

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Wednesday, June 09, 2004*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Member for Siparia (Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar) requesting leave from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the hon. Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
 2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Caroni County Council for the period January 01, 1991 to September 30, 1991. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
 3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Broadcasting Network Limited for the period September 01, 1999 to December 31, 2000. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
 4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Broadcasting Network Limited for the year ended December 31, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
- Papers 1 to 4 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*
5. The Transfer of Functions (Commissioner of State Lands) Order, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**Presentation**

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report of 2003/2004 Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2004 Appropriation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**British Consultant James Humphreys
(Details of Recruitment)**

105. Dr. Roodlal Moonilal (*Oropouche*) asked the hon. Minister of Public Administration and Information:

- (a) Could the Minister state the terms and conditions under which the British Consultant James Humphreys has been recruited to provide consultancy services, undertake social surveys and provide training to members of the government of Trinidad and Tobago?
- (b) Can the Minister indicate whether Mr. Humphreys has indeed produced any reports for the government based on his assignment in Trinidad and Tobago?
- (c) If such reports have been completed, can the Minister state when these reports will be laid in this House or made available to Members of Parliament?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, the information in the marketplace is highly competitive and any organization, including the Government must constantly improve its ability to communicate its message. The need to improve the Government's communication skills was also confirmed by the opinion leaders survey which is an ongoing exercise involving 2,800 citizens to gauge inter alia, the public's perception of the effectiveness of the programmes and policies of the country's public service.

The decision was taken to utilize the services of Mr. James Humphreys to conduct training seminars to achieve the following objectives:

- to sensitize relevant government officials on how the communications function in the United Kingdom is managed;
- to achieve an understanding as to how a proactive and integrated government agenda is realized.

During his stay here Mr. Humphreys conducted five training seminars. The seminars conducted were as follows:

- (i) Wednesday, May 05, 2004: the morning session targeted communication specialists, speech writers and advisors to Ministers in the public service.

- (ii) Wednesday, May 05, 2004: the afternoon session was directed at communication specialists from the state enterprises and representatives from media houses and some private sector agencies.
- (iii) Thursday, May 06, 2004: the participants at this session were Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries.
- (iv) Friday, May 07, 2004: focused on techniques and was targeted at communications personnel in the Ministry of Public Administration and Information and the Office of the Prime Minister.
- (v) Saturday, May 08, 2004: was a session for the executive members of Government.

For his services, Mr. Humphreys was paid a fee of TT \$52,201. It was also agreed that the Government would pay the airfare for Mr. Humphreys to and from Trinidad and Tobago as well as his accommodation during his stay here. The cost of the airfare was TT \$34,180.65 and accommodation expenses amounted to TT \$5,956.26.

Mr. Humphreys was not required to produce any report arising from this assignment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Breathalyzer Test (Introduction of)

106. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

- (a) Could the Minister state whether the Government intends to introduce the breathalyzer test for drivers who are suspected of being intoxicated, and if so, when?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister further state what steps have been taken so far in this regard?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Franklin Khan): Mr. Speaker, the Government intends to introduce the breathalyser test for drivers who are suspected of being intoxicated. In furtherance of this objective, the Government intends to introduce into Parliament in 2004 a Bill to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chap. 48:50.

The Bill shall, inter alia, empower police officers to demand and obtain samples of breath from motor vehicle drivers who are suspected of being under

the influence of alcohol. The Bill shall also make provisions for the types of equipment to be used for the purposes of breath alcohol testing.

As part of the process of finalizing the legislation, the draft Bill was circulated for public comment. Upon receipt of these comments, several issues were raised that required analysis and the formulation of policy. At the present point in time, the last of these policy issues are being ironed out and appropriate drafting instructions are to be transmitted to the drafting department of the office of the Attorney General.

In addition, the Ministry of Works and Transport has had exploratory consultations with various firms and enterprises that deal with or market breath analysis equipment. Research is currently being undertaken as to the type, suitability, reliability and user-friendliness of such equipment, as well as the training required by police officers and licensing officers for the proper usage of such equipment.

We anticipate that along with the introduction of the Bill into Parliament, a process shall be developed for the procurement of appropriate breath analysis equipment for use on the nation's roads.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sharma: A supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware that there was an offer from the Canadian government to make these equipment available and negotiations had taken place to that effect?

Hon. F. Khan: No, I am not aware, but I can check. It is not the intention to resuscitate dead issues but if there is some credence to going that way, we would surely do so.

Mr. Sharma: I asked that because the Minister's answer does not say anything.

Speed Traps (Details of)

107. Mr. Subhas Panday asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

- (a) Could the Minister indicate if speed traps are being operated between the hours of 6.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m.?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the negative, why not?
- (c) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, how many have been executed from January 01, 2002 to date?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security and Minister in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Mr. Speaker, hon. Members are advised that speed traps are not operated between the hours of 6.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Commissioner of Police has indicated that speed traps are not operated between 6.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. because the natural light is poor and there is often in some cases, an absence of street lighting. These make it difficult for police officers to identify the registration numbers of the motor vehicles. This places the lives of police officers at grave risk and, thirdly, affects the effective operation of the speed stop-watches used by the officers in this process.

In light of the answer given, part (c) is not applicable.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. S. Panday: A supplemental please, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister state whether he is happy with that explanation? Two, what about areas where the highways are properly lighted?

Hon. F. Hinds: I think I need to make a small grammatical correction. It should be “properly lit”. In any event I am called upon to give vent to my emotional state about whether I am happy or unhappy. I have just given a state of facts and that should suffice.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, what about the highways which are “well lit”, according to the Minister? He indicated that they cannot see the numbers of the vehicles and we ask: What about those well lit highways?

Hon. F. Hinds: The Member is so keen to detain us with that simple question that he has disregarded the other elements that I have highlighted.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, a further supplemental. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr. S. Panday: Does the police intend to use modern state-of-the-art equipment in executing speed traps? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Repeat the question.

Mr. S. Panday: Whether the police intends to use state-of-the-art equipment in dealing with or executing speed traps.

Hon. F. Hinds: The answer is, yes.

Mr. S. Panday: When can the population expect the implementation of those speed traps?

Hon. F. Hinds: In the not-too-distant future.

Mr. S. Panday: Could the Minister give us a time frame?

Mr. Speaker: No, no. I think the Minister has answered that question already.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, that question is—

Mr. Speaker: But he has given you an answer. He said “in the not-too-distant future”.

Mr. S. Panday: No, I am asking for a time frame. Many people are dying on the roads, Mr. Speaker. We want to find out when this thing would take place. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Minister has given an answer.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, are we happy with that?

Mr. Speaker: I am happy with it.

Mr. S. Panday: You are happy with that, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. S. Panday: While people are dying on the roads?

**COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY
(DELIVERY OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES)**

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Speaker, the delivery of public health services in Trinidad and Tobago has for some time been the source of considerable public concern. In response to these concerns, an earlier PNM administration in 1994, initiated a Health Sector Reform Programme. This programme virtually stagnated after we demitted office in 1995. This stagnation is at the root of a rising tide of discontent with the effectiveness of this sector. Complaints have centered around inadequacies in the delivery of professional services and the attendant care provided.

These complaints have intensified within recent times and have led to calls for investigations into a number of “questionable” incidents occurring at public health institutions, including some which have resulted in “questionable” deaths. The Government is satisfied that it has become necessary to conduct a full investigation into these legitimate concerns. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is now 15 minutes into the sitting and I must say, we must recognize that this is the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and the behaviour displayed by Members is really not conducive to the proper conduct of proceedings. Please, I am appealing to you all.

Continue, Hon. Prime Minister. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. P. Manning: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

If I may just repeat the paragraph that I read a few minutes ago.

These complaints have intensified within recent times and have led to calls for investigations into a number of “questionable” incidents occurring at public health institutions, including some which have resulted in “questionable” deaths. The Government is satisfied that it has become necessary to conduct a full investigation into these legitimate concerns. Accordingly, the Cabinet at its meeting today accepted the recommendation of the Prime Minister to appoint a Commission of Enquiry into the operations of and delivery of public health services in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Commission is to be headed by:

Mr. Hector McClean	Attorney at Law and former Speaker of this honourable House
Dr. Dipchan Rattan	Medical Practitioner
Ms. Yvonne Pilgrim	Secretary, Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association
Mr. Wazir Hosein	President, Pharmacy Board of Trinidad and Tobago
Mr. Glen Wilson	Vice-President, Human Resources, British Gas Trinidad and Tobago

The Commission’s terms of reference are as follows:

1. To enquire into the operation and delivery of public health care services and the adequacy and quality of such services with special reference to:
 - (i) The adequacy of existing public health care facilities to meet the needs of the public, including the special needs of the elderly, visually impaired and handicapped
 - (ii) The adequacy and quality of the health services provided by professional and non-professional staff of public health care facilities

Commission of Enquiry
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- (iii) The adequacy of the number, qualifications and training of professional and non-professional staff of public health care facilities
- (iv) The capabilities of the management and professional and non-professional staff of public health care facilities to meet the demands of the public for the delivery of quality health care
- (v) The adequacy of the medical equipment and availability of drugs and pharmaceuticals to meet the health care needs of the public
- (vi) The circumstances surrounding the procurement process and the award of contracts generally in the public health sector
- (vii) The criteria used for the rendering of a proper service to patients and whether or not these are in the best interest of the clients, that is, the patients, the Regional Health Authorities and the Ministry of Health
- (viii) What machinery exists for receiving and addressing effectively the complaints and concerns of the public in relation to the adequacy and quality of health services, including professional attention, provided at public health care facilities and mechanisms for redress
- (ix) The number and nature of complaints received from members of the public concerning the adequacy and quality of health services, including professional attention, provided at public health care facilities in recent times, what has been done to address those complaints and, if there have been omissions or delays in addressing complaints, the reasons for such omissions or delays
- (x) To make such observations and recommendations arising out of its deliberations as the commission may deem appropriate.

The Commission will sit in public and is being asked to submit its report to His Excellency the President within six months of its first sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SHIPPING (MARINE POLLUTION) BILL

Bill to provide for powers and jurisdiction in relation to pollution of the seas from ships, intervention on the high seas in cases of oil pollution, dumping of wastes at sea, prevention of pollution from ships, preparedness and response for oil pollution emergencies, liability and compensation for pollution damage and matters incidental thereto [*The Minister of Works and Transport*]; read the first time.

**FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION
OF APPROPRIATION) (NO. 2) BILL**

Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2004 [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings.
[*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Adoption

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the Second Report of the 2003/2004 Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2004 Appropriation.

Last Friday the House of Representatives met in Finance Committee and considered various amendments and supplementations to the budget which was laid in this house in September of last year. Basically, the House considered the need to supplement the appropriation by some \$644,805,330 and vary to \$162,310,000 among Heads.

Mr. Speaker, the additional funding is required to fund urgent and critical expenditure to September 30, 2004, as well as for the funding of new policies and programmes, together with changes in the Public Sector Investment Programme. The additional funding for the recurrent expenditure includes:

- Personnel expenditure of \$100,964,049;
- Goods and services of \$51,664,782;
- Minor equipment purchases \$970,425;
- Current Transfers and Subsidies of \$281,520,082;
- Acquisition of physical capital assets \$18,610,000; and
- Transfer to statutory boards and similar bodies of \$49,556,000;

A total of \$503,285,338.

Further, as a result of the mid-year review of the Public Sector Investment Programme conducted by the Ministry of Planning and Development in collaboration with other ministries and departments, there is need to increase the Public Sector Investment Programme by some \$141,520,000. Therefore, when we add the two, the total supplementary appropriation is some \$644,805,338.

As I mentioned, in addition to this supplementary appropriation, the mid-year review also suggested the need to vary from one Head to the other or from one Ministry to another, a total amount of some \$162,310,000. The mid-year review suggested quite a good return. While the budget projected a fiscal deficit of \$312.3 million, some 0.47 per cent of GDP, Parliament would be pleased to note that for the first six months of the year there was a fiscal surplus of some \$1,008.7 million compared to a projected deficit of some \$1,125.1 million for the period.

In other words, there was a projected deficit for the first six months of some \$1,125.1 million. In fact, the actual outturn is a surplus of some \$1,008.7 million. In other words, the overall change is some \$2.1 billion.

This favourable position is due to higher than anticipated revenues of \$643.1 million. So that revenues were up by some \$643.1 million, but expenditure was down by some \$1,490.7 million. The additional revenue is due mainly to increases in corporation taxes and taxes on individuals—tax receipts. Together, the total there is some \$361.8 million. In addition there were increases in value-added taxes and royalties on oil.

But I want Members to note that despite the fact that oil prices for the period have averaged in excess of US \$29 per barrel, compared to a budgeted oil price of US \$25 per barrel, tax revenues from oil companies have been some \$19.0 million lower than anticipated.

Based on preliminary discussions with the major oil company in Trinidad and Tobago, this trend may continue for the balance of fiscal 2004 and for the year it is projected that the overall shortfall would be some \$8.1 million. Because while discussions are continuing with the company, the company is claiming that its shortfall is as a result of lower than anticipated production levels and claims with respect to a dry hole as well as substantial increases in operating expenditure. Further discussions, as I said, are being held with the Inland Revenue Division with a view to resolving this matter.

In addition, oil production is down. While the budget was based on a projection of some 29 million barrels for the year, it is now estimated that oil production would be some \$26.5 million for the year.

Further, Parliament is asked to note that the shortfall in the expenditure for the first seven months was due in part to the lower than anticipated implementation rate for the Public Sector Investment Programme. While one expected to spend some \$987.4 million on the PSIP at this time—well at the end of the first seven months—the actual expenditure was some \$564.2 million. But let me hasten to add that there are commitments outstanding in the order of some \$160.2 million on the PSIP and I should add also that while the surplus for the first seven months is, as I said, some \$1,008 million, there are commitments outstanding against that. We are still on the cash budgeting system and the figures reflect what was actually paid, but, in fact, there are commitments outstanding on the recurrent, of some \$323.2 million on the recurrent, and as I said, \$160.2 million on the capital, for a total commitment of \$483 million.

Therefore if one were to net that off the \$1 billion—if one were to take that into account as one would do normally in the private sector, then we are already talking about a surplus for the first seven months of \$550 million.

Now we have attempted to put in place the mechanisms necessary for increased performance of the Public Sector Investment Programme and one would note that, in fact, even though we are really under-spending at this time on the PSIP, the expectation is—well, I shall not say that—that the allocation for the PSIP is being increased from the original budget. While the original budget contemplated an overall capital expenditure of \$1,727.5 million, the mid-year review is now allocating \$1,869 million for the PSIP and I would quite honestly say that while the Government does not expect all of this amount to be spent, we are making the allocation because of the mechanisms we have put in place in the ministries to improve performance, we have decided that we are not going to reduce any ministry's allocation, while other ministries, because they performed well, we have to provide additional allocation for them.

So that allocation is increased providing for the parliamentary approval for the ministries, but the Government, as a fact, is aware that not all ministries would be able to perform at 100 per cent. That is the reality, but we do not intend to pick winners at this time. But it is extremely important. As you know, the Constitution is clear in section 112 that we have to provide the allocation to give the ministries the approval to spend. That is clear in section 112(1) of the Constitution, which says quite clearly that:

“All revenues or other moneys raised or received by Trinidad and Tobago, not being revenues or other moneys payable under this Constitution or any other law into some other public fund established for a specific purpose shall, unless Parliament otherwise provides, be paid into and form one Consolidated Fund.

(2) No moneys shall be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund except to meet expenditure that is charged upon the Fund by this Constitution or any Act or where the issue of those moneys has been authorized by an Appropriation Act or an Act passed in pursuance of section 114 or in accordance with any other law.”

So that we have to get parliamentary approval for the allocation but the spending is something different. So we have left the ministries at the original projection in terms of the PSIP, even though some of them have been under-performing. We have taken steps to increase their performance. We have left the allocation in place, but those ministries which have been performing above, where there is need for additional resources, we have provided for that additional allocation and that is why one sees an increase in the PSIP figure.

In addition, the Government has also taken a decision to increase the level of expenditure under the Unemployment Relief Programme from \$200 million to \$330 million, an increase of some \$130 million. This has been factored into the increases we have seen here.

This supplementary funding is in respect of increases of wages and salaries in the public service and which are inescapable commitments. Supplementary funds are also required for goods and services, debt servicing and other commitments that cannot be avoided.

At the Finance Committee meeting, we dealt with most of these but I thought it important that we highlight some of them rather quickly. If one were to go to Head 01 where we are providing an additional \$970,425 which is transferred from the Vehicle Replacement Vote to facilitate the payment of medical expenses to our former President. Head 02, the Auditor General’s Department is being increased by some \$1,446,620.

Some of the more significant ones would be, of course, the Ministry of Finance, Head 18, which is being increased by \$127,641,346. That is to provide the EC \$17 million loan for the shareholder governments of Liat. That is an issue that came up at the Finance Committee. In addition, we have agreed to a settlement with the firm—I think the former name was Comlysa Lain—of some \$23.8 million. That is being provided for. Also, Members are aware of Government’s commitment to underwrite the rights issue of British West Indian Airways, and I am happy to report that the Securities Exchange Commission approved that rights issue last week and it should be coming to market soon. As you know, the Government has a commitment to underwrite that, and the

intention is to assume US \$30 million of BWIA's obligation—debt—plus providing US \$10 million in new cash for the rights issue. Therefore there is a provision here of some TT \$63 million for that assignment.

Another large amount is for the Ministry of National Security, some \$132,300,000. Cabinet in March ratified the terms of the agreement reached between the Chief Personnel Officer and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for an increase in salary and COLA, together with other allowances at an estimated cost of some \$153 million. So these are increases in wages and COLA for our security personnel, the police service. There was an inadequate provision made in the budget for 2004 and it is now being supplemented by some \$94,300,000.

A small amount is provided under the same Head 22 for a Youth Programme. An amount of \$1 million was provided. We are now asking for \$4.8 million and therefore a supplementary provision has to be made.

Further, in our quest, really, to wrestle this crime, as it were, to the ground, the Government is providing additional funding of \$32.2 million for the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago. Early in January, you would know that the Government agreed to the creation of a special anti-crime unit and the initial estimated cost for this fiscal year was some \$33.8 million. An amount of \$13 million was initially transferred from other items of expenditure to a newly created sub-item. The balance of the original amount outstanding is \$20.8 million. However, additional funding is required for the maintenance cost of two helicopters procured for the unit, as well as to meet a special forces allowance for the unit.

Mr. Speaker, under Head 23 there is a small amount of \$4.5 million, an additional amount being provided to meet fees for forensic investigation services, as well as legal services. You would understand how important it is to have forensic investigation services today.

Under Head 25, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, an additional amount of \$30 million is provided to supplement the \$60 million which was provided in the budget for Caroni (1975) Limited. This amount was needed to allow the company to increase the guaranteed price for farmers' sugarcane, fertilizer, control of the froghopper and other pests, main access roads, traces as well as transportation of canes to the factory.

A small amount is provided under Head 30, \$4.5 million to the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprises. Under Head 32, \$16,571,000 is provided to the Ministry of Public Utilities to meet the cost of implementation of the new pension plan and to meet the projected deficit not covered by the World Bank funding. The amount provided for that was some \$15,371,000.

2.15 p.m.

The Institute of Marine Affairs also required additional funding of \$1.2 million to meet the cost of new collective agreements for the period 2001—2004.

Under local government a supplementary appropriation of \$75,539,500 is being provided. These are increases arising out of a new collective agreement between the Chief Personnel Officer and the Public Services Association, which required a small amount of \$305,500. The significant amounts here relate to the provision of funds to facilitate the commencement of local government Infrastructural Renewal Improvement and Development Programme 2004. An amount of \$25 million has been provided for that purpose.

Additional funding of \$41,847,000 has been provided to supplement the scavenging votes of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation, the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation.

Under Ministry of Works and Transport, \$11 million is provided to the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for funding towards deficit and operations of coastal steamers. Head 47, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supplementary appropriation of \$24,834,736; the major item there is \$18,610,000 representing the balance needed for the purchase of the property in South Africa for the establishment of our embassy.

Under Science and Technology, Head 54, there is a supplementary appropriation of \$49,522,300. The big item there is an increase in the allocation to the On-the-Job Training Programme of \$12 million for our young people, ensuring that they are provided with on-the-job training as they enter the world of work. There is also \$16,800,000 provided under the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP); an amount of \$14,622,500 for our Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme (MUST), which is to come on stream on July 01 this year. With respect to that programme, an additional \$4.5 million has been provided under Goods and Services for the recruitment of staff necessary for the administration of that programme.

Under Head 55, the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs, \$12,185,000 is provided under the supplementary appropriation. The sum of \$4.2 million is required under non-profit institutions to meet expenses associated with the running of the Best Village Programme, an additional \$5 million for export centers and a further \$3 million for the Community Action for Revival and Empowerment (CARE) Programme.

This gives an idea of where we are providing additional funding, Mr. Speaker, and, of course, my colleagues are prepared, as required. At Finance Committee, a number of issues were raised. We undertook then to provide responses to Members and I hope Members are satisfied with our attempt. I am sure that we would not be able to provide 100 per cent of the responses required, but given the time—we had Finance Committee Meeting on Friday and this is Wednesday—I trust that Members are satisfied.

To the extent that they are not, we will do our best to supplement what we have here. I beg to move.

Question proposed

Mr. Gerald Yetming (*St. Joseph*): Mr. Speaker, I was a little confused by the explanation given by the Minister. Maybe I did not hear some of what he said. To start with, if we are dealing with a mid-year review, one would have expected that some review would have been done today on the Government's spending of the money that had been approved in the original budget. What is happening today is that an amount of about \$670 million, additional money, is being sought from the Parliament. What the Minister did was to give some explanation of the different categories of spending. I would have expected that something would have been said about some of the promises made and some of the plans announced in the budget and how they have done so far, in this mid-year, and how they intend to complete the year.

I heard that the average oil price for the first six months of the year was \$29 a barrel versus a budgeted price of \$25. We know the price is now averaging around \$40 a barrel. One would expect that within the Ministry they would have done some projections to the end of the year to get some reading on the expected revenues and that the reason for the discussion with the oil companies had to do with the fact that up to now the revenue intake has not met target because, as he put it, the oil companies are talking about dry wells and higher operating expenses, et cetera.

What we are dealing with here is additional spending of \$670 million. I would like to know from where exactly that money is coming. At the budget, they spoke about ending the year with a deficit of \$313 million and that is fine. If we are to have additional spending of \$670 million, on the basis of projected additional revenues now and for the next six months, how are we likely to end the year? On what basis are we deciding to give the Government an additional approval of \$670 million to spend?

One would expect that with an average price of oil for the past several months and some projections to the end of the year of substantial additional revenues from that sector. I wanted to hear today that, in addition to the Government spending \$670 million, what the entire additional revenues of the Government would be to the end of the year, out of which \$670 million would be taken; and how much of what is left would be going into the Revenue Stabilization Fund. It is a topic that we have discussed before and we will raise again today.

What we have is additional spending in a host of different areas, but on the revenue side, in addition to the oil and gas revenues, the Government made three announcements in its budget presented by the Prime Minister in October last year. He said, first of all, that there would be an overhaul of the non-oil tax regime because he spoke of a considerable leakage in the tax system—and we are dealing with non-oil. He talked about the revenue authority. He talked about the simplification of the system, but he also talked about the overhaul of the non-oil tax regime so that he could have prevented some of that leakage.

He was absolutely correct when he made that announcement. In addition to revenues from oil and gas, which can go up and down depending on international events and prices, it is important that the Government maximizes its revenues from its existing avenues. That first announcement of the non-oil tax regime, the overhaul was made but we have heard nothing about it in this mid-term review.

The second thing that they announced in an effort to improve our revenue intake and our revenue position was a comprehensive review of value added tax (VAT). A committee was supposed to be formed to do this comprehensive review of VAT because they acknowledged that the VAT to gross domestic product (GDP) was declining; they acknowledged that there was a considerable leakage in VAT—evasion and fraud was the language used in the budget debate.

When I spoke in the debate, I suggested that when they were dealing with this comprehensive review of VAT that they deal, not just with the exempt items, but maybe they should consider reducing the rate of VAT, rather than continuing to reduce the rate of taxation of individuals. I submitted that VAT, if reduced, would touch every single individual down to the poorest who pay VAT when they buy taxable items, as distinct from reducing the rate of personal taxation, which only benefited the income people. We have heard nothing about the comprehensive review of VAT and it is critical.

We also heard, in the third area of review, the Government make the announcement for the new regime in the oil and gas sector to take effect from

January 01, 2004. In fact, many people queried that you made an announcement of a new tax regime in oil and gas for January 01—you made the announcement in October and nobody knew what that new regime would have been because at the time the Prime Minister announced that they have received a preliminary report from consultants and that they were expecting a final report in two weeks from the date of the budget announcement, out of which the new oil and gas tax regime would have emerged for effect on January 01, 2004.

We are in June 2004 and we have heard nothing further about this new oil and gas tax regime. It is important because the Prime Minister, in his budget speech, talked about it being an imperative that the country gets its fair share from this non-renewable resource. So, here we have an announcement in October of three initiatives to improve the revenue intake of the Government without this continuing dependence on oil and gas and the vagaries of the market and we have heard nothing.

I come back to the revenue statement. We have spoken about the Revenue Stabilization Fund on numerous occasions. It is becoming boring speaking about it, but we have to speak about it because it is important for us to know whether the Government intends to legislate on this important matter. They did put about \$400 million into the Fund last year, but they continue to say that within the Ministry of Finance they were considering whether that was the best way to go. Although in the *Social and Economic Policy Framework* document, which accompanied the budget of 2004, there was a section on page 19, which made a very clear statement by the Government that they were committed to the Revenue Stabilization Fund. Page 19 says:

“Government views the Revenue Stabilization Fund (RSF) as an important management tool for not only improving domestic savings and making provision for the revenue shortfalls, but also as a measure of fiscal discipline. To this end, Government has re-evaluated the provisions of the RSF and is of the view that...”

They were going to come with formulizing it. We have heard nothing since. As of now, and particularly today when they have come for \$600 million more to spend, I am not clear on what surplus revenues they expect at the end of the year out of which the \$600 million would come, and how much would go to the Revenue Stabilization Fund.

If I estimate the surplus revenues from the price of oil and gas to be about \$ 1.2 billion for this year—I know that oil companies would have all kinds of

deductibles they would want to apply to avoid passing revenues on to the Government and there is where the new oil and gas tax regime would have to come in, but I can only go with what I have. If we are dealing with excess revenues of \$1.2 billion, on the basis of the formula that we left behind, 40 per cent would have gone to the Revenue Stabilization Fund, 40 per cent to the Consolidated Fund and what we would therefore be dealing with is additional spending capacity of \$500 million for the Revenue Stabilization Fund and let us say, \$200 million, on the basis of our formula, to the Dollar for Dollar Programme. I will come back to that Dollar for Dollar Programme in a minute.

I would like the Minister, in closing this debate, or someone speaking during the course of this debate, to clarify the Government's position on the Revenue Stabilization Fund and I would like to get clarification on the whole question of surplus revenues expected to the end of the year on the basis of the current price of oil.

I would hope to hear something from the Government, in this mid-term review of the budget, of the public debt. The Prime Minister also announced that they would continue to pursue strategies to reduce the public debt and it would be interesting to hear now what those strategies have been so far and how they have impacted upon the public debt to date and projected to the end of the year.

In this mid-year review I also would have liked to have heard and would like to hear during the course of the debate, about the success of Government's initiatives in the diversification or the transformation of the economy. We all accept, both sides, that we cannot continue to have this almost complete dependence on oil and gas. I find it unfortunate sometimes when they speak. On one hand the Prime Minister says that he wishes to have the maximum return to the country on this non-renewable resource, but sometimes they speak as if this non-renewable resource would never end. Therefore sometimes when we speak about the diversification of the economy, I do not think they take us seriously. If they believe—and I think the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries was quoted in the Senate just this week speaking as if oil and gas will continue to flow forever and forever in this country; something about what his father told him when he was a young boy.

Our strategy, in preparation for the day when oil and gas will be depleted in this country, was two-fold. Number one was to increase the intellectual capital of the country which is where there was a considerable focus on education, which led into the Dollar for Dollar, which led to the putting aside by the UNC government of \$250 million, and in that intellectual capital issue, we spoke of the fact that technology is driving the world. We spoke of the fact that Trinidad and

Tobago was way behind in the use of technology both in our private lives and in our public lives. We spoke of, apart from increasing the number of students getting tertiary education through mechanisms like Dollar for Dollar, we spoke of the Science and Technology Park in Wallerfield because we thought that technology ought to be the direction. It is not to say that they are not doing some things, which are quite in sync with that. They took the Dollar for Dollar Programme and renamed it GATE and the Science and Technology Park and called it Wallerfield whatever. *[Interruption]* It is not the same thing. You know names mean a lot. When you talk about the Wallerfield Industrial Park and when we talk about the Science and Technology Park, they convey two totally different things and we can debate which one conveys the best, but we would not get there.

I am making the point that the first strategy for dealing with this depletion of oil and gas, whether it happens 40 or 50 years from now, is increasing the brainpower of our people in substantial ways because this 8 per cent of secondary students going to university per annum is way off from the 60 per cent where developed countries are and ought to be.

If we are talking about developed country status by 2020, then we only have 15 years to move us from 8 per cent in university to minimum 50 per cent. *[Interruption]* We may have a difference of opinion as to whether it is 40 or 50 per cent. I am only making the point that to achieve developed country status, to have the brainpower to drive our economy at that time, particularly with the depletion of oil and gas, we need to do far more, and I will demonstrate that you are not doing sufficient in that respect.

The second strategy for the diversification in the economy—and it has nothing to do with whether oil and gas is depleted or not; it has to do with the fact that even today, we must reduce that dependence on oil and gas. I think that both the Government—and we recognize that the three areas in which that can and should be accomplished are in manufacturing, agriculture and tourism.

While the Prime Minister made the statement about the Government having the obligation to provide the environment to facilitate the growth of the manufacturing sector, and while a number of initiatives have been announced with committees to review the manufacturing and service sectors, and while they have talked about the Wallerfield Science Park and assisting in re-engineering businesses, I do not think that sufficient has been done in that respect.

In February 2004, the headline of an editorial in the *Guardian*—it might be four months ago—was “Still awaiting trade measures”. If you talk to the private

sector today, while they do not deny that there has been much collaboration with the Government and many initiatives talked about, nothing is happening. In fact, it is safe to say that manufacturing and agriculture are in stagnation at the moment, when today we should be doing things to allow these sectors to make substantial leaps, particularly in the light of the FTAA that is right before us.

Manufacturers are still saying that it is far easier to import than to export and we are dealing with agencies of the Government and legislation that is supposed to be there to help in creating that facilitating environment. Like I said, I am sure that much is being discussed, but much more is desired in their ability to make things happen. Maybe they are too comfortable in the fact that oil and gas revenues are flowing. I would want them, when they speak during this debate, to tell us about their success with some of these initiatives.

In the case of agriculture—again an industry in stagnation—when I look at the budget statement, it says that Caroni (1975) Limited is intended to play a pivotal role in facilitating the new thrust in agriculture. That is fine, but nothing has happened to date with respect to the allocation of land to the Caroni workers, whether for agriculture or otherwise. So at Caroni (1975) Limited, which is supposed to play a pivotal thrust in energizing and facilitating agriculture as another sector to create jobs as a move away from the dependence on oil and gas, nothing is happening.

In the same budget speech, they talked about concentration on the production of certain crops, introducing up-to-date technology, agricultural research, providing greater support to farmers, containing praedial larceny and providing appropriate protection against foreign competition. Of course, in all that is the question of allocation of arable lands, probably doing nothing right now, to workers to whom they had promised the land. Nothing is happening.

That is on the revenue side, Mr. Speaker. On the expenditure side, the Government is seeking to have approval to send \$820 million more this year—\$660 million, but when you consider the variation of how many million, you are dealing with spending an additional \$820 million. Interesting to note that in the variation, \$100 million is coming from the Ministry of Education and \$40 million from the Ministry of Health—the same sectors, the same area for which the Prime Minister announced a special commission of enquiry—but reducing funding both to health and education, the two critical areas requiring all the help they can get in this country.

How are they spending this \$820 million? One would expect that at the time the budget was done the moneys were allocated to the various ministries in

sufficient quantities to do what they had to do for the balance of the year. We know that to spend \$20 billion, a ministry would have gotten demands for \$40 billion and there would have had to be substantial cuts. We know that. In cutting, we would have expected that whatever was given would have been adequate to have the ministries run and that any additional revenue that they are fortunate to come in possession of; any additional revenue that they need to spend, they would spend in the areas of greatest concern at the time.

In the case of families, if we are accustomed to a particular revenue, we know what we have to spend on food, et cetera, and when we get a bonus, we would put aside some money and save some and that is where the Revenue Stabilization Fund comes in. In spending the balance, we would try to pick the critical areas—a leaking roof, et cetera. If you were to ask what is the most critical thing facing this country today, everybody would be unanimous in the view that it is crime.

Mr. Speaker, of this \$820 million, \$32 million is being given to crime. Less than 10 per cent of this \$820 million is being given to the area of greatest need in this country. They are trying to say that it is not a question of resources, they have sufficient manpower and it is only a question of legislation. Well, we will deal with legislation at another time.

If you have the Police Service Welfare Association applying to the Commissioner of Police to march on the basis that they are not being given proper equipment and they talk about bulletproof vests and favouritism to this new Anti-Crime Unit; if they catch four kidnappers in San Fernando and the mayor had to lend three cars to the police, you cannot tell me that it is only a question of legislation and not of resources. If it is a question of resources, why, with \$820 million to spend would you give \$30 million and that \$30 million is not to the regular police, but to the Anti-Crime Unit?

The Prime Minister, in delivering his budget speech, did an unprecedented thing. After the regular introduction, his first heading was national security. He said that the criminals were rampant and he vowed to carry the fight to the criminals and announced an 11-point plan to do it.

Number one in the 11-point plan is the creation of the Anti-Crime Unit, with immediate effect, and the promotion of Colonel Peter Joseph with immediate effect. Now we are seeing that they will be getting \$32 million for that.

The second point in his 11-point plan was giving resources, the most modern equipment now used in countries around the world, to the Riot Squad. While the Prime Minister acknowledged that demonstration is a legitimate form of

expression in a democracy, he went on to say that he would not tolerate lawlessness from either criminals or anybody else and that he was going to prepare for the “anybody else” by beefing up the Riot Squad and giving them the most modern equipment in the world—point 2 of his 11-point plan.

That goes to show the thinking and priority. Nowhere in the 11-point plan was there anything to do with giving the other part of the police the most modern equipment in the world. Nowhere in that 11-point plan did they talk about giving training to this sufficiently manned police service of 7000-plus persons. They recognized the need for training and professionalism but nowhere in that 11-point plan did it say that maybe because recruitment in the police service had not been of the best because the standards were too low, they needed to invest, as a matter of urgency, in a most comprehensive fashion, in remedial training. That is why the Government has not been successful in fighting crime and that is why crime has been getting worse by the day.

When you look at the numbers as presented, you would see that the Ministry of National Security is getting over \$100 million; but \$90 million of that really is going to salaries and overtime, so I put that under staff costs. That has nothing to do with getting additional money and spending it in the areas of greatest need. I do not want someone to get up and say that I have not read my numbers right.

Mr. Speaker, interesting, of the \$820 million, \$32 million is going to crime; our area of greatest need, and \$45 million is going to scavenging. Imagine that! Scavenging has become an area of greatest need in this country today, more than crime. One would have expected that when the budget was first developed and the funds allocated in October, that there would have been sufficient money to deal with scavenging throughout Trinidad and Tobago. I am signalling the priority.

Education, an area of great need in this county—\$100 million comes out from the allocation. I will concede, however, that \$123 million is being allocated to training. I will let you know how I arrive at this \$123 million. This \$123 million is made up of moneys for the University of Trinidad and Tobago, moneys for on-the-job training, YTEPP and about \$20 million more for scholarships; the Laventille Technical Institute—I think that is being done—\$123 million for a net increase for education of \$123 million, out of this massive \$820 million.

Mr. Speaker, \$5.6 million of \$123 million is to deal with remedial education and full tuition scholarships for students of the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT), that popular institute that we debate here all the time. I want to spend a little time on that because I need to get some assurance from the Prime Minister on this issue.

On COSTAATT's remedial education and full tuition, I would want to know who would benefit from that \$5.6 million, which is the first tranche of funds to flow into that fund. What are the criteria and who will decide who will get? I am raising this in the context of the Government's previously announced policy on targetting Afro-Trinidadian under-performing youth, because if they continue to pursue the policy of targetting under-performing Afro-Trinidadian youth, then those targeted Afro-Trinidadian youth will benefit from the funds set aside for remedial education and scholarships.

When that policy statement was seen in a government document, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance immediately said it was a mistake and an errata sheet was issued. I believe the Prime Minister himself announced somewhere that that was not government policy. Then we had the Member of Diego Martin West getting up in parliament and defending the policy. Up to today, because the Member for Diego Martin West, supported by the Member for Diego Martin East—senior ranking Cabinet Ministers—the Member of Diego Martin West who wishes to challenge and replace the Member for San Fernando East and who maybe, wants to prove to the Member for San Fernando East that he is more leader than he—[*Interruption*] Well, he is trying to prove something to you. The Member of Diego Martin West gets up in parliament and defends the policy.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, that singular policy statement is what drove us to file that Motion that is currently being debated on Private Members' Day. All along I, in particular, had been talking about discrimination in the context of party. I conceded in piloting that Motion, when we talk discrimination against party in this country, it is very easy for people to interpret it as racial discrimination, because of the composition of the respective parties. I kept it at party discrimination, until that policy.

When I raised that matter in the debate—incidentally I should read this in the record again—I was charged with racial inciting. *Newsday* is the one, not the *Probe*, in an editorial said on the same defence of that policy:

“...we must say that we are quite alarmed that...the Government should see the need to have such a racially biased recruitment programme.”

That is the *Newsday* speaking. It went on to say in the editorial:

“We believe that, in a multi-ethnic society such as ours, where every creed and race should find an equal place, such programmes would inevitably be seen as inequitable, discriminatory and provocative and will

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only lead to an aggravation of social tensions which are already a serious cause for concern.’”

For them to get up and keep accusing us of racial incitement, they are not speaking the truth. I was told that in moving this Motion, I had to do it. Somebody called me a reluctant bride.

Mr. Speaker: I think you need to be very careful of the distinction you are drawing. We have a Motion that is currently before the House. If you are relating it to expenditure, that is fine. Draw the distinction between the Motion and expenditure, in terms of the COSTAATT position you are taking.

Mr. G. Yetming: I have before me a request for approval to spend \$5.6 million to deal with remedial training for COSTAATT students. I am asking the Government for clarification on its earlier announced policy on targeting Afro-Trinidadians. I am appealing to the Prime Minister because of what his senior Cabinet Member said in the debate.

The Member for Diego Martin West raised a very interesting point. When everybody else was saying that I was made to do it, he had a different slant. His slant was that I wanted to improve or elevate my chances at the leadership of the United National Congress. As he puts it: “There are 15 Indians across on that side and one non-Indian. They took the non-Indian to file that Motion. That non-Indian filed the Motion because he wants to prove that he is more Indian than the 15 Indians.”

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, that is not the debate.

Mr. Speaker: I ruled just now. The context in which you are raising that matter is for another occasion. Relate it to the expenditure please.

Mr. G. Yetming: I would like to finish on that point because it is relevant. The Member for Diego Martin West, who saw that Motion in a leadership context and who is interested in leadership on the other side, is upset with his Prime Minister's plan to bring more people into the party. It would be a glorious day when the membership of the PNM would reflect the society. The PNM brought Sen. the Hon. Sahadeo and my friend, the Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, there is a group within that party that does not like what it is doing. The Member for Diego Martin West got up to defend a policy that the Prime Minister said was not policy. It was only to prove to that group within the party that he is leadership.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. G. Yetming: I would leave that alone. The World Bank Report, from which many of the COSTAATT issues emerged, was being suggested as a policy document of the UNC Government of the time. I would only say that in government they know and we know, one gets all kinds of reports: some you commission, some you do not. The fact that a report lands on a Minister's desk, commissioned or not, does not mean that everything that is stated in the report or recommendations are recommendations that the Government is forced or obliged to implement. While that World Bank Report could have said all kinds of things, it is wrong and deceitful of them to suggest that that racial policy was a policy of the UNC.

I will quote the Prime Minister in closing the debate on the budget.

“We are going to spend our time next year trying to make existing programmes more and more efficient, and to ensure they are given a completely national reach.”

He acknowledges that the programmes they implemented did not have a national reach. It continues:

“We admit that some of our programmes have not yet attained that level, but we have moved so fast, trying to intervene so rapidly, particularly in the areas which are hot spots, that on occasion when such an allegation...”

He is talking about racism.

“is levelled at us, it is not entirely without foundation,...”

He acknowledged that.

During the Finance Committee, the Prime Minister, in response to a question, made reference to a directory of services. When I piloted the discrimination Motion I made two recommendations—you were not here at the time I did it—at the end of my presentation. I said first that the Government should produce a directory of social services. I made reference to the fact that every household receive three cable television guides every week. I said if they prepare a directory

of services, where they name every social service that is available, where people could go in the different parts of the country, to whom they should go, what telephone numbers, criteria, application forms, and so on, and issue it quarterly because people will change in offices. I made that suggestion. I do not want to take paternity for this thing.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for giving way. A draft of that directory was received this week. We are working on it. It should be out not too long from now.

Mr. G. Yetming: I am pleased. Whether that directory came as a result of a suggestion I made, or it came as a result of whatever, the fact is that it is being done.

I want to ask two things. I wish the Prime Minister would do it himself. That COSTAATT policy that was published for which an errata sheet was issued which he had, I believe, publicly said was not policy, subsequently, and on many occasions, including during the debate on the Private Member's Day, two senior Cabinet Members continued to defend it. We are still confused as to whether it is policy or not. I ask it in the context of the \$5.6 million. He needs to make a clear statement. The question of racial discrimination and the question of discrimination generally will not go. The Government has to see it. They know the nature of this society. They claim that there are people fanning the flames, although they believe that of everyone on this side. They must accept the fact that as a government, they have an extra responsibility, an extra duty to convince the population that they are not discriminating, whether party or racial, in the application of their policies and in the dispensation of these social grants.

The directory is one mechanism. If everyone is aware of where they can go, no one could complain about not getting. I am suggesting that a greater responsibility lies with the Government in doing things. The *Guardian*, in an editorial on crime on Tuesday, June 21, said:

“Mr. Manning needs to back up his words with action. That will convince the people of his sincerity.”

I use the same words in the context of this. People must not continue to feel that he is mouthing certain things and doing certain things out of expediency, while he allows his Ministers to go and do the things they want to do. He must give the population the feeling that he is sincere in his intentions and all that he is doing, with respect to the broadening of his base, out of a deep sincerity and interest in Trinidad and Tobago.

I made two suggestions in that debate. I would repeat the second one just for the sake of repetition for the Prime Minister, seeing that he is here. I said that he should appoint a Minister of Cabinet rank whose responsibility is to ensure his policies, particularly in the context of equity and equitable sharing and distribution. We all recognize that as Prime Minister and Ministers, very often we do not know what people below us are doing. We do not know what the chairmen and CEOs of state enterprises are doing. If we are lodging complaints, it cannot be for every complaint we lay here, one hundred per cent of them are without foundation. I suggested then, and I suggest again, appoint a Minister of Cabinet rank. Let him review all his policies to ensure that the application is fair, equitable and consistent with what he sees is right for Trinidad and Tobago. It cannot be that people are complaining, it may not be a question of real discrimination, party or otherwise, it could be a question of perceived discrimination. Whether it is real or perceived, you still have a responsibility to deal with it, to prove and to show by your words, deeds and actions, that it is not the case.

In the further allocation of the \$820 million, I spoke of a net amount of \$23 million going to education, low in the context of the \$800 million. The sum of \$32 million will be spent on crime; \$27 million will be spent on housing, low in the context of the desire to build 10,000 homes per year; low in the context of the squatting that continues to take place in this country. The sum of \$30 million will be spent on agriculture, which is the subsidy to Caroni (1975) Limited. I spoke earlier about the decline in agriculture and the fact that they are not meeting some of what they said in the budget. The \$30 million had to do with the Caroni (1975) Limited subsidy. The sum of \$75 million would be spent on property expenses: South Africa and London. \$116 million is allocated for personnel expenses. The sum of \$186 million is allocated to infrastructure. I do not have a problem with that. A modern infrastructure in Trinidad and Tobago is critical to the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Therefore, whether it is roads, rivers or drainage, the \$186 million is money to be spent, although I have lumped in the money for BWIA into that. I am of the view that our air links to the rest of the world is a critical part of our infrastructure. When BWIA ran for money, I did not hold the view that BWIA should be chased away and be left to disappear.

Mr. Manning: I thank the Member for giving way. Would you therefore say that BWIA is of strategic importance to Trinidad and Tobago and the region?

Mr. G. Yetming: I agree that BWIA or a Trinidad and Tobago airline is critical. Yes.

Mr. Manning: Strategic importance?

Mr. G. Yetming: Absolutely. That is why I did not agree with the nature of the privatization that took place some years ago with Acker. I did not agree with that. I could support any request. If it is BWIA could make money, that is fine. I would suggest that no Minister of Government is capable of responding to a request from BWIA for money, particularly when the plane is locked up in Miami and they need the money next week. No Minister of Government, even with his reputation on the board, could analyze the information in such a fashion to make a good decision on whether they could get the \$50 million or not. I would strongly suggest—if we agree that it is a critical part and of strategic importance—my advice is not to invite a consultant into BWIA once every couple of years when we feel that somebody did something wrong. I would put a consultant there on a permanent basis reporting to me.

We have to make up our minds that in the airline world today, with the price of oil and wars, for the airline to continue to fly, it would probably always require some degree of subsidy. I am not prepared to respond to subsidy today for tomorrow. I do not believe that I could rely on a board member or a management person. If it is that I have to engage at the expense of the Government, a permanent individual with the expertise to be working alongside the board and the CEO, then I would be alerted long before it actually happens, when they need money.

What I do not agree with is the manner in which the Government is treating with Liat. Prime Minister Gonsalves flies in one day. They are in deep trouble. They need how many millions and they get it. I do not see the similar action, I do not see a similar concern by the Government on the inner workings of Liat, to ensure that they reduce themselves to some degree of efficiency. When we force BWIA to send 300 people home, in order to get whatever benefit, then you need to do the same with the overstaffed Liat. It cannot be. However, I would concede that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has a certain degree of responsibility towards the Caribbean region. Whether it is Liat or the Caricom trade sector facility, which \$22 million is going into, I have no problem with these things.

What I would want the Government to do is to be very clear to the population on the specific measures it intends to take to help the Caribbean region, accepting that some things have to be done. In principle, I am totally supportive of this Caricom trade sector facility. I want to believe that there is a trade sector facility that is of a substantially greater value available to the Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, I would want the Government to tell us, apart from the specifics on the oil and gas additional revenues, how much success they have had in the three areas they announced for revenue improvement: non-oil tax regime, VAT, oil and gas. I would want to have some more up-to-date information on their success in the diversification of the economy. I want to know more of what they are doing with the manufacturers.

Mr. Valley: Let me thank the Member for giving way. I simply want to ask him whether the fact that for the first six months we have seen an increase in revenues and we have stated that increase in revenue was as a consequence of an increase in corporate tax receipts as well as individual tax received, whether by itself—it is said that the proof of the pudding is in the eating—that ought not to suggest—taking into consideration that the marginal rate of tax in the non-oil sector has declined to 30 per cent—that something is happening there stimulating the sector?

Mr. G. Yetming: It does, but all I am saying is that if you are dealing with a mid-year review of the budget, I would like to get the details which you have not indicated. You said that you are going to end the year with a deficit of \$313 million. I do not think you indicated what you are likely to end the year with this time around. You must have projections. *[Interruptions]* I am asking for it now. We will get it. I am only recapping. I would like to know more of the Government's success is in the manufacturing sector getting that, not just ready for FTAA, but in the context of the diversification of the economy. I think that our performance in agriculture is poor and we need to be told of what steps you are taking. I have expressed some concerns about the manner in which this \$800 million is allocated. I have not seen the allocation in the priority areas, as we ought to be doing.

Finally, I would like to get the continued reassurance with more tangible action from the Prime Minister on this whole question of the equitable distribution of the resources of this country to all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, we have heard the usual waffle from the Member for St. Joseph. It is necessary to put on the record again what the true facts are. *[Interruption]* You cannot deal with anyone. Let us deal with the facts. The Member for St. Joseph, in his quest for leadership of the UNC—there are about five of them competing over there. There is the Member for Couva South, playing dead to catch corbeau alive. There is the Member for St. Joseph saying: “Changes

must be made now.” There is the neophyte Member for Pointe-a-Pierre who just come, but wants to take over. There is the Member from Oropouche, waiting in the wings. Of course, there is the sleeper, the Member for St. Augustine, hoping all of them will destroy themselves. How could I leave out the Member for Caroni East, the anointed one, the heir apparent. There are approximately six of them over there. The Member for Siparia is not in the race. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. C. Imbert: I have to place all of this in context. This is why the Member for St. Joseph is willing to put his credibility on the line and to place inaccuracies in the public record with regard to the actions of the former UNC administration.

I wish to put on the record again what the true facts are, with respect to the policy that appeared in the social and economic policy framework, with respect to at-risk groups in the society. It is a matter of fact, under the UNC Government, a study was commissioned with the assistance of the World Bank, looking at social equity in Trinidad and Tobago. That is a fact. [*Interruption*] Be quiet and sit down.

Mr. Speaker: That is unparliamentary.

Mr. Ramsaran: On a point of order. He is misleading the House. I have the evidence.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Hon. Colm Imbert: Mr. Speaker, this is why I told him to be quiet and sit down. I knew it was not a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to you. It is a matter of fact that in 2000, when the UNC was in office—

Mr. Ramsaran: [*Words expunged*]

Mr. Speaker: No. Hon. Member for Chaguanas, I ask that you apologize. Firstly, you need to withdraw the statement and apologize to the House.

Mr. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I would apologize for the statement. This is what I consider to be bias in this House.

Mr. Speaker: No, please.

Mr. Ramsaran: He is misleading the country. I have the document here.

Mr. Speaker: Are you withdrawing the statement and apologizing?

Mr. Ramsaran: This is exactly—

Mr. Speaker: Please, expunge the comment from the Member from the record.

Hon. C. Imbert: For those who want to know—not the Members on the other side—you can go on to the World Bank’s website on the Internet and you can pull down the document which was published in 2000. You can go to the first page and you will see that it was done in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development of the UNC. It is on the website. Not only was that study commissioned by the Member for Chaguanas, not only was it published, not only does it appear on the official record of the World Bank as a government document of Trinidad and Tobago, that document clearly enunciated the policy that there are at-risk groups in the society and you need to make special arrangements for them.

I know why the Member for Chaguanas is getting hot. It is there. Anybody can go. Any member of the press can go and look on the World Bank website and they would see it. It is a year 2000 document. That is why he is getting hot. The truth offends. The document was done in collaboration with senior public servants in the Ministry of Social Development under the then Minister of Social Development, the Member for Chaguanas. It is that document that formulated the policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, that if there are at-risk groups in the society, we should make special arrangements for them.

Mr. Speaker: May I inform you that the same rule that applies to the hon. Member would apply to you. If you relate it to the money that was voted, it is all right. Do not carry on with that line please.

Hon. C. Imbert: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. The Member for St. Joseph—I took copious notes of what the Member said—made the point that he saw an allocation. If you look at page 27 or 28 of the document before us, the document indicates that a sum of \$5.6 million has been allocated in this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill for financial aid programmes at COSTAATT. It was the Member for St. Joseph who introduced this into the debate, based on something in the document before the House.

The Member for St. Joseph demanded to know what was the Government’s policy with respect to at-risk youth in the society and whether the \$5.6 million that has been allocated for financial aid programmes under COSTAATT, had anything to do with a phrase that appeared in the *Social and Economic Policy Framework* which was tabled in the budget. He wanted to know. He was very specific. He demanded to know whether the \$5.6 million, which is allocated for transitional programmes, scholarships and bursaries, had anything to do with that policy that appeared in the *Social and Economic Policy Framework* document.

It is in that context that I am indicating that the policy of which he is complaining was the brainchild of the United National Congress. It came out of a study by the United National Congress. It was implemented. What I find so dishonest is that the Member for Chaguanas is fully aware of the fact that after that 2000 study was published—the Member for Chaguanas, I am certain other Members opposite are aware that the UNC administration followed up that study and the findings of that study by implementing pilot programmes, targeting at-risk groups, at-risk youths, young African males between the ages of 17—24 in the East Port of Spain area. The Member for Chaguanas knows that. In fact, he conceded that to me himself. Flowing from that World Bank document, he initiated pilot programmes targeting young African males between the ages of 17—24 in East Port of Spain. That is what I find so dishonest. It was a UNC policy. They implemented pilot programmes. When they see the same thing appear in a PNM document, all of a sudden we are the biggest racists in town. It is an absurdity!

I think the Member for St. Joseph needs to take a credibility test. It was his administration that enunciated the policy. It was the administration of the hon. Members Opposite that initiated the pilot programmes. Do not hide from the truth now. I would say now, the financial aid programmes that are being funded under this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill—the scholarships and bursaries—are targeting young people who are underdeveloped, who are in need of assistance, financially challenged, who for one reason or another—based on their environment and social circumstances—cannot get access into the tertiary education system.

Mr. Singh: Would you inform this honourable House at what stage of the process and whether you would have clear published criteria for testing this? What committee? Will it be post-matriculation or prior-matriculation requirements access that would be given to the full scholarships, tuition, transitional studies?

Hon. C. Imbert: Certainly. This is a matter that we have raised before in this House. I thank the Member for Caroni East for reminding me of it. There will be clearly articulated policies. We will not favour any particular group in the society. I hope that answers the question of the Member for St. Joseph. What we are going to do is favour students from underprivileged backgrounds, students who are financially challenged and students who, for one reason or another, have dropped out of the education system and need to be encouraged and given incentives to re-enter the education system. No one would be excluded.

I am giving this House a commitment that there will be clearly published guidelines and policies for all these financial aid programmes. The overriding

policy—[*Interruption*] If the noise from pit over there could just go down a bit. For the Member for St. Joseph to deal with his specific question, the overriding policy is inability to pay. Based on means testing and other well-established scientific assessment procedures, one will establish the economic circumstances of students. A means test is based on means testing. That is the only thing that can be tested. They would not be testing any other attribute or characteristic of the student.

I will give the Members for Caroni East and St. Joseph my personal assurance that these policies will be widely articulated. They will be published for the public to absorb and understand. You can ask any question you wish about how we translated the policy into action and how people become recipients of these bursaries. As I have said before—this is the mistake the Member for St. Joseph makes. In order to double the participation rate in tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago, which everyone would agree is a desirable objective, we have to have the whole country on board. In order to become a developed country to get to the state we want by the year 2020, we need all hands on deck. There is no room for discrimination in a policy like that.

At the present time, there are less than 20,000 persons enrolled in the cohort between 17 and 25. There are less than 20,000 persons pursuing tertiary education.

When one looks around the globe and one sees the kind of levels that we need to get up to, in terms of technical training, university education and technical and vocational education, we need to get that up to the 40,000 and 50,000 level. We need to double the number of persons who are involved in post-secondary and tertiary-level education programmes. That is the only way. We need to get everybody; whether they are UNC supporters, PNM supporters or if they do not support any political party. We need to get every single person on board and involved with us in our developmental thrust.

This is why the Government has demonstrated its commitment to national development. I am glad the Member St. Joseph did some addition. Your numbers are not entirely accurate, Member for St. Joseph. The actual increased figure for the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is an increase of \$130 million, not \$123 million. If you look at the actual schedule you will see that the increase is \$130 million. I am not sure if you attended the Finance Committee, but if you look at the breakdown of the supplementary allocations to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education you would have seen that the \$130 million is composed primarily of development projects.

It is necessary to upgrade the John S. Donaldson and San Fernando Technical Institutes; the Point Fortin Vocational Centre; to start rehabilitation work at the

Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry; and to establish the University of Trinidad and Tobago. You would have seen we have provided in this legislation before the Parliament today—almost \$40 million has been allocated for start-up courses for the University of Trinidad and Tobago, demonstrating how serious we are about increasing the opportunities that are available for our young people to further their education and become productive members of our society.

I wish to give hon. Members the assurance. I know, as I said before, there are all sorts of things going on in the party. There is a posture that some of them adopt when they deal with issues in this House. I want to give them the assurance that our GATE programme—let me deal with that. The GATE programme is a significant improvement on the Dollar for Dollar programme. The Dollar for Dollar programme only gave financial assistance to students attending the University of the West Indies. It was limited to 50 per cent of the tuition fees.

What the PNM administration has recognized is that there are a number of students who are unable to find the other part of their tuition fees. That was what was so inequitable about the Dollar for Dollar programme. I do not expect Members on the other side to admit it publicly that there were inequities in the Dollar for Dollar programme. Persons attending private institutions were excluded from the programme. Poor and underprivileged students who could not find the first dollar for the Dollar for Dollar programme were, therefore, inhibited and did not continue along the path of entering tertiary education.

What we have implemented is a bursary system. The bursary system, as opposed to a scholarship system, recognizes that there are a large number of persons who, for reasons of economics—their background, they do not come from wealthy families—may be forced at a young age to become breadwinners in the family and do not have the financial wherewithal to find the first 50 per cent of their tuition fees. Therefore, they are excluded from the education system.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, studies in developed countries have demonstrated that when you have an inequitable system of financial assistance for higher education, the output that you would get out of your education system would not match your country's development needs. If the intake of students is coming only from the middle class or the upper class, you may find a concentration in a number of particular professions, and you would not get the proper skills mix, and the broad range of technical competence that is required for a country from developing status to

developed status. This is why progressive countries all over the world have implemented the system of bursaries.

So, you would recognize that there would be a large pool of people who cannot afford to go to university; who cannot afford the 50 per cent tuition fees and, therefore, you would have to use means testing—look at their income, their assets and the income of their family and so forth, and then you could determine that a particular group of students requires financial assistance. That is why in our Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) programme, there is a system where everyone would get a 50 per cent waiver of tuition fees. So, whether you come from a rich background or a poor background, you automatically get a 50 per cent waiver of tuition fees.

The second 50 per cent—this is where GATE is different from the Dollar for Dollar programme—would be given only to those persons who could demonstrate an inability to pay. The principle of social equity is to balance the playing field, as it were, where persons who cannot afford to go to university would be given 100 per cent tuition waiver. We would then get the best students entering the system. There would be a whole range of intake now, whereas before it was concentrated in the middle class and the upper class. When the system is broadened like this to give financial assistance to the underprivileged to enter university, you could now access the entire society. All progressive countries have found that when the system is opened up, you have a number of highly intelligent and motivated people, who would not have been able to go on to university education. Because of the bursary system, they could now become very productive members of the society. [*Desk thumping*] That is one fundamental difference.

The other fundamental difference is that we recognized that we have a capacity problem at the University of the West Indies. We have to be realistic about that matter. The Member for Oropouche who moonlights from time to time as a part-time lecturer at UWI knows of the overcrowding problem at that institution. The intake of students at UWI has gone from 5,000 students to 10,000 students. There has been a 100 per cent enrolment at the UWI over the last five years. [*Interruption*] I am not arguing. I am dealing with facts. The fact is that there is an institution that was designed to deal with a student enrolment of 5,000 students, and that institution is now grappling with an enrolment of 10,000 students.

The information available to me, and from my discussions with the senior administration at UWI, is that they want to go to 15,000 students. I have already told them that they would have to start looking for alternative locations for new

campuses for the University of the West Indies. As far as I am concerned, St. Augustine is totally crowded at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that if we are to increase enrolment in tertiary education, as part of an overall policy to become a developed country, we cannot depend on the public institutions alone. Again, over the last five or seven years, there has been a mushrooming of private tertiary level institutions. Many of these institutions have been in business for 10 to 15 years, and they are achieving the level of credibility that one would want to achieve from these institutions.

Mr. Speaker, whereas five or 10 years ago, there were not many of these private schools, we now have ROYTEC, the School of Accounting and Management Studies, the Caribbean Union College and a number of other institutions. *[Interruption]* Member for Caroni East, I am not arguing, but I am just making the point that if we are going to take the number of persons enrolled in tertiary education from 17,000 to 24,000 then we must call upon the resources of everyone involved in the education system. This is why in the GATE programme there is a fundamental departure from the Dollar for Dollar programme. We are now giving assistance to students who are enrolled in private tertiary level institutions.

Mr. Singh: I want to thank the hon. Member for Diego Martin East for giving way. I think the Member has been proceeding well, in the context of outlining the previous government's Dollar for Dollar plan. The second phase of the Dollar for Dollar programme—providing that there was a regulatory institution for proper accreditation of the programme—was to bring in the private sector. We could not allow the private sector to come in and access government's money until there was a proper accreditation regulatory intuition. That was part of the architecture. So to say that the Dollar for Dollar programme did not provide for the extension of capacity; utilizing the private sector institutions like the Caribbean Union College, ROYTEC and the School of Business and Computer Science is simply not true.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to quibble with the Member for Caroni East, but all I would say is that when the PNM administration took over, the Dollar for Dollar programme was restricted to public institutions. This PNM administration has developed a policy framework which was taken to Cabinet. Cabinet had approved this policy framework, and we have established a new programme, which embraces both public and private intuitions, and which would also give 100 per cent waiver. *[Desk thumping]* I hate to quote the Member for Couva North, but that was a “woulda, coulda, shoulda” speech.

I remember when the UNC came into office and we would say that was our plan, the Member for Couva North used to jump up like a jack-in-the-box and

say: “You all was a woulda, coulda, shoulda government.” Well, Member for Caroni East, your government was a “woulda, coulda, shoulda” government. The fundamental difference is that we are doing it. Whatever was hidden in the cloistered hallways of the minds of the Members on the other side—I do not know what was going on in their heads. I could only deal with what is on the ground, and what is on the public record.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that this mantra of discrimination that the Member for St. Joseph likes to bleat about so much, I would like to ask Members opposite that as we develop the education programme to make higher education accessible to all—the GATE programme will be implemented in September, 2004; our transitional studies programme in the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT); our community education programme; our book grants; our work studies scholarship and so forth unfold and are made available to the public—the Members opposite should observe and see the equality and the impartial nature in which we are going to develop our higher education programmes. As I said, the only way that this country could be developed is if everyone supports the Government’s initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that today we have social problems in Trinidad and Tobago. There is a large pool of young unemployed, angry youths. We must not hide from these things. This is a fact. There is a large group of frustrated youths outside there. One of the reasons they are frustrated is that they do not have employable skills. These are facts. I do not think that we need to belabour these issues. These are realities.

One of the initiatives of this PNM administration—I do not want to hear that you “woulda, coulda, shoulda” do it as well—is that we have recognized the social inequities in this society, and the gap between the rich and the poor would continue to widen; and the frustration of our young people would continue to build. So, we have to equip our young people with marketable skills and give them an opportunity to see a professional career; to see career advancement; to see how they could get involved in entrepreneurship; and how they could develop and improve themselves.

In the first week of July, we will be implementing our Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme. As a radical departure from the past, and recognizing that education is evolving all the time, this is a workplace-based programme, where the workplace-based competencies of the trainees would be assessed on the job site. So, persons who are academically challenged, but who have the aptitude to acquire a skill, a trade or even a profession in due course, for persons like that, we

have recognized—and, again, progressive countries all over the world—that there are different ways of educating people. There is the traditional classroom system; the chalk and talk system; the academic taught system; the vocational system; and the On-the-Job Training (OJT) programme. So, in our Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme—as I said, they would get tired of me very soon.

Mr. S. Panday: You did not prepare yourself.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I need to explain exactly what we are trying to achieve with our Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme. The construction sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in the country. As with any economy, once there is economic growth in a country, one of the first sectors that would expand is the construction sector. Over the last two or three years, if one looks back, one would see that there has been continuous expansion in the construction sector in Trinidad and Tobago. With projected revenues coming from oil and gas over the next 20 to 25 years, one has determined that there would be a continuous demand for persons in the construction industry—persons at the level of the technician, persons at the level of the professional, persons at the level of the craftsman and so forth.

Today, in Trinidad and Tobago, there are a number of construction trades that are in heavy demand for things as rudimentary as plumbing, electrical installation, carpentry, masonry, welding and so forth. We are initiating our Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme, and the first phase is in the construction sector. With this programme, we are going to keep building the number of recruits into the programme. We have been talking with employers to get placement for our trainees. So this would be a realistic training programme. We have held discussions with the Chamber of Commerce. We are looking at manufacturing companies that manufacture products for the construction industry; we are looking at the block making factories that construct materials for the construction sector; we are looking at using these local manufacturing companies to produce local products; and we are also looking at using them as training grounds for persons in the construction trades.

Mr. Speaker, one of the features of economic growth in Trinidad and Tobago is that there is a demand for construction materials and there is a demand for construction personnel. Over the last two or three years, there has been a shift in Trinidad and Tobago from the usage of local materials towards a preference for imported materials. If one examines most of the high-rise buildings that are under construction now in Trinidad and Tobago, one would see that they are using artificial cladding and imported components. Traditionally, they would have used block-wall and masonry.

The adverse side effect from this is that it shifts the demand in the construction sector away from the masonry trades. For example, when you import a pre-fabricated wall, the installation requirements are much more rudimentary than in the traditional block-wall construction. So, there is foreign exchange leakage and the suppressing of a very important construction trade.

The local construction manufacturing companies have approached us, through the Chamber of Commerce, to see whether we could set up training programmes in their factories and so forth, which would assist in the utilization of products from companies like Bestcrete, Abel and so forth. This would also assist in the conservation of foreign exchange and the training of an entire cadre of skilled masons and persons in the masonry trades. That is one example of one of the areas that we would be going into.

In addition, if anyone on the other side was paying attention—you know, they are making a lot of noise about the La Brea constituency. If any of the hon. Members opposite would bother to take two minutes and go down to the LABDICO Estate in South Trinidad, one would see, for the first time, there is major fabrication of offshore platforms taking place in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what is happening in La Brea. And, of course, they do not want the country to know this; they do not want the country to know that Trinidad and Tobago has advanced to the stage where multinational oil companies have made policy-decisions to locate the fabrication of their offshore platforms in Trinidad and Tobago. Since BP Amoco and BHP have made policy-decisions to fabricate oil platforms in La Brea, this has caused a tremendous demand for welders, particularly welders using the most advanced technology.

Mr. Speaker, two months ago, one of the major welding and fabricating companies in Trinidad and Tobago approached me, and as part of their contract, they are required to train 100 welders in new welding technology. That is a specification requirement of these new platforms that are being built in Trinidad and Tobago. Flowing from a policy-decision from a multinational oil corporation to locate fabrication of offshore platforms in Trinidad and Tobago, we now have a demand for the local skill. So there is now a requirement of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education to put systems in place to train hundreds of welders in the most advanced technology like marine welding and so forth. Recognizing that, this is why in the first phase of our Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme, we would be focusing on the construction area.

As Trinidad and Tobago develops a reputation for being a premier location for many heavy construction activities in the energy sector—previously this would

have taken place in Texas, Louisiana and in the Gulf of Mexico and so forth. These platforms would have been towed from Louisiana or Texas, all the way to Trinidad and Tobago and simply put in position in Trinidad and Tobago. Now, we have an evolution of technology in Trinidad and Tobago, where major components of these platforms are being fabricated in Trinidad and Tobago thus increasing local content; saving foreign exchange; requiring jobs; requiring training; requiring new skills and requiring new initiatives of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Again, I give the Members opposite the assurance that with respect to all of these programmes, there would be social equity; non-partisanship and there would be an impartial approach to the training of persons because the demand is so high.

With respect to the second phase of our Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme, one would see that there is an allocation here of about \$20 million for the balance of this fiscal year, and we are projecting an expenditure of about \$100 million on this programme alone in the fiscal year 2005.

The third phase of this Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme is in the hospitality industry. Persons who are investing in the hospitality industry in Trinidad and Tobago—in hotels and restaurants to support our whole drive towards moving towards developed nation status and towards becoming a centre for economic activity in this part of the hemisphere—one would see that there is significant investment in hotels in Tobago, and now we are seeing investment in hotels in Trinidad. There are also investments with respect to other aspects of the hospitality industry. There is now a tremendous demand for persons in the restaurant trade; for persons working in hotels; for persons who have special skills in food and beverage management; and all the other necessary skills that are required to operate a successful hospitality industry. So, the third phase of our Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme would be in the hospitality sector.

The fourth phase would be in the agriculture sector. Again, for those Members on the other side who want to listen, they would know that over the last 15 or 20 years, there has been a movement of population out of the agricultural estates. Agriculture is no longer attractive to persons. Any Member opposite who has an interest in an estate or knowledge of agricultural production would know how difficult it is to get skilled workers to work on estates and in agricultural production.

Long ago, one could have depended on the extended family to provide the pool of labour for the agricultural sector, but with migration and upward mobility within families in Trinidad and Tobago, the opportunity to use the extended family to provide a labour pool for agricultural estates is no longer available. A

number of agricultural estates in Trinidad and Tobago are going out of production simply because they cannot get persons who are trained in basic rudimentary techniques, for example, sweating the cocoa, or the proper way to prune a citrus estate, or the proper way to deal with the farming of tilapia and so forth. Again, the fourth phase of our Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme would be in the agricultural sector.

In this legislation before us, one would see that we have allocated \$40 million towards the University of Trinidad and Tobago. In the fiscal year 2005, we expect that we would be spending upwards of \$100 million on the University of Trinidad and Tobago. In establishing the University of Trinidad and Tobago as a technological university we are, in fact, keeping abreast of matters. In some aspects we are ahead of many countries of the world that are trying to achieve developed country status.

Mr. Speaker, about 12 months ago, Malaysia established a technological university. When I was reading the speech of the Minister of Higher Education for Malaysia, he said that they were way behind the rest of the world in terms of technological education, and whereas they had other universities dealing with more conventional programmes, the government of Malaysia recognized that there was need to have a university of technology in Malaysia.

So, in establishing the University of Trinidad and Tobago with a technology bias, we are simply following what is happening with the rest of the world. For example, in New Zealand, again, I was reading an address from the Minister of Higher Education in New Zealand, and they have also recognized that in order to upgrade their country, their focus must be on technology education. All the countries in the world that are moving towards improving their standard of living and their developing status are investing in technological education. So, Trinidad and Tobago is well in-step with the rest of the world in this regard. The new university that we are going to establish at Wallerfield would require an expenditure of some \$600 million.

I heard the Member for St. Joseph carrying on about the priorities of this Government and so forth, but I want to tell him that \$600 million is no little piece of money. That is a significant allocation towards tertiary and technology education in the country. We are going to make sure that something real, visible, tangible, productive and worthwhile comes out of that expenditure of \$600 million. [*Desk thumping*] After we have spent that money, there would be a fully functioning and credible University of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] With respect to the University of Trinidad and Tobago, unlike what had happened in the recent past, there would be no “squandermania” on the part of Members on this side.

Mr. Speaker, in developing the University of Trinidad and Tobago, we have established alliances with well-known technology institutes all over the world. We are not going to reinvent the wheel, but we are going to take advantage of what is available in the developed countries of the world. This is why we have formed strategic alliances—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin East has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, the much maligned trip of the Prime Minister to Spain has already borne fruit with a collaborative joint venture between a world class energy institute in Madrid—I think it is the Instituto Superior de la Energia—which is one of the world's leading institutions in energy studies. They have already formed a collaborative venture with the University of Trinidad and Tobago. We would be establishing an institute for energy at the main Wallerfield Campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, in collaboration with that energy institute in Madrid, Spain. This is a direct outcome of that trip to Spain by the hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

We are also forging alliances or developing and upgrading alliances with institutions in Canada, in the United States of America and with our own University of the West Indies. The programmes that we are developing would not be in isolation, but they would have a world perspective and a regional perspective. In addition, recognizing the peculiar needs of Trinidad and Tobago, the Wallerfield Campus would have a virtual aspect to it where much of the training and so forth would be online, and this would be projected to other locations in Trinidad and Tobago. This is why we have an intention to establish an institute for offshore studies in Point Galeota. I am sure that the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro would be happy to hear that.

We intend to build on the existing capacity that exists in the Chaguaramas peninsula where there is the long-standing Fishing Institute and the Institute of Marine Affairs. These institutes would form the nucleus for an institute of Maritime Studies in the northwest part of Trinidad. As I said before, even though the University of Trinidad and Tobago would be focusing on technology education, we would also have a college for liberal arts, public affairs and journalism. [*Desk thumping*] It would be a balanced university. I do not say this for Members on the other side.

A school of journalism has been long overdue in Trinidad and Tobago. I think the only way that we could develop the publishing industry and journalism in Trinidad and Tobago is for us to have our own indigenous institute. I have already initiated discussions with some of the senior journalists in Trinidad and Tobago and getting their views on this matter. [*Interruptions*] We have been getting views and feedbacks from practising journalists in Trinidad and Tobago on what should be the guiding principles; what should be the curriculum; and what should be the policy mandate of the College of Journalism in Trinidad and Tobago. We expect to be able to launch that in the year 2005.

The University of Trinidad and Tobago would be a multi-campus institution. Its main campus would be in Wallerfield, where we would focus on information technology, business studies and energy studies. The Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology has already become the manufacturing and processing technology campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago—renamed now as the Point Lisas Campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. So, we have Wallerfield in the east, the Institute of Maritime Studies that would be in northwest Trinidad; the Institute of Offshore Studies and Offshore Technology that would be in southeast Trinidad. In Southwest Trinidad we would be looking at establishing an institute dealing specifically with the petrochemical industry and the heavy industrial sector. So it is a holistic and national approach to education where we would have a main campus in the east and satellite campuses in strategic locations, incorporating and including every single population area in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what we are doing with the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

We would also be establishing a campus in Tobago. When we put forward our Position Paper for UTT, the Cabinet approved a campus of the UTT to be established in Tobago, and consultation would be held shortly with the Tobago House of Assembly and with other persons in Tobago such as the Member for Tobago East and the Member for Tobago West, on the kind of curriculum; the level of education; and the type of studies that should be held at the UTT campus in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] The intention is, as it is with our current policy, that Tobagonians would be able to get all their university education on-site in Tobago; they would not have to travel to Trinidad. This would give Tobagonians access to higher education that they never had before.

In addition, in our training effort, we have recognized that there are many different categories of students and many different categories of requirements for tertiary education. We are now looking to develop the post-secondary education

system. Whereas the former administration had developed COSTAATT, they never took it to the next stage. COSTAATT has no home; no administrative centre; and there is no COSTAATT campus. They are scattered all over the country in rented accommodation.

If we do not move swiftly, the School of Nursing would be asked to move from the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. The John S. Donaldson Technical Institute is also in a dilapidated condition. So, recognizing that there is a significant cohort of students who may not wish to go on to university education, at this point in time, but require something more than the standard secondary education, there would be post-secondary education and tertiary education programmes that would give them diplomas, certificates, associate degrees and so forth.

We would establish a campus for COSTAATT in the St. Joseph area, on lands just south of the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. This campus would become a centre for learning. This year we have approved the main headquarters for the Institute of Business to be built in that area. This is very close to the Mahatma Gandhi Institute Centre. The headquarters for the National Training Agency is earmarked to be located in that general area; the headquarters for YTEPP would be also centrally located; and the COSTAATT campus would be located in that area at the end of Farm Road, just below the Valsayn area. We are going to be developing a cluster of tertiary level institutions which would provide people with a range of opportunities. So, instead of persons going straight on to university, they could go on to a technician training programme; a nursing programme; a business studies programme and so forth and get a diploma or an associate degree. They could then work for a few years and come back into the system after they have acquired some funds and then move throughout the system.

We are not leaving out the children of the East-West Corridor. There is much old talk about discrimination. The Member for St. Joseph was very careful not to look at the expenditure for infrastructure by this PNM administration in this fiscal year. When I looked at the expenditure on roads, I see that out of a sum of some \$200 million, over \$100 million has been spent and would be spent in areas represented by Members opposite.

You see, the Member for St. Joseph would not read that out. The Member would not read out that we are spending \$30 million on the Mayaro-Guayaguayare Road; that we are spending \$36 million on the Naparima-Mayaro Road; that we are spending \$48 million on the Guaracara-Tabaquite Road; that we

are spending \$43 million on the Couva Main Road and the Cedar Hill Road. None of those areas are in constituencies represented by Members on this side. [*Desk thumping*] The Member would never say that. The Member would never come and say that page 11 of this document shows the inaccuracies and the bogus foolishness from Members opposite about discrimination.

As the Member for Diego Martin East, when my constituents require expenditure on roads, and I have to come into this Parliament and hear all this rubbish about discrimination from the Members opposite; when I open these documents and I see that more than 50 per cent of the expenditure on roads in Trinidad and Tobago is in UNC areas, I get very annoyed. I am fed up with hearing this old talk about discrimination. I am calling on the Government to start spending money in PNM areas. It is about time. [*Desk thumping*] I want equity. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, it is a deliberate strategy of the Members opposite, to come in this House and to cry discrimination. When the Minister in the Ministry of Finance was dealing with Dr. Selwyn Cudjoe's issue, he read out the amount of money that was given to Indian celebrations like Divali celebrations, Indian Arrival Day celebrations and so forth, and the money was three times as much money given by this PNM administration to any Indian festivals when compared to African festivals.

Mr. Speaker, you see, the Members on the other side want to come in this Parliament and pretend. They do not want people to know that this PNM Government is bending backwards. We would continue to bend backwards to facilitate social equity. The Member for St. Joseph spoke about discrimination. [*Interruption*]

If one examines the expenditure during 1996—2001 period, one would see that 90 per cent of the expenditure on infrastructure in this country represented UNC areas. That is a fact. If one goes into the records that is what one would see. If one looks at the record—in terms of expenditure over the last two and a half years by this PNM administration—one would see that this PNM administration has been very even handed and has spent money in every part of Trinidad and Tobago, and this administration has not discriminated against any group in the society. This administration has made sure that it cannot be justifiably accused of discrimination.

The fact of the matter is that when one looks at the expenditure on education and the construction of schools in Trinidad and Tobago, one sees that this PNM administration is being very even handed.

When one looks at roadwork expenditure in this country, one sees that this administration has been very even handed; when one looks at the expenditure for public utilities in Trinidad and Tobago, one would see that this administration is being very even handed. In every aspect of expenditure by this PNM administration, this administration has bent backwards to facilitate the concept of social equity and equal distribution of national resources. It is a fact! It is a strategy of Members on the other side to complain and moan.

I remember in the last PNM administration, the Member for Princes Town complained bitterly that the PNM administration was not spending any money on roads. On that very day, we had paved the road to his house in Princes Town. The Member was carrying on and beating up about discrimination by the PNM administration, and we were paving roads throughout the constituency of Princes Town, on that very day.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that people in this country understand what is going on; it is time that one looks at the actual figures and the statistics; and it is time that one does a holistic, neutral and non-partisan examination of expenditure in this country. If that is done, one would see that this is the most impartial; the most non-partisan; the most neutral; the fairest; and the most even-handed administration that has ever held power in Trinidad and Tobago.

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

Mr. Speaker: I know that we do have two minutes but, perhaps, this is a good time to take the tea break. We would return to the Parliament at 5.10 p.m. Before we demit the Chamber, may I inform Members of the passing of the mother of the hon. Member for La Brea. I think his mother passed away yesterday and was buried early today.

4.29 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.11 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on the Motion before us dealing with the supplementation and variation of the 2004 appropriation and to continue a critical analysis of the Government's spending and policy agenda, as it relates, not only to the 2004 budget, but also to some of the initiatives highlighted in this measure before us today.

I would also take the opportunity, briefly, to respond to a few issues raised by the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, the Member for Diego Martin East. It is not on every occasion that the Member is as entertaining

as he was this afternoon. While some of us might appreciate that level of entertainment, most of us believe that it is not really necessary in the House, before teatime at least, to spend your time joking away on what are serious issues before us.

For the umpteenth time the Member for Diego Martin East came to the House, raised a document and told anyone who cared to listen, although I doubt that anybody on his own side would listen, that the UNC commissioned and published a study and adopted a policy dealing with the issue of affirmative action, that it was the UNC's policy and it was done under the UNC. Nothing I say would register with the Member for Diego Martin East so, clearly, I am not addressing him, but let me repeat for the record—and Members on both sides are aware of this—that the document the Member has been waving around for the last three months or so is really a study done by the World Bank dated June 2000, in which the World Bank made certain policy recommendations based on a type of analysis. This report was made available to the then UNC government.

I challenge the Member for Diego Martin East, he is in office now, to produce a Cabinet minute of a decision taken by the UNC government that gives substance to the report; that is all. If he could find a Cabinet minute which states that the Cabinet received the report and adopted it as government policy, or any part of the report, I think then we can take him seriously. Until then we take him for entertainment value on that matter.

The other matter is that the Member for Diego Martin East and the Member for Diego Martin West are on a collision course with their Prime Minister and Members of their Cabinet. I think they should keep that for Balisier House. That is a matter that really deserves to be aired and discussed at Balisier House, not in the national Parliament. Clearly, they are at a difference of opinion as far as it relates to the issue of affirmative action. It is very interesting that we read in the newspaper that a gentleman, a renowned educator from Mississippi in the United States, a Dominican by birth, is now the President of the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT). However the goodly gentleman reached here and by what means, we will learn about that later.

Mr. Speaker, all I ask the Members on the other side is to keep these little fights to themselves; work out what is their policy whether it is affirmative action, yes or no, and if no then everybody must say that. They cannot come one month in the Parliament and say, "We support affirmative action," and the next month say, "We do not support that." That is what they have been doing. I believe that has to do with their own intrinsic problems in their party, in their Government,

really at the Cabinet level. At one of those special Cabinet meetings you have on Friday evenings, spend half an hour or an hour and debate thoroughly the matter of COSTAATT's intake and the racial affirmative action plan, and then come with a common position; but for the Prime Minister to say, "I do not have anything to do with that,"— The Prime Minister said in his post-Cabinet meeting, "If I had my way, that would not have been in the document." Then a few months after that both Members for Diego Martin East and West said, "It is in the document and we support it." Then they came back today and were stumped with the same thing. So I am not going to comment on that, because our position is very clear on that.

Mr. Valley: You are losing your audience.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Once you are there, I am happy. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, I would focus on a couple of issues that are really pertinent to this Motion before us. I have said it before, and I want to repeat it, that it is very important for the Government, as the Member for St. Joseph said, to articulate a comprehensive and integrated policy framework on what it is doing per sector. The budget is a policy document, we know that, in which they spell out, in some detail, their different proposals and so on, but there is a big difference, a Grand Canyon gap, between what they are saying and what they are doing.

You will listen to the Member for Diego Martin East rattle off all these grand plans for education, training, skills development, art and craft, woodworking, plumbing and so on.

Mr. Imbert: "Yuh" jealous.

Dr. R. Moonilal: That is very nice, excellent; they sound good. He must have read that in another leader's speech somewhere, but what do they deliver at the end of the day? What do we have? Where are we? Eight months or so into the financial year, we have passed the budget, but where are we? Where is the society today? What is happening in the labour market, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and, of course, national security, which is the burning concern of the day?

Mr. Speaker, they have to be honest enough to put certain targets; that is one thing that they are not doing, because it is a government of slogans; it is really a sloganeering government. They come up with all sorts of—YAPA, GATE—nice terms to describe these programmes, but they are not putting targets. What is the unemployment level today and where will it be at the end of the year? How many people are employed in manufacturing and where will that be at the end of the year? How many people receive water today and where will that be at the end of this year, next year or at the end of 2020, which is the dreamtime we have?

Performance monitoring and setting targets for their development agenda are completely missing elements in their entire framework and presentation. We hear of this hoax, this level of “conmanship” called Vision 2020, to which Mr. Lok Jack and many others are now formulating a 2020 plan. This Government of Trinidad and Tobago signed another agreement, as part of the United Nations community, as far as it relates to the millennium development goals, of which many people might be surprised. In fact, Members on the other side might be more surprised to know that by 2015 this country must reduce its poverty level by half, according to the millennium development goals, to which Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory. Do we hear anything about that?

