

SCRUTINY PARLIAMENTARY JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES:

In 1999, the Constitution was amended by Act No. 29 of 1999 to insert Sections 66 A-D. These new sections gave rise to the establishment of Departmental Joint Select Committees of Parliament. These Committees are to inquire and report to both Houses of Parliament in respect of:

- (a) Government Ministries
- (b) Municipal Corporations
- (c) Statutory Authorities
- (d) Enterprises owned or controlled by or on behalf of the State or which received funding from the State of more than two third of its total income in any one year; and
- (e) Service Commissions;

in relation to their administration, the manner of the exercise of their powers, their methods of functioning and any criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions.

These Committees serve for the life of the Parliament and are required to be appointed as soon as practicable after the commencement of each Parliament.

Because of the oversight function of these Committees their powers when compared to other Joint Select Committees are much wider in scope. For example, in addition to the regular powers of Joint Select Committees, these Committees also have the following powers:

- To send for persons, papers and records
- To adjourn from place to place
- To report from time to time
- To appoint specialist advisors
- To appoint sub committees and to delegate to any such sub committee all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to Parliament
- To communicate with any committee of Parliament on matters of common interest
- To meet concurrently with any other committee for the purpose of deliberating, taking evidence or considering draft reports
- To meet notwithstanding any adjournment of the House.

Matters are referred to these committees for inquiry as follows:

- ❖ Annual Reports of Ministries, Statutory Authorities, Municipal Corporations, Service Commissions, etc.
- ❖ Written Memoranda from the Public

- ❖ Any matters referred to it from the Senate and the House of Representatives
- ❖ Memoranda from the Members of Parliament
- ❖ Or the Committee can initiate its own inquiry

These committees comprise twelve Members each. Six Members from the Senate and six Members from the House of Representatives are appointed to serve on each Committee with some Members serving on more than one committee.

Although these committees are empowered to meet in public they can also meet *en camera* if the committee so agrees by a resolution.

These Committees have begun their work. Advertisements were placed in the newspapers inviting the public to make submissions or write to the Committees on matters within the scope of the Committee's terms of reference. The public response has been minimal a mere three letters to date.

EXPERIENCES TO DATE: T&T

Given the Committees are now working for at least 3 years the T&T experience will be explored:

Resources

Constraints

Sending for persons, papers etc

Senator Mary King
Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago