduct they had guidelines for the disciplinary actions stated that the principal can take, the removal of privileges, behavioural contracts can be issued, school community service can be issued, in school suspension and confiscation.

Miss Beharry: Also, Mr. Chairman, we would like to remove parts (c) and (d) from clause 5(3).

The reason for this being, moving the students to another school is not going to solve the problem, and expelling them from school is in violation of the universal declaration of human rights.

Miss Jeffery: I would like to know why do you think removal of the student is not going to be effective?

Miss Beharry: If you move a child to a new school, how is that teaching them?

Miss Jeffery: Perhaps the change in environment might be good for the student.

Miss Beharry: That is an assumption that is not backed up with any information whatsoever.

Miss Jeffery: It is not backed up with any information, on what basis?

Miss Beharry: Can you provide for me cases where moving the child to a new school—

Miss Jeffery: Perhaps the child is being bullied within the school.

Miss Beharry: Okay, what if the child is not being bullied?

Miss Jeffery: But, we are using the example, perhaps the child is being bullied within the school.

Miss Beharry: Okay. All right, even so, are we going to punish the child that badly as to suspend them or send them to a new school because we do not have systems put in place—

2.25 p.m.

Miss Jeffery: There is also teacher victimization going on.

Miss Beharry: Wait, hold on. We do not have systems put in place—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Members, please!

Miss Jeffery: There is also teacher victimization. What will we do in that case, leave them within the teacher’s jurisdiction?

Miss Beharry: Is that not why we have principals?

Miss Jeffery: The principal takes part in this venture.

Miss Beharry: Then I think that is something that you as the Minister of Education need to look at.

Miss Jeffery: And this usually will be dealt with the Ministry of Education which will require them for transfer into another school.

Mr. Taylor: Hon. Minister of Education, I would just like to address a statement where you said that, perhaps the students we are expelling or suspending is being bullied. Are we going to punish or assign disciplinary action to the victim? [*Desk thumping*] I would just like for

you to correct that statement please.

Mr. Campbell: On a point of clarification hon. Member for Laventille West, she stated that if the person who has the mobile phone is being attacked by members of the administration then that child is moved. Not the child who did the wrong doing. Make sure you have the statement clear, please.

Mr. Taylor: I see your point, hon. Minister. I stand corrected.

Miss Jeffery: I understand that comprehension skills are very poor.

Hon. Member: Insulting language, that is a Standing Order.

Miss Jeffery: That is not a Standing Order.

Mr. Chairman: Members, the question is that clause 5 be amended as follows:

“Where a principal of a school is satisfied that a student has acted in breach of section 3 or 4, the Principal may use their discretion to assign a suitable punishment as prescribed in the National Schools Code of Conduct.

The Principal may suspend from attendance any student whose attendance at school is likely for any serious cause to have detrimental effect upon the other students. So, however, that no such suspension shall be for a period exceeding one week and the principal shall notify the supervisor of schools.”

Question put.

Miss Nanan: Mr. Chairman, I would like to propose a division please—call for a division.

The Committee divided: Ayes 20 Noes 23

AYES

Manzano, S.

Lynch, J.

Moore, Miss A.

Maharaj, D.

Lewis, M.

Ballantyne-Smith, Miss D.

Ramadhar, V.

Gopaulsingh, Miss D.

Munro, A.

Beharry, T.

Woods, B.

Rougier, Miss A.

Leslie, Miss P.

Jack, S.

Hansraj, Miss K.

Alexander, Miss M.

Taylor, K.

Ottley, J.

Jonathan, W. Q.

Beharry, Miss A.

NOES

Salandy, C.
Nanan, Miss K.
Conliff, A.
Nabbie, I.
Paul, J.
Ali, Miss S.
Phillip, Miss K.
Outar, Miss S.
Ramjohn, J.
Inniss, D. M.
Noel, Miss K.
George, Miss K.
Williams, Miss K.
Jeffrey, Miss A.
Campbell, K.
Ragbir, R.
Nanton, Miss J.
Armstrong, Miss N.
Grannum, Miss S.
Superville, Miss T.
Keith, S.
Jackson, Miss K.
Kissoon, J.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill, as amended, be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, with amendment, read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made: That this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [*Hon. C. Salandy*]

Divali Greetings

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question on the adjournment we are all aware that Trinidad and Tobago will celebrate Divali tomorrow. I therefore now take this opportunity to invite the Members to bring greetings to the Hindu community on the occasion of Divali on behalf of their Bench. Member for Tobago East.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Narisha Armstrong): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Government to wish the nation of Trinidad and Tobago and by extension all Members of this House a happy and safe Divali. Shubh Divali. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Varun Ramadhar (*San Fernando West*): As the nation joins as one to celebrate this auspicious festival of Divali, I take this opportunity on behalf of the Opposition Bench to share with you a few words on the significance of Divali.

Divali is the festival of light and the light which dispels the darkness of ignorance, the light which shows us the way through our journey of life. The purpose of Divali is not to glorify the light of the candle or that of the firecracker, but to glorify the light of God. A candle burns out, a firecracker is momentary, but the candle of a still mind and the firework of a heart filled with devotion, devotion to a cause and devotion to God that is eternal, and this is the true essence of Divali. And as such, I would like to again take this opportunity on behalf of Members of the Opposition and by extension, the Members of the 13th National Youth Parliament, to wish the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago a Shubh Divali. Thank you.
[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I thank you for your contributions and I too am very grateful to take this opportunity on the eve of Divali to wish both the Opposition and Government and by extension all Members of the Hindu community a safe and enjoyable Divali festival tomorrow.

Youth Parliament (Appreciation of)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, allow me to express appreciation on behalf of all Members of this Youth Parliament to the Trinidad and Tobago branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Parliament.

Today's debate focused on two issues, a Motion regarding climate change and a Bill entitled the Regulation of Mobile Devices in Schools Bill, 2015. The contributions made today by you, honourable Members, were comprehensive and sought to highlight various issues surrounding these. The effectiveness of events such as this is determined by the impact it will have after today rather than the display of the day itself. Therefore, we trust that the issues raised and information highlighted during the debate will be reviewed and assessed by the relevant authorities.

We wish to express our deepest gratitude to all officials who accepted our invitation and grace us with your presence. To our schools and institutions for selecting us, our family and relatives who exercised patience and assisted us in preparing for the debate, we say thank you.

During our intense weeks of tutoring, we were trained by the vivacious Ms. Catherine Gordon who coached us on dress, etiquette and civility. The effervescent Mrs. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt, [*Desk thumping*] who took us through the paces with respect to debating skills, aspects of debate and Standing Orders, and Ms. Marlene Davis and Dr. Barbara Jenkins who drilled us on proper pronunciation of the English language. [*Desk thumping*]

Mention must also be made of the coordinating team of the Parliament who contributed in varying measures to the successful execution of this event and for training us in the rules of parliamentary practice and procedure. [*Desk thumping*]

It was truly a distinguished privilege to have participated in this annual debate. May I now kindly ask that you remain seated after the adjournment for a brief award ceremony?

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly. Adjourned at 2.39 p.m.



The Bill

THE REGULATION OF MOBILE DEVICES IN SCHOOLS BILL, 2015

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(These notes form no part of the Bill but are intended only to indicate its general purport)

The Bill seeks to regulate the use of mobile devices in primary and secondary schools

Clause 1 would provide for the short title of the Act for which this is the Bill.

Clause 2 would provide for the definition of certain terms.

Clause 3 would prohibit the use of mobile devices by students attending primary schools while at school.

Clause 4 would prohibit the use of mobile devices by students attending secondary schools during class time.

Clause 5 would impose a duty on the Principal of a primary or secondary school to inform the parent or guardian where a student has allegedly contravened the Act. The Principal may also impose disciplinary penalties and report any contraventions to the Supervisor of Schools and the Minister.

Clause 6 would empower the Minister to make Regulations to give effect to the provisions of the Act.

A BILL

An Act to provide for the regulation of the use of mobile devices in schools and for related matters

Enactment ENACTED by the 13th National Youth Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago as follows:

Short title **1.** This Act may be cited as the Regulation of Mobile Devices in Schools Act, 2015.

Interpretation **2.** In this Act-

“interactive communications function” includes-

- (a) sending or receiving oral or written messages;
- (b) sending or receiving facsimile;
- (c) sending or receiving still or moving images; and
- (d) providing access to the internet;

“Minister” means the Minister with responsibility for education and
“Ministry” shall be construed accordingly; and

“mobile device” means a mobile telephone or any other device which performs an interactive communications function by transmitting and receiving data, but does not include a personal laptop computer provided by the Government;

“prescribed” means prescribed by regulations made under section 6;
and

“Principal” includes Vice-Principal or any person acting in the Office of Principal;

Prohibition of use of mobile devices in primary schools **3.** No student attending a primary school shall use a mobile device while he is at school.

Prohibition of use of mobile devices in secondary schools **4.** No student attending a secondary school shall use a mobile device while classes are in session.

Penalty and report of breach **5.** (1) Where a person alleges that a student has acted in breach of section 3 or 4, the Principal of the school shall inform the parent or guardian of the student and inquire into the matter.

(2) Where a Principal of a school is satisfied that a student has acted in breach of section 3 or 4, the Principal may suspend from attendance any student whose attendance at school is likely for any serious cause to have detrimental effect upon the other students, so, however, that no such suspension shall be for a period exceeding one week and the Principal shall notify the Supervisor of Schools.

(3) Where any student is suspended from attendance under subsection (2) the Supervisor of Schools may notify the Minister of the suspension and the reasons therefor and the Minister may, after receipt of the notification –

- (a) order the extension of the term of suspension in order to enable proper inquiries to be made;
- (b) after due investigation, order the reinstatement of the student on a date to be fixed by him;
- (c) order the removal of the student to another school;
- (d) order the expulsion of the student.

(4) Any order made by the Minister under subsection (3) shall be final.

Regulations

6. The Minister may make Regulations for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of this Act.

Passed in the House of Representatives this day of , 2015.

Clerk of the House

I confirm the above.

Speaker



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2015