Of course, there are other objectives of that Millennium Development Declaration of 2000; poverty is one. It has to do with education, gender equality, the provision of infrastructure and so on, but the United Nations have given the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the other States until 2015 to meet specific targets. We have not heard from the Government, from captain to cook, what our strategy is to reach 2015. Where are we? [*Interruption*] I said cook, not crook; you misheard.

We have not heard about 2015 and how we are going to reduce poverty by half by 2015. Forget 2020; 2015 is when we have a commitment to the international community. Is this a renegade nation, that all the countries of the world: India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Southern African countries and so on are all busy formulating strategies, plans and programmes to comply with the millennium declaration goal, 2015, but we ignore it completely?

That is a gap that is always missing in any policy discussion with this Government of the day because, inherently, it is a government of sloganeering and launching ideas. So they have an idea, they go to the Hilton and spend \$300,000 and launch it; that feeds into the press and something happens; we believe something is happening. I am calling upon the Prime Minister or any other relevant Minister of Social Development and Gender Affairs or whoever to articulate our programme and policy towards 2015, when the United Nations expect us not to have poverty, to get to a further mark, in terms of equality between male and female and to improve infrastructure. But this Government would be found wanting, because that involves targets; it involves measuring development. They are not into measuring development; they are into measuring money. That is why the Member for Diego Martin Central made a sort of accounting statement today, an administrative statement, “We really want to increase by \$10; we want to take \$2 and \$4 and make \$10,” that is their approach; it has to do with money. It does not have to do with programmes and plans.

The United Nations 2015 deadline is critical to this country's development, but the worry there is if you focus on 2015, where there are concrete objectives, you might be caught wanting. It is better to have this nebulous Vision 2020, in which we will be a developed country by 2020. Every year this country appears to be less developed, as we move towards this state of chaos, but by 2020 everything will be okay. That is how they approach it.

A prominent pillar of any development challenge to reduce poverty has to do with education. It is clear, unless you were under water for the last 25 years, that all countries have come around to the belief that education is a key pillar towards reducing poverty. Education is still considered to be this great liberator: that you get people who are poverty-stricken and underprivileged and by bringing them into the system, transferring skills, education and knowledge, they will liberate themselves, their families and so on; the Member for Diego Martin East spoke about that. How many people do we know who have come from poor families and when one person in the family secures a good secondary or university education that family, as a whole, lifts itself up and the other generation follows, where you have more graduates and so on? So the Member for Diego Martin East may have read something useful from another minister in another part of the world.

I want to make a few points on the matter of education. In an article from the *Saturday Express* of June 05, 2004, page 19, no less a person than one David Abdullah, trade unionist, Chairman of the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operatives, political leader of Motion, President General of Fight On and other titles, a prominent critique and social thinker and considered by many to be so, said:

“T&T on the road to disaster”

This is Mr. Abdullah. This is not someone who we believe might have some sympathy towards the Opposition, and he is the Chairman of the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operatives. In fact, they fought for that; when he first went there as Chairman the court ruled that they did it illegally and they reconfigured and brought him back as the Chairman. Bless his soul; he is functioning there now. Mr. Abdullah said that the country is headed towards a national disaster with rising poverty, increased unemployment and a crisis in the education system.

Mr. Imbert: So what?

Dr. R. Moonilal: We will come to “So what?” now. Just a few days ago in San Fernando—and I know San Fernando is very dear to our Members here; both representatives of San Fernando on the other side and here are citizens of San Fernando—armed riot squad police with submachine guns went into San

Fernando Secondary Composite School. That is what we call “Old Tech”. It is on Todds Street on the hill by the San Fernando Government Secondary School. The riot police with submachine guns went there; the students were protesting.

Interestingly, they were protesting when they had just finished a session on anger management. Thank God; if they did not have that session on anger management, we would have been in trouble. They were protesting because they wanted the principal to remain. They said, “No Bacchus, no school, gut it,” G-U-T for got. I hope they got it. [*Laughter*] “No, Bacchus, no school, no work, big “troble,” they meant trouble, but they spelt it badly. These are secondary school students.

They want the principal; he did not teach them to spell. They said that he painted the classroom and that they like him. In fact, it was very disturbing that the newspaper reports that the students said that they did not want any Indian principal. This is secondary school; could you imagine that? In light of this, unless I missed it, the Minister of Education is yet to make a statement on the conduct of children in the education system. I have been talking for months now about the “cepepization” of the labour force. What we have now is the “cepepization” of the education system; that is where we have reached; “Gut it; dat is troble.” They cannot spell; this is secondary school, but “dey know dey doh want no Indian principal; dey clear on dat one.” This is what is happening in the school system. “What we talking” about educating to reach developed country status, technology, skill and so on? This is your reality.

I want to share something else with Members here. I would say one time at the beginning that I am not calling anyone’s name, because my intention is not to name, shame or blame anybody. I am going to relate an issue without calling anybody’s name. Whether Members on the other side think this is authentic or not, is irrelevant to me, because I have it in my hand and it is correct.

In a primary school recently a spelling test was given. I will not call the name of the school either because, again, I do not want to locate it and get into an argument. The hardest word might have been “mathematics”; you have words like, away, from, circle, happy, cannot, under. This is a spelling test for primary school students. This document went to a parent, whose name is here, but I will not call. The parent replied to the teacher:

“Too big for infants; way too big for my child; too much big...”

Expletive used, which I will not, of course, pronounce, and that is spelled badly too:

Finance Committee Report
[DR. MOONILAL]

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“words; too much work for ABC ketch-a-crab children.

...mother”

That is where we are with education today. The parent did not write to the teacher to say, “Really difficult words; where can we get help; is there a book we can get; is there some extra lessons that my child needs to spell Wednesday or mathematics?” This is what a parent wrote to a teacher:

“too much big...word for my child.”

What do you expect now? That is where we have reached in parenting; that is where we are. It is not just the child alone; it is also the parent; that is the reality facing the education system. We can condemn teachers and principals as much as we want and, surely, some teachers and principals may take the blame, but when you have this crisis among parents, it spells doom for Trinidad and Tobago, notwithstanding all the bright plans we heard about.

If I wanted to I could have called the name of the school and the parent, but I am not into that; that is not my interest. It is really to put on the table the seriousness of the crisis in education that we face. We are not helping it when state enterprises and Government promote bad spelling and bad grammar, so you TSTT, “Talk fuh so”. Eventually nobody will be able to spell those words.

In a very interesting article in the *Sunday Express* of June 06, 2004, the American legend, Bill Cosby, who is world famous as an entertainer, delivered a speech at Howard University to a graduating class. He has been a pioneer of causes promoting inner cities in the United States, promoting African-Americans in the professions, arts and so on. He said:

“For decades a defender of African-Americans on a number of levels, Cosby lashed out at members of his tribe who, taking the black community to task for parental failures he said led to high dropout rates, crime and other social ills.” [*Interruption*]

But you should listen as a parent; I am appealing to you. You may have been the one to write that letter.

Bill Cosby continued—notwithstanding a parent whom we could use as an example. Cosby went on to say that the community must hold itself responsible and must be blamed for poor parenting, for the plight of today’s African-American youth. He said:

“They stand there and cry for the camera when their son is dressed in an orange suit...”

That is jail clothes in the United States.

“...when he was two, or at high school time, or when he got to be 18 and had a pistol in his waist?

‘How come the parent never knew the child was forever high on drugs or into a life that was bound to get him into trouble with the law?

‘People putting their clothes on backwards: Isn’t that a sign of something gone wrong? People with their hats on backwards, pants down around the crack, isn’t that a sign of something.’”

He said that many of them could not speak English, but yet many of them wanted to apply to get into the United States Peace Corps. He also said that many of them had names they could not spell. He called upon the parents to take an interest in their children and stop complaining when the child is lost in jail. Whoever wrote this story for the *Express* put a note: “That could just as easily apply to inner-city youth in Trinidad and Tobago.”

The crisis in the education system is not just the students, but the parents as well. That is what the State policy needs to respond to.

Before I leave this issue, in the *Guardian* of May 13, 2004, it states:

“CJ adds voice to debate on escalating crime

T&T on the road to self-destruction”

The Chief Justice is saying that now. All is not well and far from that, it is worse than just saying all is not well. We are really in a state of collapse and there is a crisis in education. Against this background, we learned in our document dealing with allocations and variations to ministries that the vote to the Ministry of Education is going to be decreased by \$100 million. So where you have the real problem, you have just found it fit to remove \$100 million; that deserves a commission of enquiry. I want to say categorically that this is testimony to a staggering level of incompetence in the Ministry of Education, and it begins with political leadership.

Ministries are run on the basis of administrative and political leadership as well. So when we voted September last year for the education budget of one point something billion, we did not know that by March or May this year these programmes would not have been implemented, that we would not have had the capacity, the competence maybe. When we go parading up and down the country, putting adds in the newspapers every time we drop into some government office,

we do not know that there are important programmes to start, that we must push through the process to spend the money allocated.

Construction of blocks and improvement works at recently constructed secondary schools, \$15 million; \$25 million allocated towards that; \$15 million out; secondary education modernization programmes; teaching and learning strategies, the sum of \$32 million was allocated for the fiscal year 2004. Of the sum allocated, expenses amounting to \$0.187 million were incurred at March 2004.

Mr. Speaker, we need some explanation as to what is the crisis in the education Ministry. Maybe we need a commission of enquiry into the Ministry of Education as to how \$100 million could not be used. Is it the rain? “Teaching and Learning Strategies Component”—hear what this component is comprised of: installation of computer laboratories; design and build, upgrade 361 science and technology laboratories, production of new curriculum, related print and possibly radio and video materials, money allocated to improvement, refurbishment, extension to primary schools, \$24 million allocated, \$4 million spent by the end of March. In six months, only \$4 million out of \$24 million; so schools go without the necessary extensions, refurbishment and improvement. While this is happening, we put up a tent in Palo Seco for the students and a blackboard fell on a teacher.

I say, humbly, something is wrong with the Ministry of Education; maybe it is not the Minister. Who knows? There might be other problems in the Ministry that warrant a full commission of enquiry as the one established and announced today into the Ministry of Health. It is very curious that you have a sitting Minister of Health whose job is to provide political leadership, inspire public officers to get cracking, as the Member for Diego Martin East, on all those programmes, and ensure that there is transparency, ensure that the work is being done and targets are being met, yet there is a full commission of enquiry into the Ministry.

So how does this work: The Minister on the 15th floor and the commission of enquiry on the 14th; when he signs one document it goes down so the commission of enquiry could look at it? I believe that it might be unparallel to have a commission of enquiry into an entire ministry. Normally, if you have eggnog poisoning, as there was in St. Ann’s many years ago, or if you have some major crisis in one part of a ministry, you would have a commission of enquiry to deal with that. Am I correct? You do not have a commission of enquiry to address all the work of a ministry.

Mr. Speaker, the question that begs itself is: Does the Minister continue to function as a Cabinet Minister of Health? Is it possible to investigate everything

taking place in the Ministry, while the Minister continues in office? Maybe the Minister should remove himself and allow the commission to do its work and set up an apparatus where the Ministry of Health is run from the Office of the Prime Minister; so the Prime Minister takes care of important, critical matters in the Ministry of Health and the substantive Minister of Health is removed pending whatever the commission of enquiry comes up with. I do not think I am way off base on that one. I have never heard of a commission of enquiry into all the functions of a minister and a ministry; that is very suspicious. We will see how that goes.

We are on the education issue; a \$100 million decrease in critical areas of teaching, learning strategies, improvements, refurbishment and extension to schools at a time when you have this major crisis in the education system. We have accused this Government on several occasions of promoting a culture of mediocrity. We took note of the Member for Diego Martin East's contribution today. The Government must be judged on what it does, not by what it says. With all the fancy language, commitment and predictable appeal for assurance, we must judge them on what they are doing not by what they are promising. You cannot hand a bottle of whiskey to an alcoholic and expect that he would promise you not to open the bottle.

You cannot accept the word of a government reputed for discrimination, although it says, "We will be fair; we will be on top of the table; do not worry; trust us." That is their position. I appeal to the Member for Diego Martin East that he must be a bit more transparent than his very good colleague and leader from Diego Martin West and allow us to view, at least if not debate, his policies and the administrative mechanism to do means testing and screen students. It is not enough to come to the Parliament and say, "We will treat everybody fairly; do not worry; trust me." They must explain to us the mechanism, the personnel, who is recruited, how that person is recruited to undertake means testing.

There is a debate in the United Kingdom about means testing to enter university and tertiary level institutions, where people believe means testing is an attack on the middle class of a country. You may have my two parents working, paying taxes, working hard, they do not have time at home, but somehow in that means test for their child they must pay all or half of the money, but somebody else who is not contributing will pay none. That is a big debate now. The Member for Diego Martin East must tell us all these policies and who is going to implement them, unlike what the Member for Diego Martin West did.

I want to expose the Member for Diego Martin West. Well, I want to expose the Ministry of Housing, not necessarily the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mr. Singh: He is exposed already.

Dr. R. Moonilal: He is exposed already; heads will roll.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what scam they were up to. They advertised to this nation that they would select 10,000 persons for housing grants of \$10,000. Later on they changed the number of persons and the amount of money. Either they changed the money or the people; the people, but in the newspaper ad, which all the Members of Parliament were encouraged to cut out, fill in and get their constituents to apply, they said that the criteria for getting the \$10,000 grant were that you must earn or get less than \$24,000 per year, it must be proven that you were the owner/occupier of the house and you must be a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. We looked at it and said that it was fine. We encouraged our constituents to apply properly. Many of us were at pains to ensure that the applicants coming through our office, at least, were legitimate.

When we came to the Finance Committee meeting, the Minister of Finance introduced “the spirit of the programme”. He told us, “In the spirit of the programme, we noticed from the applications that a lot of people were pensioners, so we decided to be lenient to pensioners.” I have no problem with pensioners and the elderly, they are very much deserving, but what about the thousands of people who are not pensioners, who are destitute, underprivileged, many may be disabled, on public assistance, not employed and not employable, who would have applied for the \$10,000? You changed the policy in mid-air, so before the plane in landed, the policy changed.

So now we expect that when the list of 500 persons who will receive housing grants come out, it will have pensioners. But why did you not say that in the first place and let the nation know that you would favour the elderly and pensioners? Why did you con everybody? Why did you con this nation into putting 17,000 applications into National Housing Authority offices throughout the country? And they expect us to trust them with that approach. The Minister of Housing should be dragged before the Cabinet and asked to explain why the housing ministry undertook unilaterally to deviate from the policy spelt out to the national population. I assume that he is still attending Cabinet meetings. You cannot do that and discriminate against others. We are not talking about ethnic discrimination here. It might well be. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I must draw to your attention that another “conmanship” evolving now is where many ministers are encouraging Members on the other side and the

Opposition to write in all our demands, programmes, what we need and how many persons for jobs. When we do write in, they say, “Thank you, very much,” and they throw the letters in the waste paper basket; that is another approach here.

The Member for St. Joseph raised the issue of crime and insecurity. He lamented that today we have newspaper clips of which one day many of us would be terrified to see a headline like:

“Maracas police station caves in”

The police are complaining that they have third-rate bulletproof vests—the Maracas Police Station caved in. I want this to go on record: a few nights ago the driver of a minister of Government was attacked. The newspaper said he was clobbered. Our information is that in San Fernando when someone called for the police at 1.00 a.m. they said that did not have a vehicle to respond, when the driver of a Government minister was beaten, robbed and clobbered; that is where we have reached.

They believed that when they unleashed this violent tendency it was for the Opposition, but criminals do not know Government and Opposition. There is a point where they do not know who is Government or Opposition, they are looking to rob, rape, kidnap and murder. The state of the police service is that police officers applied to the commissioner to march and he turned them down. It is very interesting: If the police go ahead with that march, they will have to beat up themselves. If the police march unlawfully, then I imagine that other policemen would have to beat them up and arrest them, as they did unfairly to our members. That is the state of the police service.

The police service has another grievance: the differential and preferential treatment of our elite squad of special forces. In this Parliament we could not get the names of persons in the special forces, because they said that it was a matter of national security. Today, we have before us a measure that will give them each \$5,000 more per month, apart from their salary and normal benefits, as what is called a Special Forces Allowance. So they get \$5,000 more, but we do not know who they are. They could be anybody. Who knows? Well it could not be the Member for Laventille East/Morvant; he got an end recently. So we cannot know who really getting money from taxpayers’ money. We could approve their money, but we do not need to know who they are; that is a matter of national security.

We learned this week that spying equipment brought into the country to assist the police is, allegedly, still located at the residence of the Prime Minister. “Under the bed,” that is their response. [*Crosstalk*] Well it must be to monitor other people’s bed, if it is under the bed. That must be the function. [*Crosstalk*]

On the issue of crime and insecurity, we have said before that if you look at the graph for murder, in 1999 there were 92 murders, that went to 229 by 2003; that was a rapid increase. There is a law against murder. There is a law that you are not supposed to get bail before the court on a charge of murder. What is that stopping? Does the bandit have a law book in his pocket to see what offences are bailable or non-bailable? That has not stopped murders. Why do we think that laws to prevent kidnapping would stop kidnapping? They have big people in the society talking rubbish.

The Downtown Owners and Merchants Association (DOMA) President, what is his name? Gregory Aboud was on television with a crybaby face, talking to the population and asking the Opposition, “Come together and support; we need law.” If you ask him if he read the law, he has not, but he was there with this crybaby face. I want to tell Mr. Aboud, if he listens on the radio, television or read the press about this comment—I may send a *Hansard* copy to him—do not be conned by this PNM Government; that police bills package is really to take attention away from their incompetence in dealing with crime. [*Desk thumping*] It is to take attention away from the fact that violent crime, kidnapping and murder escalated beyond control after 2001. There is a reason for that that is rooted in this Motion before us.

We always had crime; murder, bandits, thugs, whatever; we had that before 2001, but when they went on a programme to fill the pockets of the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) contractors, who were also known criminals, they used taxpayers’ money to finance crime and here we are. [*Crosstalk*] I will never say that under the past UNC or NAR governments there was no crime, but what led to this is when you took \$200 million from the URP and CEPEP and put it in the pockets of these contractors who themselves were criminals. You took taxpayers’ money to enhance the criminal industry and that is why we are here. That is why we have had buckets full of blood. That is why they cannot stop it and they want to come with Police Bill Nos. 1, 2 and 3 to divert public opinion.

So Gregory Aboud must understand that there is a law against murdering people and when you are charged, there is no bail. Did that stop murder? We came together with this Government six to eight months ago and passed the Occupational Safety and Health (No. 2) Bill, a historic piece of legislation. We supported the Government; we remember that day. The Leader of the Opposition alone spoke. Eight months after, where is that legislation? Have workers benefited

from it at their workplaces today? Is it in force or implemented? So why do we think that passing kidnapping laws would mean they would be implemented next year or the following year? This is a hoax. This is to give the population the idea that they are sincere about doing something about crime.

We passed the health and safety legislation. If somebody fell on the wet terrazzo floor outside Parliament, the health and safety legislation is not effected; it is not in force. This is part of the hoax. They have people like Mr. Aboud, a prominent member of the business community, shedding tears on television saying, “We have to unite; we must be sincere and kiss each other,” and all that type of thing. That is the nonsense they have leaders of businesses talking. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, on the matter of crime—as I speak now I think the murder rate is 109. When I began this speech it was 108; that is how murder is increasing in this country. It might be 110 by the time I leave here. [*Interruption*] You laugh about it, 110.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. R. Moonilal: In fact, 110 murders, all PNM put up “yuh” hand. You should be proud of that; I think that is a record. [*Crosstalk*]

The Member for Diego Martin West came on another occasion and said in this House, to the effect, that Members on this side get some joy and excitement with the crime rate. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: I said orgasmic.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Whatever orgasmic feeling the Member for Diego Martin West got in Scarborough, is a matter for the police and not a matter for here. [*Crosstalk*]

For the record, Mr. Speaker, it gives us no joy to read or hear news that citizens of this country, of any and every ethnicity, whether male, female, child or adult, are murdered, kidnapped, raped or robbed. That gives us no joy. [*Crosstalk*]

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the issue of crime, we still have the outstanding matter of the cocaine in the diplomatic pouch. To this day

the Minister of Foreign Affairs has accepted responsibility, but not the consequence of that responsibility. The Minister of Foreign Affairs should have resigned long time ago in the aftermath of the scandal with the Barbados fishermen. As of now, we are no clearer to a solution concerning how cocaine reached in the diplomatic pouch. Incidentally, it may have been cocaine on that occasion, but in the future it could well be anthrax or some other chemical biological weapon. Some chemical substance could have been in the diplomatic pouch going off to New York and London. [*Interruption*] Well cocaine is not that bad for them; they are okay with that.

In the aftermath of that problem, what was even more punishing to this population was when the Prime Minister rose in the House to indicate, “Well, yes, this is a serious matter, but a few years ago some blank passports went missing, so we need to weigh that.” Then he summed it up well by saying that they would do better. They have cocaine in a diplomatic pouch; that is better, coming to think about it.

Anybody will tell you that to get cocaine in a diplomatic pouch, no small man is involved in that; no guard, no security “fella” from Forest Avenue. As they say out there, “That is a big boy.” To be presiding over that in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that is a big boy. They need to go after that. If they would go after those persons responsible for cocaine in the diplomatic pouch with the same tenacity as they have gone after persons they have accused of corruption in the airport, they would come to the end of that soon. Maybe they are scared that if they go after persons in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, it may lead back to their respective political homes.

We spoke about housing. On the matter of employment, the Member for St. Joseph made the point that to this day there is no clear policy on Caroni (1975) Limited, what is meant to take place. If you drive by Brechin Castle and some of the former section offices, you would see that the property is in a complete state of disrepair. It is now housing animals. People have vandalized the offices all over the country; government property, resources.

Time and time again, those of us on this side asked the Member for Port of Spain North, when he was responsible for agriculture, to place on the Table of this House his plan for Caroni (1975) Limited. We begged for that plan, but no plan was forthcoming. They got rid of 10,000 workers; they said that was to save money, that they were a drain on the Treasury. Today we hear about \$50 million or more to prop up the sugar industry. It would be very curious to learn the support from the Treasury that has gone to the Sugar Manufacturing Company; it

may well be the same amount that was going to Caroni (1975) Limited. [Interruption] The difference here is that the Sugar Manufacturing Company does not hire 10,000 people, but about 400 from four contractors. They continue to give support from the Treasury to the Sugar Manufacturing Company. They have a nice way of doing it now; I think there are persons being paid out of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources directly to work in the Sugar Manufacturing Company. So they are involved in that, but it was to get rid of the workers.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, many of our constituents were employees of Caroni (1975) Limited. To this day, many are unemployed, frustrated and stressed; one committed suicide. Many workers are suffering without food, without the ability to provide for their family. In a newspaper of May 20, 2004, I read the startling revelation:

“Sahadeo reveals employment boom in TT”

This is, of course, the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. Christine Sahadeo. She was addressing another graduating ceremony of Caroni workers and said that she was disappointed that the workers, themselves, were not participating in the numbers she thought they should have. The Minister said that there was an employment boom and that workers who were in Caroni (1975) Limited before would now get jobs in the offshore sector, that they could go on the rigs and so on to get work as the energy sector expanded.

Mr. Speaker, I pray to God that this Minister was inebriated, that this was after a cocktail party and she would have been in a good mood to be making this type of statement. I hope this is not the same Minister who has been rude to other ministers on the next side. One of these days we will talk about that, as well. I really hope this Minister had something to consume before making a statement like this.

I cannot imagine how workers who were cutting and loading cane would suddenly find themselves on a rig offshore undertaking some technical work in the energy sector. This is carrying the joke too far. When they dismantled Caroni (1975) Limited, they should have established a programme to assist displaced workers. In other parts of the world where this is done, there are established programmes called “Displaced Workers Assistance” programmes to help workers find jobs, not to call them for graduation.

These poor people have to make a dress every two months to graduate. These Caroni workers go for two weeks and learn to sew and make toolum, and then

they make a silk dress to get a certificate signed by the Minister. I challenge the Government to bring a list to the Parliament of Caroni workers who have been employed in any government sector. Many of them have to get maxi-taxis, drive trucks and work in what we call the informal sector. They are looking for loans from NEDCO to sell at the side of the road. This Minister who is a Minister in the Ministry of Industry and Trade with our very good friend from Diego Martin Central said that Caroni workers should not be too worried. [*Interruption*]

Not the Member for San Fernando West; the Member for Diego Martin Central. The Member for San Fernando West is a Minister there too. [*Crosstalk*] In fact, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant is a Minister there as well. [*Crosstalk*]

Caroni workers did not take any promise from this initiative, because in the labour market we now have another crisis brewing. As if the spate of industrial unrest was not enough, the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) workers are now on the warpath. We are learning now of the exploitation of women, underprivileged people in the CEPEP system, where CEPEP has been used to undermine workers in the formal sector.

We keep on saying that there are many people who do not want a job in a warehouse, shop, store, supermarket, they prefer CEPEP, so employers cannot recruit because you get more money in CEPEP than if you work in a shop. The Government needs to address the matter of the exploitation of underprivileged workers. Their approach is to take another \$50 million or \$100 million and intensify and expand the programme.

I want to be fair. I have said before that many of these programmes are good; they are not bad programmes, very good objectives. The Member for Diego Martin East outlined several programmes that are promising, that if properly implemented will really help the industrial development of this country, but once they come with their brush of discrimination and pollute these programmes, there will be no end of problems for workers. After over four decades of independence, we still need to talk about equality and discrimination. Imagine this small, rich country does not have institutions to address issues of discrimination. That is all we ask for any time we talk. We do not ask you to discriminate any one group as opposed to another, we just ask for institutions to protect citizens from politicians. After more than four decades of independence we do not have that.

Just last week I read in a British newspaper that a new unit has been established to deal with racism in the British Police Service; not racism towards

the public, but among officers themselves. They have a problem with racism in the Metropolitan Police Service between officers of one ethnic group and another. They have just put a mechanism in place to deal with that. We have not put mechanisms in place to deal with anybody, whether inside or outside; that is the problem we face.

With the employment issue, there is a crisis; in education there is a crisis; crime, they know about that themselves; housing, we learned of grants that will be given out. There are a few more issues relating to the deterioration of the environment and the violation of laws and procedures governing the construction of plants and so on, which my friend from Tabaquite will deal with.

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when during the budget debate, the Prime Minister came and announced with fanfare that there was an 11-point plan to deal with crime and that Colonel Peter Joseph would be appointed with immediate effect as Brigadier to lead this special force, I said in this Parliament that whether this Government appoints Peter Joseph or Tommy Joseph, it would make no difference. Regrettably, I was wrong. I have a feeling if they had appointed Tommy Joseph it might have been better.

Where are we today in terms of all the initiatives to deal with crime, where are we, when we do not have the resources for the police; when we do not have the proper equipment, a simple thing like the vehicles? How far have we reached eight months after passing the budget; eight months after the elite squad was approved by the Parliament? I do not know if in the thinking of the Government that they believe that the elite squad of 25 persons, well trained they may be and they have passed lie detector tests, I assume, that this squad would now descend by helicopter all over the country and prevent crime and protect our citizens. There is a point at which the police service needs the resources.

I want to make a call, in closing, to this Government which is a call that was made recently by a Member of Parliament in Jamaica. Jamaica had been plagued by several problems, chief among them, the problem of crime. In Jamaica it is felt throughout the country that one of the major problems has been the connection between the politician and what they call there, "dons", their criminal underworld. Recently an opposition member in Jamaica made a call which I think it is now opportune to repeat and to say it in Trinidad, that we must put an end to the link between the politician and the criminal underworld.

We need now to de-link the politician from the drugs, because drugs are connected to crime. Crime is to buy drugs. We need to call on all Members of this

Parliament to denounce their connection with the criminal elements in this country, once and for all; de-link politicians from the drug kingpins, from the criminal underworld. There is no good that would come to this country by the continuing relationship of politicians to criminal elements. That has no good ending. That story does not have a good ending. You can look all over the developing world and you would see, there is no good ending.

We saw something in the *Express* which is alarming and may not be coincidental. The *Express* reported that a young lady charged in San Fernando for the kidnapping of Saada Singh is a well-known PNM activist.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. That statement is just not true and the Member for Oropouche knows it.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding that intervention, I would like to indicate—and I plead with the Members to please take steps—all of us because you do not personalize it; not just the Members on this side—to disassociate from criminal elements.

Could you imagine a day when Members of Cabinet cannot go to a political meeting with family members? Take steps to disassociate yourself from criminal elements and do not be emotional and ranting and raving. *[Interruption]* If it is not connected it is not connected to you; if it is not so, it is not so, but they know better and I am not into calling names. I could call names to everybody here. But they know and I know the family. So that is my word on that.

In conclusion, we have pointed out several issues that the Government should address, including strategies to deal with the crisis in education, the issue of employment for the Caroni workers, including that issue with the grants in the Ministry of Housing. We have touched on matters of their own credibility in terms of equality and integrity. Notwithstanding that the Integrity Commission recently issued a letter to the Prime Minister and, indeed to myself, on a matter raised at the Integrity Commission—it is very interesting that they received the letter and then they were ordered to pay costs in San Fernando in the court, where the presiding judge in San Fernando ruled that the Integrity Commission was negligent in responding to a complaint from a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, whether he is a member of Parliament or not. On that basis, because of the conduct of the Integrity Commission, by failing to respond to citizens in what they term, reasonable time, ruled that even when they respond much later in the day, that they should pay costs to the attorneys representing the citizen in San Fernando.

That has cast aspersions on the Integrity Commission and I think it is incumbent upon all members of the Integrity Commission to resign forthwith, in the light of that ruling in San Fernando. I believe they should all resign.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Speaker, it was not my intention to intervene in this debate but I thought that having regard to the way the debate has been going, that I ought to make a contribution, however briefly, if only to add to the wisdom that can contribute to a proper understanding of the conduct of governmental affairs in this country.

I have been a Member of this Parliament for a long time, since 1971. I have found that whenever a good contribution is made, it matters not the side from which it comes, whether it comes from the Government side or whether it comes from the Members of the Opposition; the side to which I belong or the side to which I do not belong; it does not matter.

I believe that whenever proper contributions are made in this Parliament, it contributes to the stature and history of our institution and it is a credit to all of us, especially in the years to come when those who associate with the history of Trinidad and Tobago review the records of this Parliament and come to some kind of conclusion as to what we did in our time, as opposed to what may have been done in different periods of time in the country's history. And so today, I would like to commend the contribution of the very distinguished Member for St. Joseph, even if at the same time, I condemn the contribution of the Member for Oropouche. If you listened to the Member for Oropouche, that Member, together with some of his colleagues, are determined to undermine every institution in this country. When it is not false allegations of racial discrimination, it is condemnation of an institution called the PNM—you name it; the Judiciary or what have you. Too many of them on that side seem bent on doing that and can only get away with it because the leadership on that side allows it. For our part, we on this side, would like to take our distance from that kind of thing.

I rise today because one of their Members has taken a course of action that sets him apart and above from the rest of all of them. That is the Member for St. Joseph. I would like to respond, very briefly, to an aspect of his contribution. The very distinguished Member for St. Joseph, a former Minister of Finance in this country, talked about oil and gas, the undue dependence of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago on oil and gas and therefore Government's revenues on oil and gas, and that whatever we may think, they are finite resources and a day

would come when there would be no more; when the contribution that they would make to economic and, therefore, national social development, would be considerably restricted and that we are making an error to continue our dependence on those two commodities, instead of seeking to diversify away from them so that the vulnerability that is inherent in the utilization of the use of a finite resource, is a vulnerability from which we can insulate ourselves. That was the essential point that was made by the Member for St. Joseph.

There are popular misconceptions associated with that point of view, because whenever the statement is made, whether intentionally or unintentionally, there is an underlying suggestion that that day is sooner rather than later. I was exposed to that in 1971 when I was screened by the PNM for the first time to be a candidate in the elections, and when the then political leader, Dr. Williams, asked me a question about oil production—I was at the time a geologist for Texaco Trinidad Incorporated—at a time when the production on land had just peaked—it was Navet Field at the time, of Texaco, when Texaco was doing quite well with its oil production, but production had begun to decline a bit from that particular field, but that production in the rest of the country had begun to rise. Indeed, that production peaked in 1978 at 240,000 barrels a day. When Dr. Williams put the question to me, I realized that he, too, was not sure in his own mind how long this thing would last and whether we were not vulnerable to the vagaries of the uncertainties associated with an undue reliance on a wasting asset that had a very finite quantity and in respect of which the time frame of its life was not known by us.

During the last UNC administration, a big noise broke out at that time between the Chairman of the National Gas Company, one Mr. Steve Ferguson, who incidentally has been charged, and the then Minister, one Mr. Finbar Gangar, who also has a case to answer before the courts, both of them entering into a public squabble over this matter. On that occasion they were arguing over the quantity of gas available to produce a product that has to be used for further processing into a petrochemical called ethylene, a basic building block of the plastics industry.

We were then in opposition and we sat on the outside and watched that debate go on, and from time to time in this honourable House, hon. Members opposite have made the point over and over again. Mr. Speaker, those of us who are practitioners of the science or art, if you wish to call it that, know very well that Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad in particular, is a country of very complex geology and it is the complexity of the geology of Trinidad that causes us to be producing oil and gas even now. The first well was drilled in this country in 1857 and oil was discovered for the first time in 1866, and we have been producing oil and gas ever since 1866.

Indeed, a story has been told. I have told this story recently but, perhaps, for the benefit of the parliamentary record I ought to repeat it. When I worked in Texaco in 1969—1970 as a geologist, I had access to the company's files. In one file—I think it is necessary to say it for the record; I know my good friend from Couva South knows it because he, too, has had access to the files. But in one file I saw a letter where the then chief geologist was expressing a view to the then General Manager of the company by way of a letter, that unless the company looked for alternative sources of revenue, then it could find itself in difficulties, because he was concerned that the oil and gas production of the day could run out in the short term. When I look at the date of that letter, it is 1905. And here we are, 99 years later, when the oil production is far higher than it could ever have been in 1905—not to mention gas production; way above that—but we are looking at that production today on the basis of concerns expressed in 1905; concerns that are being expressed even now and expressed this evening by the hon. Member for St. Joseph in making his contribution to this honourable House.

I think you ought to know also that recently two of the largest oil companies in the country came to the Government and advised that they were coming together to drill the deepest well ever drilled in Trinidad and Tobago on the east coast, the well that would go to a depth of some 21,000 feet—no well has gone to that depth before—will test a very large structure on the east coast; so large is the structure that it is anticipated that it would prove up somewhere between two and a half to six trillion cubic feet of gas. But more than that, the gas that may be found is likely to contain a high percentage of liquids. Liquids fetch a higher price on the market and therefore in terms of Government revenues, would account for a higher level of revenues for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. It is the largest structure ever. The well would cost US \$40 million, but that came to our attention against the background of concerns that have been expressed from time to time and concerns repeated today by the hon. Member for St. Joseph.

I think I should also say—incidentally, the well is very prospective, that the acreage is very prospective, which means that the likelihood of the well being successful is very high and, therefore, not a shot in the dark. In other words, it is indeed a rank wildcat. However, it is a rank wildcat well that is being drilled in a particular circumstance which gives us cause for greater optimism than is normally the case in the drilling of rank wildcat wells in Trinidad and Tobago or elsewhere in the world. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, the Member for Couva South can pour cold water on it if he wishes.

Mr. Ramnath: I said they have not found anything in that block.

Hon. P. Manning: Well look at that, but we would see. At the time that they are saying that to us, BHP Billiton is preparing to bring into production its own domestic oil, a discovery on the east coast in the northern quarter which production is expected to come on stream in December of this year. In fact, they can tell you they target it for December 05, at 2.00 p.m. They have it down to that art. Within months, that production is going to rise to 70,000 barrels per day. The significance of that is better understood when you take into account the fact that the oil production in the entire Trinidad and Tobago at this time is just about 130,000 barrels per day. It is more than a 50 per cent increase that is coming.

Now may I also say that BHP Billiton would continue its exploration activity and it is more than likely that there would be new discoveries. Indeed, early this year—I think it was in January—BHP Billiton made an announcement that they had discovered a field—they called it marginal; that is a statement for tax purposes, if you know what the licences and the production-sharing contracts look like—but I could tell you, the well that they discovered was relatively shallow because it was above 6,700 feet—I think the well went to 6,783 feet—and on a juristem test it produced between 1,000 and 5,000 barrels per day. Now that is not insignificant, and speaking for myself, I am quite optimistic that that is going to turn out to be an oil discovery. It discovered oil, not gas.

For those who have been fortunate enough, BP Trinidad and Tobago has in Port of Spain an item of technology that is at the cutting edge of technology worldwide in terms of oil exploration and production. It is a thing called the Hive. What it does, it maps in three dimension and it can give you a picture of what goes on below the surface of the earth in three dimensions, so you can look into the hive and you can see exactly what the strata on the ground looks like. BP's understanding of the geology of Trinidad and Tobago, enhanced as it has been by technological developments, has reached the point where their success ratio here is much higher than the success ratio elsewhere in the world.

Therefore, when you look at the hive and when you see what they have been able to deduce—the conclusions to which they have come about the geology of the east coast—two things would strike you immediately. In fact, let me leave it at one. I do not want to say what the other one is. One thing strikes you immediately, and that is that the acreage on the east coast of Trinidad and Tobago that has so far been the subject of exploration, is minuscule in relation to the acreage that is available for exploration on the whole.

It is important to make that point, because against that background you can now begin to take a slightly different view of how long the oil and gas resources are likely to last.

I talk only of the east coast. I have not spoken of the north coast from which a significant amount of gas production already comes; I have not spoken about the west coast from which a quarter of the country's oil production now comes and I have not spoken about the south coast, the prospectivity of which is now considered enhanced again as a result of technological developments and as companies now prepare to engage in activities in that province in a way in which we had not done before.

At the time the letter was written in 1905—we do not even have to go as far back as that—the gas production in the country was negligent. In fact, gas as it was produced, was considered waste, an adjunct to oil production, therefore you could flare that. We have moved from that situation to a situation today where gas is produced for utilization in the manufacture of products domestically and we are today the largest exporter of ammonia in the world; we are today the largest exporter of methanol in the world and gas is also liquefied for export purposes. We have Trains 1, 2 and 3 in LNG and Train 4 is under construction, and we are now talking about Trains 5 and 6, one of which would utilize Venezuelan gas for export purposes.

We have moved to a situation where our gas production is in excess of—it is about 2.9 billion cubic feet per day. It is very high. For those who do not understand it, perhaps we could put it in terms of barrels of oil equivalent. Whereas our oil production was 240,000 barrels per day in 1978, our production per day of oil and gas—oil equivalent to gas—amounts to about 635,000 barrels per day. This may appear not too significant in terms of an international context, but significant enough for a small developing country of 1.3 million people which is seeking, on the basis of a proper utilization of its oil and gas resources, to move from stage to stage as it improves the standard of living of its people, targeting developed country status by the year 2020. Will it last or will it not?

When in the past that allegation had been raised at us, it was in the 1970s when there was an oil price shock in 1973 and there was another oil price shock in 1979, the second one, leading to a skyrocketing of prices to as high as \$40 a barrel, but it came at a time when our oil production was also high and therefore the revenues that accrued to us were high. And the call at the time was, yes, the oil production is there now; we do not know how long it would last. Indeed, we do not know how long the price would last and therefore it could lead to economic problems at home.

We took a conscious decision in 1975 on the basis of consultations to diversify within the energy sector away from oil, to gas, with the consequences I have just pointed out. Therefore, whereas in the past we were accused; we were cautioned against a heavy dependence on oil alone, now that we have diversified away from oil within the energy sector, we are now being cautioned about an overdependence of oil and natural gas.

The reality of it is that when Trinidad and Tobago was made, we were not there. It was done by almighty God, and if God in his wisdom has given us natural resources, who are we to say that it is a curse to be endowed with natural resources of oil and gas and as a consequence we would not use those resources to the extent that they are available to us so that we can maximize our revenue position and improve our standard of living? We disagree with that view.

And so the policy of the Government, notwithstanding the fact that the assets are wasting assets, is a policy where we would maximize the returns from oil and gas, while at the same time we seek to develop other areas of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, so that it is not just a question of getting revenues from other sources but maximizing the revenues you get from natural resource. At the same time you move into other areas so that you not only reduce your dependence on oil and gas, but you reduce your dependence in the long run on any one aspect of economic development. So that if something goes wrong in any one area, the country is not unduly vulnerable as a consequence of that. [*Interruption*] You did not make it in that way. The way the point was made, it gives an impression that I thought I had to deal with this afternoon.

It is our good fortune that—the most developed country in the world, the United States, to the north of us—we are located on the doorstep of the largest economy in the world. It is even our greater fortune to be located on the doorstep of that country producing oil and gas at a time when that country has become very concerned about its own energy supplies. The statistics show that about 3 per cent of the demand for energy in the entire United States now comes from imported gas, LNG, and that over time, that figure would increase. By the year 2010, it is expected to be 10 per cent and by the year 2025 it is going much higher, as much as 25 per cent, as one authoritative source has suggested.

When you look in the western hemisphere, the only source of LNG supplies to the United States right now, outside of the US, is Trinidad and Tobago. Alaska produces gas but Alaska is a US state. That is an internal issue. We find ourselves in a very fortunate position, fortunate also because the price of gas has gone up

and, today, fetches between \$5.00 and \$6.00 per barrel, an MBTU, an MCF. It is very high.

So significant are our exports to the US that year before last we were responsible for 68 per cent of all LNG imports into the United States of America, and last year that figure went up by 10 percentage points, to 78 per cent. Trinidad and Tobago, with 1.3 million people, on the doorstep of the United States, short-haul gas; transportation charges relatively low; maximize the revenues, responsible for 78 per cent of all imports of natural gas into the United States. That must have implications for our relations with the United States. It takes us out of the realm of energy production and puts us in a position where we could leverage that energy production for economic development and therefore make it an element of foreign policy consideration—a big issue.

We had here recently the CEO of British Petroleum, Lord Brown. When we met with Lord Brown in London in December, he had this to say: that Trinidad and Tobago—and incidentally, BP is the second largest oil company in the world—is very fortunate because it is quite clear that American foreign policy today is dictated by considerations of energy security to a large extent. That is what he had to say. Therefore if that is so, it puts us in a position to leverage our own economic situation and our own energy supply situation with the United States and to see how we can use that to benefit ourselves and to advance the objectives that we have set as part of our economic and social development of our country.

I think I ought to put into the record that Trinidad and Tobago is now saying to the United States, we can be a secure supplier of gas. We are going to give the United States as secure a supply of gas as we can, and to achieve that, we are going to bring about a major shift in our own policy position by participating at every stage in the value chain. We have a share in the LNG plants; we will now seek a share in the tankers that transport the gas to the United States; we will seek a share in the re-gasification terminals that are used to put the gas on shore, and we are going to seek a share in the pipelines on shore that transmit the gas from the major re-gasification terminals, to the major markets all over the eastern seaboard of the United States.

When we do that, what, in fact, we would be doing, is participating in that value chain, sharing in the profits of it, but being in a position to influence the decision-making at every stage of the game and therefore being in a better position to guarantee the security of supply which, as a prominent oil company executive has said, Lord Brown, drives US foreign policy to a very large extent. Surely that must mean something for Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like to draw to the attention of the Parliament two areas in which it is significant. The first is in the area of petroleum tax. The Minister of Works and Transport was discussing it a few minutes ago with me, that the basin on the east coast does not now carry the level of risk that it carried some years ago when the tax regime was put in place. Therefore, we are now in a position to review the tax regime in terms of oil and gas production in such a way to increase Trinidad and Tobago's take, recognizing that the risks associated with oil and gas production in the country in that basin are not as great now as they were then—most important. It means dollars and cents for us.

But since Trinidad and Tobago is so critical to the United States of America, it must mean something to Trinidad and Tobago. Do you know what we are asking for? Right now we have CBI and CBI gives us one way free trade access to the United States market for all goods outside of the energy sector. We are asking that that same provision be now extended to the energy sector. In other words, our production of aluminium, iron and steel, methanol, ammonia, urea and all the derivatives, can enter the United States duty free. That is the first thing we are asking for. And secondly, in the context of our determination to diversify and to industrialize the country to a greater extent, we are asking that goods packaged in Trinidad and Tobago gain duty free access to the United States' market. That has implications also for Caribbean development, where it is possible if we are able to secure that—and we have every reason to believe that we can; it is not going to be easy but we are going to fight; we are fighting for it—we see the possibility of companies investing in Caricom countries, in Grenada, in St. Vincent, Barbados, whatever country it is, producing in those countries as indeed they can do the same in Trinidad and Tobago, and then shipping to Trinidad and Tobago where the goods are packaged and then exported duty free into the United States of America. It is also an instrument of Caribbean regional integration.

Remember this also, since we are talking foreign policy, that Trinidad and Tobago is the largest market in Caricom; that Caricom is the second largest market for the output of domestic industry and if adversity hits any one of the countries in Caricom, it backs up to unemployment in Trinidad—it reduces their purchasing power—and if we have adversity here, it means that we cannot purchase as much goods from the region. It can manifest itself in unemployment in the region.

The development of one country is inextricably bound up to the development of the others and, therefore, as we put this policy in place, we take it one step further in terms of Caribbean development and therefore Caribbean economic integration.

We had another opportunity recently when the Chairman of Alcoa was here and they signed the agreement to pursue the establishment of the aluminium smelter. The project started off initially as a smelter to produce 125,000 tonnes of aluminium. When we signed the MOU it was 250,000 tonnes. In short order, having regard to all circumstances, we doubled the size of the plant. But we were also told that if the gas was available at the right price, Alcoa would consider doubling the size of the smelter again because they consider an optimum size to be 500,000 metric tons per year.

Mr. Ramnath: Free gas?

Hon. P. Manning: It is not free gas, it is gas that is priced in a manner that is designed to produce another primary product in the country in respect of which there is a potential for significant downstream activity and therefore significant job-creation. That is what it is.

Mr. Ramnath: Gas in lieu of royalty.

Hon. P. Manning: We would explain it in a minute.

What we said to Alcoa is this: that if we make the gas available to expand the capacity of the plant, we want, as a prerequisite to that expansion, the establishment of alumina production facilities in Guyana, because the plant as it now stands, is going to be operated on the basis of alumina from Jamaica and Suriname. Guyana, as you know, is a typical country, heavily indebted, poor country and we believe that we can leverage our own energy situation here to help a country in the region that is in significant economic difficulties and in respect of which our own actions carry the promise of a better way of life for the Guyanese people. So we put that as a precondition.

Before I take my seat I think I should just deal with the point that has been raised *sotte voce* by the Member for Couva South, and that is, that the aluminium is possible because of the pricing of the gas. He is absolutely correct. In 1994 and 1995 when discussions were well underway for the establishment of the first LNG plant, we made it quite clear to Amoco at the time that we were not happy with a situation in which gas was fetching a royalty of one and a half cents TT per MCF. Was that the figure? We never liked that. We always thought that was not fair; that royalty represented the patrimony of the country. That is what the country gets as a consequence of the exploitation of one of its natural resources.

We told Amoco at the time that export gas would have to come under a different regime and there would be no LNG unless and until we upgrade the royalty arrangements by which gas is produced for export.

But you know what happened in 1995. We demitted office and it would go down to the eternal shame of this country that the government that succeeded us ignored that and proceeded to allow gas exports at a royalty rate of one and one half TT cents per thousand cubic feet. It took the return of a PNM Government to make it clear to the companies involved that that situation cannot continue and that as a precondition for Train 4, we had to solve that, and we solved it. Do you know how we did it? Not by increasing the revenue, because if we had done that, by increasing the royalty itself—if we had done that, there is a pass-through clause that would have caused that price to be passed on to the consumers and it would have manifested itself by way of a higher gas price as an input to the manufacturing sector, which we did not want.

Instead, we decided to take it in kind. We got 100 million cubic feet of gas a day until the year 2017 and with 100 million cubic feet of gas in the Government's hand, the Government is able to price that gas at a level that would now bring about a significant expansion in the manufacturing sector, will introduce a new and strategic industry to Trinidad and Tobago and will give us the base by introducing yet one of the other planks that we consider as a prerequisite for the establishment of a modern industrial state, aluminium. That is the basis for that.

I just want to reassure this honourable House, one, that Trinidad and Tobago is not ashamed of the fact that we have oil and gas; two, that we are going to maximize the use of our oil and gas resources for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago; and three, that as the strategic advantages given to become clear to us and others, we are going to leverage our gas and oil position for development in other aspects of our economy. This is all designed to improve our quality of life and to achieve for us the developed country status to which we aspire before the year 2020.

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

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (*Couva South*): Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that Members were quite happy to listen to the intervention of the Prime Minister. Perhaps he would achieve what he has set out to achieve, and that is to lift the debate of this Parliament, as indeed the Member for St. Joseph has, based on the Prime Minister's own admission, if he would, in caucus, speak to the Member for Diego Martin East and others who engage in frivolity to such an extent that a mockery is made of this House.

I have no doubt that we should be talking about a lot of these issues. I am very disappointed that my friend who is a very learned geophysicist, a man of great

repute in this area, has not chosen the opportunity over the last couple of years, to intervene in a lot of these matters. I do not know whether he is allowed or not allowed to do so, but I know he is quite capable, and to have listened to the Prime Minister this evening talk about the future and make some very important policy statements, is very enlightening.

6.55 p.m.

If you want to move the debate away from what is taking place and what is upsetting you, you should link the serious social problems that we are experiencing in the country to the efforts by the Government in enriching the nation through the best use of our oil and natural gas resources. You cannot deal with it in isolation. We are politicians; we represent people. Almost my entire constituency is impacted by the closure of the sugar company and I have every reason to be angry, if not disturbed in a serious way about the manner in which an oil and gas economy has treated this little region.

I want to let the Prime Minister know that the PNM, at the time Train 1 was negotiated—and he knows who were involved in the negotiations of Train 1—did not seek to have the tax regime changed in relation to LNG because they did not get the benefit he is talking about today with respect to Train 4. It is the same 1.5 cents. That was the agreement reached by the negotiators of Train 1, so do not blame the UNC that took power in 1995 for that.

Let me also say, Mr. Speaker, that we had, sitting on the north coast, considerable reserves of natural gas. Petrotrin had 19 per cent of the reserves out there. It took the wisdom of the former Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Mr. Finbar Gangar— *[Interruption]* you can say what you want about what is happening today, but we can deal with that at another forum—to ensure that those blocks were unitized, so that we can now secure a production-sharing agreement and make it possible for us to exploit the gas in those north coast fields. *[Interruption]* I was not in the government; I was not so fortunate. I have the greatest faith and confidence in the integrity of my colleagues; otherwise I would not be associated with them. I would leave some of these extraneous issues to the law. I still feel that once the British Privy Council exists, there will be some measure of justice. That is why I will not vote for your Caribbean, coconut and banana court of justice. You will not get my vote.

When my party assumed office, the proven reserves of natural gas in this country was 8 trillion cubic feet and with all that is being said today and bandied about the country about our vast resources, apart from those resources being given

to us as a people by the Great Almighty as we are told today, it took initiative, sagacity, will, acumen and sheer brilliance to encourage drilling and exploration in Trinidad and Tobago to reach the level of reserves that we can now boast of. There was a virtual lull in activity for a very long time. It changed when the UNC came into power. *[Interruption]* They know the facts; if you do not know, you can ask and we will give you the facts.

When the country had a minister of energy in 1986—the Member for St. Joseph, you will recall—the price of oil went down to \$10 a barrel. We were in a very precarious position. We had to go to the IMF. We had to face all kinds of conditionalities. I caution the Prime Minister with his optimism, as if we would always have oil and gas and we would always get the results from exploration and exploitation of our resources, and this country would always have. In fact, it is now a commonly made statement that we would always get oil and gas in the country.

The Member for St. Joseph was simply making the point that this is a wasting resource and we must use it wisely. We must get the best out of it. What this country needs is a natural gas law. We do not need to negotiate with Atlantic LNG and their partners to get something in lieu of royalty. We must have a law, which deals with royalty and other forms of taxation in relation to this most important resource. We are repeating that we should thank our lucky stars that we are blessed with these resources.

We have drilled several wells in deep water on the east coast. ExxonMobil drilled several wells and they found nothing of a commercial nature. We heard from this Government in the last debate that there was an agreement whereby the outstanding work obligations of ExxonMobil would be transferred to Petrotrin. In fact, there was a hurriedly called press conference at Piarco Airport when the Prime Minister came back from one of his trips and he met with the chairman of Petrotrin because certain people on the board of Petrotrin were very concerned and expressed such concern about an agreement being reached with the Government with respect to the outstanding work obligations of ExxonMobil.

Shell also drilled a number of deep-water wells on the east coast and found nothing. In fact, Petrotrin, for which I have the honour to work, had to fight to send—*[Interruption]* I am working there 30 years and my record has been unblemished. For the Prime Minister's information I live in close proximity to the chairman and chief executive of the company.

The point is—and the Prime Minister would admit—that the production on land today is 60,000 barrels of oil a day. The production, Mr. Speaker, from south

Soldado is 36,000 barrels a day. The production on land is another 24,000 barrels a day, when you add the lease operators, joint ventures and Petrotrin. The total production of Petrotrin is 60,000 barrels, so let us not argue about a few barrels here and there.

The point I am making is that in 1978 or 1979, this country was producing 228,000 barrels of oil a day, so our production has actually gone down by 100,000 barrels of oil a day. Unfortunately—and my geologist friend, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, who is very knowledgeable in these matters, will tell you—it took the UNC to ensure that the BHP Billiton lease and all those things associated with it, to make sure that that lease was properly exploited. It was the UNC that made that additional 75,000 barrels a day possible.

Let me not be uncharitable. They have continued to encourage further exploration and production. That is the job of government; that is not the gift of the PNM. That is what we are all supposed to become involved in. We are supposed to make sure that we develop policies that will encourage companies like BHP and all the other multinationals that can drill wells to 21,000 feet, because we all believe that there exists in the very deep horizons great prospects and potential for oil and gas in the country.

I do not want the Prime Minister to convey the impression that that is something that was just discovered. Companies will drill where oil exists. That is the first rule of exploration. *[Interruption]* The Prime Minister referred to 1905. I am in the process of creating a site in Aripero to celebrate that important well, the first well that was drilled in Trinidad. That is my responsibility on behalf of Petrotrin. *[Interruption]*

We take our work seriously, as I did on World Environment Day, when I had the opportunity to rehabilitate the La Fortune Dam in Point Fortin, particularly when I heard there was no water in that town. I had the honour to be in the company of His Worship The Mayor of Point Fortin, the chairman of Petrotrin and the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin. I discovered that I was the only UNC man at the head table. It shows our magnanimity, our commitment to the environment and our commitment to the exploitation of our resources. *[Interruption]* Do not miss the point!

The Member for St. Joseph was making an important point, that we must not find ourselves in the situation in which we found ourselves on so many occasions during the course of history. Having said that the asset is now disappearing, what did we do about it?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries always quotes Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams. I notice that he does not at all refer to anything said by his current Prime Minister as far as energy is concerned. Every time he speaks it is about that famous speech that I had the opportunity to listen to personally when Dr. Williams spoke in the sugar cane field in Point Lisas. I think you were there when he spoke about sugar giving way to steel and aluminium.

We have come a long way from that period and successive governments—the NAR, the UNC and the PNM—have all become involved in trying to make the best use of our resources. But where is the evidence? On land today we employ a considerable number of persons. Petrotrin alone employs 5,000 persons. The minimum wage is \$28 an hour or thereabouts. There are a number of joint venture operators. There are a number of lease operators.

I hear some grumbling from the Member for San Fernando West. She knows what I am saying. She was part and parcel of encouraging government, when she was in the Chamber, to lease and sublease a number of the wells which were producing less than five and ten barrels of oil a day. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has done nothing to ease the tax burden on these small operators. I said so about eight months ago. We heard that we were going to get some kind of changes in the tax regime. Today, the only thing we have gotten is 100 million cubic feet of gas in lieu of royalty, by agreement, not by law, and we are now thinking about making that gas available for the generation of power. I would be following the selection of contractors for erecting that power plant. I do not know if it will be Alcoa or the same people who advised you when you negotiated with Southern Electric to create PowerGen.

When you speak of InnCogen, you must look at a company that is providing electricity at a more economical price than PowerGen is providing to Trinidad and Tobago at this stage. I understand their politics and I do not want to bring the debate down to the level that the Member for Diego Martin East did earlier today.

We must be careful. The Alcoa shares immediately went up when the Memorandum of Understanding was signed, not because of an agreement signed by Trinidad and Tobago, but because they were offered cheap gas. The basis for the shares going up was the announcement that Alcoa was going to get gas at almost zero cost or a very low price.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Couva South for giving way. I just want to correct the record that it was the announcement of the aluminium smelter in Trinidad and Tobago that caused the share price to go up.

They did not talk about the gas price. What was spoken about was an aluminium smelter in a country that is on the doorstep of the United States within its sphere of influence and which is properly run and managed, in a country on which they believe that the United States can depend in respect of security of supply of a strategic product.

Mr. K. Ramnath: That is the spin he has put on it—a political spin. The fact is, and I will produce the evidence, that the announcement that cheap gas was going to be made available—Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister will tell you that they have not been establishing aluminium plants around the world. The cost of energy is too high. You have to have 99 per cent reliability as far as power is concerned. There is a serious environmental problem in removing the hazardous waste. It is not easy to even transport such a waste. We will have to find close to the plant some kind of methodology and some kind of hazardous waste site in order to do it. You cannot even move it from there and countries are very reluctant, first of all to make gas available at a very cheap price, and secondly, to deal with the environmental problem. While I do not wish to take away the credit from the Prime Minister for what he considers to be a major achievement for Trinidad and Tobago, I want to say that the lure was really the availability of gas.

In Suriname, power is available. [*Interruption*] Precisely! They left Suriname and the reason for that is that there were serious political problems, but there were also serious problems in relation to what was going to be made available to the company and the price of power and so forth. So while he wants to boast, Suriname is also located close to the United States but Suriname, of course, had its problems.

They could have gone to Guyana. In fact, what is also interesting is that Bharath Jagdeo, President of Guyana just announced that he has signed an MOU with a Russian company to build a smelter in Guyana. In order for a smelter to take place, you have to start talking about electricity production, hydroelectric plants, expensive plants compared to plants fired by natural gas. So, we have the advantage in Trinidad and Tobago. But let us be careful that we do not enter into arrangements that lock us into very long-term agreements to supply our energy at a very low price and not get the returns we require.

For example, what is going to happen with their joint venture partner, the offtake partner out of Venezuela? Are they going to have downstream industries in Trinidad and Tobago, or are they going to take it to Venezuela?

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the Member for Couva South for giving way. The Sural has agreed to establish two downstream industries in the

industrial estate at Wallerfield. I did not deal with that this evening and Alcoa is contemplating between two and three additional downstream industries. A decision will be taken on that by the end of June.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that I entered the debate. I am very happy that the Prime Minister chose today, in reply to the Member for St. Joseph, to give us some insight into what is happening. It would have been very nice and very polite and he could have lifted the standard of this Parliament and the dignity of which you speak would have been reintroduced had he come here as the Prime Minister and made a statement to the House with respect to this matter.

When you do not do that, Members and the media, obviously, will begin to speculate. We will ask you questions about the Memorandum of Understanding. Is there something very secret about it? Maybe there are certain things you would not want to reveal to the public, at this stage—it might be sensitive—but you do not go to a Thursday afternoon press conference or use that as a substitute for this dignified House. You have to set the example. It is a matter that you have expressed concern about.

I would like the Prime Minister, at some stage, to tell the country a little more about this arrangement and leave out the secrets. We do not have to be told the secrets. There are, maybe, issues that he does not want to make available to the public because of arrangements that are being made at this stage and discussions that are being held. I welcome such an investment in Trinidad and Tobago. Let me make that clear. I do not think anybody on our side would not welcome such an investment. We subscribe to the view that we should not simply do what we have done with oil, and that is, take it out of the ground, ship it to other countries and they add value, or even what we are doing with natural gas. We are also taking it out of the ground, liquefying it, adding some value, but we are also shipping it to factories, to homes and industries in the United States.

However, when we get projects, which genuinely add value and a chain is developed when we participate downstream as well, I think all the citizens would rejoice that this is good for Trinidad and Tobago. However, the people need to know the facts. If the Parliament is denied the opportunity of knowing what is happening and indeed perhaps some of your own Members, then you cannot come here and say that the debate is not at a level that you expect and that the country is now talking about issues which are not important.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and other Ministers have stated that our reserves are around 20 trillion cubic feet. I am

not talking here about the proven reserves that are around 18 trillion to 20 trillion cubic feet. That is a Ryder Scott report. [Interruption] 20.8. If you take out 3 billion cubic feet of gas per day, you are looking at about 16½ years in terms of your reserves-to-production ratio. I am not a pessimist, as perhaps the guy in 1905, but the Prime Minister knows that only geologists are optimists in the oil industry. All other practitioners are practical and we are pragmatists. If they did not have that optimism, they would not become geologists and they would not have the drive to look for more and more reserves.

We cannot take optimism as our only guideline. We have to face reality. You could very well stop finding gas. You could say there is a certainty you would find and that based on your present rate of finding, it is likely you would find more. All of us want to make sure that that is happening. When you add Trains 4 and 5, you would be putting, I think, 1.8 billion more and you would be taking out about 800 million. When you look at your proven reserves and you are adding 800 million more, you are looking at reducing your reserve-to-production ratio. That is the point we continue to make. We cannot live with optimism alone. Patriotic as we all are, we have to be extremely practical. When these companies are finished with your gas and oil, they quietly leave.

Let me just say, I worked for Texaco, like the Prime Minister, and the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro worked for Tesoro. Some worked for BP and others worked for Shell. They all abandoned this country in our times of need. They walked out. If we had been wiser, the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery would have been given to us free. I know they did not negotiate that sale. They were ready to go because the operations here did not fit into their strategic plan. Of course, as wise negotiators, they were able to extract a lot out of Trinidad and Tobago because we were concerned about saving the jobs of many people. We had many jobs to save and they walked out on us.

They are all here. I have no problem with that. I have no problem welcoming them with open arms because that is the way the business works. If we are not emotional about it, we will understand that is how business works. Nothing prevents Atlantic LNG and their partners from saying at some time: "Well, it is about time for us to go."

Canada is now negotiating to sell liquefied natural gas to the United States because their pipeline system allows them to sell a certain amount of gas from Alberta, in particular, to the northern United States. Canada has now made significant discoveries on the east coast and is providing significant quantities of gas to the northeastern states of the United States.

We are living in a competitive environment. Do not think that when peace comes to the Middle East, if it ever does, that we will not see an increase in the production of LNG. We are competitive in the sense of our location, but because of our reserve position, we may not be price competitive if there is peace and stability. In fact, a lot of our competition is premised on the fact that certain other regions of the world have not enjoyed peace for a long time. I am not being a pessimist. I am not suggesting at all that we should not be looking forward in terms of our investment, but let us not simply say that in 1905 the gentleman predicted that we were not going to have oil, that changed and subsequently we have had other predictions which have not been true.

I am surprised that the Prime Minister chose to attack my friend, the Member for Oropouche. I thought he became emotional about his calling the name PNM. Perhaps now that he has seen the PNM on the decline and the country up in arms against what is happening, he has become a little concerned and emotional.

Prime Minister, Trains 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, BHP, \$75,000 barrels a day at 2.00 p.m. on whatever date, deep well drilling and so forth, is but one aspect of national life. The other aspect is the politicization of everything in Trinidad and Tobago and it is not a feature of the Opposition. Another main issue is inequitable distribution of the wealth. You cannot just deal with one side of the equation, you have to look at the other side and people are crying out to the high heavens because of poverty in the society.

He has announced today, Mr. Speaker, a commission of enquiry into the health services of the country—I do not know what has caused that; I am not interested at this stage; I can only speculate. A commission of enquiry is not supposed to make policy for the Government. They knew, when they were in Opposition, when we were there and they were here, according to the Member for Diego Martin East, what was wrong with the health sector. They had a plan for the health sector. To come now to talk about a commission of enquiry while they are in office, is either an admission that they are deeply concerned about the state of the health sector and that they want to do something about it, or that his Ministers have failed. If his Ministers have failed, he should find other ministers to do the work because of the history of commissions. It is either something is radically wrong with what is happening today, he has no ideas or his Ministers have failed.

We know the history of commissions of enquiry. I would not advise people to go before a commission of enquiry, before television cameras. These should not, in my view, be publicized. We will not get citizens to go before a commission of

enquiry and be very truthful, not that they would lie or anything, but they would not want to put their necks on the block to speak on some issues.

I sound a warning that while it is the prerogative of the Prime Minister and the Government to do that, we have to be extremely careful not to divert the attention of the population away from the real issues that are facing the population. I am very concerned myself about the state of the health sector and so are the Americans in their country. In fact, one of the major campaign themes in the previous election had been the issue of health care. If the commission of enquiry is designed to bring about some kind of relief to the citizens, that is a different matter.

I find that whoever wrote these minutes—and I hope it is not a public servant who wrote them. It says: Responses Arising from Questions Emanating from the Senate: Response by the hon. Minister of Finance with respect to a question to the Minister from the Member for Barataria/San Juan. It said that in 1998, Cabinet took a decision that former Presidents and Prime Ministers of the Republic would receive medical benefits, similar to those applicable to the incumbents of the said office. As a result the sum of \$1,062,000 was incurred for expenses by former President Mr. ANR Robinson.

That is not the reason that \$1 million was allocated to Mr. Robinson? That cannot be the reason. Sir Ellis Clarke and Mr. Noor Hassanali were entitled and Prime Ministers are entitled to medical benefits. Did they spend \$1,062,000? This is a question that must be asked because this is a document in the public domain.

In addition, Mr. Robinson, after he demitted office, was facilitated by the Cabinet with a tax concession applicable to Members of Parliament and so on or holders of the office for two luxury motorcars: one a BMW and one, I think, an SUV. In addition, the Cabinet has approved an allowance of \$24,000 a month to Mr. Robinson.

Let us not bother too much about the medical benefit because he might have a special case that needed that attention and if something were to happen to the other Presidents and the Prime Minister, I have no problem with that, but there are people in this country who cannot get even generic drugs, for example, those who suffer with diabetes and hypertension and many of the illnesses for which the Government claims they can go and get medication, but they cannot get their medication. They are having problems.

So they approve this money for Mr. Robinson, in addition to which they approve tax-free concessions; in addition to which he receives \$24,000. He knows

what I am talking about—the Cabinet took that decision. I have a copy of the minute. It is to pay for a research officer, a nurse and other people. Does Mr. Hassanali get that? Does Sir Ellis Clarke get that? You know the response from an experienced politician and Prime Minister now serving the third term—30-odd years in Parliament? They never asked for it.

I would have to use this opportunity to ask Sir Ellis and Mr. Hassanali to apply for it. They do give Mr. Hassanali the tax concession for which he applied in the purchasing of a new car. The rule is that you must now ask for it and the frivolous reply is that that is what the Bible says. These are former Presidents and they should be treated with dignity and equality. They should treat former Speakers the same way and they should treat ministers and MPs the same way. *[Interruption]*

I will get a pension from where I work, but there are many people who give their lives to serve in public life and when you look at their pension under the present law, they are treated worse than the lowest level in the country. I do not even want to talk about the deprivation of those of us who serve our constituents and were never paid for 10 months because of one thing—vindictiveness.

So when you want to talk about lifting the standard of debate and dignifying Parliament, how could the Member for Diego Martin Central say, if you vote for the Police Bill, we would pay your salary? In this entire document, you will see the Government is coming here almost toward the end of the year and asking for money.

I just want to go to one other point here. Something that worries me a lot and has to do with making funds available to the Attorney General.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. *[Hon. K. Valley]*

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members. We propose to increase allocations to the Attorney General of \$4.3 million and part of that is for the establishment of an Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau.

The fact that the Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau is listed under the portfolio of the Attorney General, to the best of my advice, is highly irregular. *[Interruption]* It never occurred under the UNC. It was never listed. The fact that the former Member for Couva South had ambitions, Mr. Speaker, to control the police is not a matter for discussion here today. The fact that the former Attorney

General and then Member for Couva South had designs on power, which included the supervision of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, is not in question today.

I want to say categorically that under the last government the Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau was not under the portfolio of the Attorney General. In fact, it was listed in the *Gazette* when Mrs. Glenda Morean took office.

7.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, what is happening here is an abuse of power. The Attorney General is now instructing the police in the country, with respect to what they should and should not investigate. If the DPP, as he has done, sent a complaint, an instruction or an advice that LABIDCO should be subjected to investigation—if the Prime Minister is right—nothing is going to happen. The Attorney General and his Anti-corruption Investigation Bureau can decide. I have no interest in that. Why would the Government not give the DPP more powers? He is the one whom the Government should give power to. The Attorney General is a politician in Trinidad and Tobago. He is appointed to the Cabinet by the Prime Minister. He has political status in the country. He is not an attorney general selected by an Executive President, who does not belong to a political party. He is a member of the PNM. I suspect he wears the Balisier tie when he goes to the other place.

The Attorney General could now instruct the Anti-corruption Investigation Bureau to investigate or not. When I read in the newspapers that people are being charged, I realize that nothing will happen. I realize that many of these matters—I do not want to comment on those matters at this stage. I want the guys to have a fair trial. These issues will end up at the Privy Council as sure as day follows night. The kind of people involved in these matters—lawyers, and the issues that would be raised before the courts in this country and elsewhere—would be of such a complex nature, because of the relationship between the politician called the Attorney General and his attempts to victimize Members of the Opposition. That will be the claim. Nobody will take seriously a government in which a politician is supervising people who are charging Members of the Opposition. The charges are laid. Do you know what amazes me? It is the speed, efficiency and efficacy with which the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service do their job, when it comes to the issue of anti-corruption. It is amazing. I read in the newspapers that it took them two years of intensive investigation, which involved travelling to the United Kingdom and various places. Mr. Speaker, the population is crying out loud about the same police in the country who cannot find the 20 or 30 persons. All those in the PNM know who is responsible for the crime that is taking place in the country. If you do not know I will tell you. There are 20—30 persons.

You must read what Bharath Jagdeo, President of Guyana said in an interview. I would quote:

“How Guyana stopped kidnapping”

I am quoting. I am not quoting from a reporter. I am quoting what President Jagdeo allegedly said. Forget the source.

“The last crime wave originated in a special area, and organized by criminals and certain deportees, came to an end when he sent a clear, strong signal to the police force and the army to protect themselves against criminals.

I think that they saw the support of the government and they dealt with the situation,’ said the quiet but firm talking Guyanese President.

It was an unprecedented...in our history. It went on for a while but through persistence, through government measures including legislative changes, support for the security forces, deployment of the army, a lot of those criminals were either arrested or died in shootouts with the police. That has brought some ease to the situation.

Kidnapping was associated with a small group of people and we have not had a kidnapping in about a year and the crime wave came to an end.”

You should have a look at what he said. Those who are talking about legislative changes, have they read the Bill? Why not read the Bill? You are talking about legislative changes.

Mr. Virgil Boyd and those police—Mr. Speaker, when I saw the police holding Sen. Sadiq Baksh and Dr. Rafeeq by the hand and taking them to court, a decent man like Dr. Rafeeq, if it were me you could say—dragged them to the court in Trinidad and Tobago; people who hold high office. They are people who would have been exonerated, as you have seen. You should sue them. *[Interruption]* That is right. He has a right. The court has given an opinion on these matters. As a bush lawyer I could tell you that.

The efficiency with which certain sections of the police are carrying out their duties, when it comes to dealing with Members of the Opposition, sympathizers and supporters of the Opposition, is not used in the same manner as when we are dealing with criminals in the society. Someone announced that today we are at murder 110 in the country. That is something that every single citizen should be concerned about. There was a situation such as what happened in San Fernando, where a child was kidnapped. I saw the Mayor of San Fernando reached there in a few minutes. I have to congratulate him for being so efficient. I do not know

whether other politicians on the opposite side do the same thing. At least there was an outpouring of concern by the Mayor on this particular issue.

People are so afraid in the country. Oil and gas is in the country. This is a country with a prospective aluminium smelter. This is a country that intends to build another Train 5 of liquefied natural gas and is reeling under pressure, because the police in Trinidad and Tobago cannot and are not allowed to do their job. What we are facing here today, whether the Prime Minister likes it or not, is a propensity on his part to, perhaps unknowingly, fascism.

If the police can single out people, in the way they are doing it, if you cannot carry out an investigation, with respect to who planted missiles and cocaine in Sen. Baksh's water tank in San Fernando, you expect that we are going to give you more power? I do not think if the police Bills are passed, it will make any difference whether the police commissioner reports directly to the Prime Minister. What prevents the police commissioner today from disciplining the undisciplined officers? Nothing. He has that. The Chairman of the Police Service Commission has made that very clear. He has that power to discipline. They hire. The Police Service Commission does not go out there and hire policemen. It is the Commissioner of Police who sets up the mechanisms. What are we saying, we have wronged the commissioner, or the selection process does not throw up the right person? Now the politician must go and select a police commissioner. I do not know, as a Member of this Parliament, what you really want. The Government is spreading the propaganda that if the Opposition unites with it to support this Bill, all crime will evaporate in the country. What is even more amazing is that it is being repeated by people who have never read the Bill. I want to suggest, why not publish this thing?

The Government should take out an ad instead of publicising every day some of what it is doing or not doing. They should take sections of the Bill and publish them for the benefit of the population, so they can make an informed judgment. If the judgment is that the Opposition should support it, then we would listen to the people. We are not going to support a Bill that gives the Prime Minister total control over an arm of the State that chooses to lock up Opposition Members; whether they are Members of Parliament or people from the community. That is not going to solve the crime. I am not here to give a lecture on how crime would be solved. We have to be careful. If Brigadier Joseph is not reporting to the Commissioner of Police, which he cannot, he is not a policeman, he must be reporting to someone else; he must be reporting to a politician. The Constitution was designed to isolate politicians, particularly those who have a propensity to

accumulate more and more power from the implementing arm. If we allow that insulation to be removed nothing prevents a ruthless Prime Minister—I am not saying who—from abusing that power.

Mr. Speaker, certain elements in the police force have not demonstrated a capacity in, Trinidad and Tobago, to operate above board. That is a major concern. Those who want to mouth remarks about that Opposition must unite with the Government, have not read the Bill. They do not know the mechanisms. I sympathize with those people who are the victims of crime and who feel whatever is done is important. They must understand. Today we might be trying to deal with a situation which may require some kind of co-operation. That legislation can be used to haunt citizens in the country and create a fascist state.

I am not of the view that you cannot run the country with the present arrangement. We repeatedly said, if we are going to give more power to the Prime Minister, there must be greater accountability. Let us choose our Prime Minister on the basis of popular vote. Let us go to the polls; we put up a candidate, you put up a candidate, and let the people decide, in terms of the popular vote. I would be the first to support the Prime Minister or President of the country, elected that way. In choosing a Cabinet, I understand the difficulties he has with these people. If his survival as a leader depended on some of these people, he cannot be sure that when he leaves here a palace coup is not about to take place. I could understand why some people have now accepted positions after they have rejected them. [*Interruption*] Absolutely! You are totally right, Mr. Shah sought to undermine the leadership of the Opposition. Arouca North, you are a brilliant man.

If your President is elected in that way—when the people choose you that way, not when you build houses and change the demographic distribution; bring supporters and put them there; re-enslave some of your supporters; give them temporary jobs and a place to live in order to win elections—you expect that you are going to have the power that you are asking for, I say to the Prime Minister and the PNM, you have a long wait coming.

I would advise that between now and 2007, the Government should try to find a way to seriously discuss constitutional reform. We have to discuss it. You just cannot come and ask for more power. I understand the difficulties that you can be in at this time, in a technologically modern society, with all kinds of apparatus available such as the Internet and other kinds of equipment. I understand the difficulty the Government will have in the situation, but piecemeal legislation will not help. I, perhaps, am more afraid of politicians than I am afraid of bandits, especially in a situation in Trinidad and Tobago, where we had 17/17 and 18/18.

A lot of thuggery was involved in the last election. To give more power over the coercive machinery of the State is to relinquish our responsibility and the mandate that the people have given to us.

I want to state very categorically that this Anti-corruption Investigation Bureau should be removed from under the Attorney General. If you want to put it somewhere, give it to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who has the responsibility for investigations. We cannot, as a Parliament, continue to support such a measure. I am absolutely sure that the Attorney General is incapable of being unbiased. He is a politician and he supports the ruling party. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the other speaker, I have been checking my Standing Orders. We have had so far three Government Members speaking and three Opposition Members. I would like to refer Members to Standing Orders 69(2) and 70, which concern the business we are about. While the debate has extended far and wide, I would caution Members, henceforth to confine themselves to the Standing Orders. If I may indicate to Members, Standing Order 69(2) states:

“On the debate on the motion ‘that the Report of the Finance Committee be adopted’, Members may raise points as to specific details of Heads of Expenditure in the report but may not raise any matters of general principle.”

On the Supplementary Appropriation Bills, “the debate...shall be strictly confined to the matter for which additional expenditures is required...” I think Members on both sides, an equal amount, have had a field day. It equalizes itself. When I recognize Members are continuing, I am going to insist Members confine themselves to the Standing Orders and the matter where we are. Members may raise points as to specific details of Heads of Expenditure but may not raise any matters of general principle. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, if nobody is going, I would wind up the debate.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Franklin Khan): Mr. Speaker, I had no intention, from the onset, to be contrary to the Standing Orders. In that regard, I guess I have no problem save and except, coming immediately after the hon. Member for Couva South, I was almost tempted to join the energy debate on this side. There is too much firepower existing on this side of the Parliament, as it relates to energy. If I continue along those lines, the Opposition would have no recourse whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I have personally enjoyed the last couple of contributions. I want to go on record as congratulating the Prime Minister in particular, the Member for San Fernando East, for what I considered to be a very scholarly and high-level debate this evening. I want to let the House know, having been seated at the right hand of the Prime Minister, when he was looking at his notes, while he was debating, he had nothing written on his note pad.

Mr. Valley: Who is this?

Hon. F. Khan: The hon. Prime Minister. All that he was discussing, obviously, came from his head; indicating the knowledge of the gentleman, as it relates to matters of economic policy and energy matters in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on a couple of matters that are related to the Ministry of Works and Transport as it relates to the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) (No. 2) Bill. You will see that the Ministry of Works and Transport has been allocated an additional \$88.296 million in this mid-year appropriation. If we look at the details, the money would be expended on approximately four or five major items, which I plan to discuss very briefly.

Basically, we have allocated \$11 million to the dry-docking of the *MV Panorama*. We have allocated an additional—actually this is a new vote—\$17.2 million for the implementation of the ISPS code for security on the port. Very importantly, we are allocating an additional sum of \$20 million for the National Highways Programme, the year two and year three contracts. We are also allocating moneys for flood mitigation, navigation systems at the Crown Point Airport and other matters that are related to general infrastructure development in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, firstly I would like to deal with the National Highways Programme. The National Highways Programme started in 1997. I just want to indicate to this honourable House that over the last seven years the IDB has been reviewing the programme periodically. The programme commenced at the end of 1997. It was reviewed in June 1998 and got a satisfactory review. Again, it was reviewed in December 1998 and got a satisfactory review. That was the beginning of the programme. Under the previous administration, they had constructed a series of bridges all over Trinidad and Tobago especially in the Manzanilla and Mayaro areas.

The IDB review of this project since then, I would read it out: “The National Highways Programme rating in June 1999, unsatisfactory; December 1999, unsatisfactory; June 2000, unsatisfactory;”

That is the IDB review team, monitoring the National Highways Programme in Trinidad and Tobago, \$2 billion infrastructure improvement programme. There were two satisfactory ratings at the beginning of the programme in 1997/1998. In June 1999, the rating was unsatisfactory; December 1999, unsatisfactory; June 2000, unsatisfactory; December 2000, unsatisfactory; January 2001, unsatisfactory; December 2001, unsatisfactory; and June 2002, unsatisfactory. In December 2002 there was a turnaround, satisfactory, June 2003, satisfactory. The review team left two months ago, indicating their satisfaction with the programme of this administration. Mr. Piggott and I turned around the National Highways Programme since then.

Mr. Speaker, it is a trend we are seeing with all the IDB projects. The Health Sector Reform Programme struggled over the 1995—2001 period. The School Reconstruction Programme struggled. I am convinced that the UNC never liked the IDB Programme from the beginning. The reason for that, all of us on this side know, is because the procurement process of the IDB is very transparent and very tight. The UNC sat on these programmes and did nothing about them.

We are pleased to inform this honourable House that the year two projects are currently being constructed. These are contracts worth \$129 million and are at various levels of completion. It has been indicated here from a response, but I want to put it on the record. At a cost of \$43.297 million, Seereeram Brothers were awarded contract No. 07. This contract involved rehabilitation from:

- Cedar Hill Road, from the Solomon Hochoy Highway to the Mayo Road, in the constituency of Tabaquite.
- Couva Main Road, from the Solomon Hochoy Highway to the Pepper Village Gas Station, in the constituency of Tabaquite.
- The Diego Martin Main Road, from Acton Court to the intersection of the St. Lucien Road in Diego Martin Central.
- Guaracara/Tabaquite Road, in the constituency of Tabaquite. \$48 million was awarded to Seereeram Brothers.
- Contract No. 19, in progress, awarded to General Earth Movers for rehabilitation of the Moruga Road from its intersection with the Naparima/Mayaro Road to the St. Mary's Village at a cost of \$35 million.
- The Mayaro/Guayaguayare Road, awarded to Haniff Mohammed and Sons, at a cost of \$32.7 million, from the intersection of the Naparima/Mayaro Road at Mayaro Junction to Point Galeota Road.

- Contract No. 21, awarded to Super Industries Service Limited at a cost of \$32.28 million. This has two components: the Naparima/Mayaro Road from Albamy Street in Corinth to St. Croix Junction in Princes Town. That is also in progress. Also the Southern Main Road No. 2, from Cap-de-Ville to Granville, which is in the constituency of Point Fortin.

I made the point because in these programmes, and in this administration, in particular, the Ministry of Works and Transport, takes technical decisions. We are not driven by all the “ol’ talk” about who is discriminating against whom and what have you. There is a scientific evaluation criteria as to how we select projects. This has been very well articulated by the conditionalities of the IDB. When we implemented the IDB programmes it was above board, devoid of discrimination and for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago.

Too often we come to the Parliament—the debate has been going in a particular way—and hear spurious acquisitions about what the Government is doing or that the Government is being biased. The roads that have been selected on this programme have a national spread and have been largely chosen with a very scientific criteria. These roads are supposed to be completed by January/February 2005. Most of them are in various stages of completion, ranging from 30—50 per cent. It is a trend we would want to continue in the Ministry of Works and Transport.

These projects are not road paving projects. The projects involve proper slope stability, which is landslip repairs; proper drainage on the sides of the roads; where applicable, total excavation and rebuilding of the base, sub-base and foundation of the roads before we re-sheet the roads. For the first time in several years, we are seeing projects of this quality. One of the issues that has cropped up over the last couple of months and has slowed down the contracts slightly is that of quality of the aggregate that we are getting from the local quarries in Trinidad and Tobago. The percentage of fines is too low. When they undergo compaction, they weaken the sub-base of the road so they do not meet the international specifications of the IDB.

Under normal circumstances, the contractors felt that the Ministry of Works and Transport should have turned a blind eye to sub-standard aggregate being used on the base and sub-base. We have taken a very firm stand at the Ministry of Works and Transport. We cannot be spending \$129 million worth of construction contracts and compromise ourselves with substandard material. The culture of substandard work has been all pervasive in the construction sector sometimes. We have taken a very serious stand against that.

Recently, there was an incident at the Piarco International Airport runway. The aggregate failed some of the testing. There was no quarry in Trinidad and Tobago that was providing the proper quality aggregate for the runway. We took the decision to shut down the runway contract for two months and import the aggregate from Canada. Members of this honourable House, we have to bring back a culture of excellence and high quality works, when we give out construction contracts. These are what I call flagship projects. Those of you who have been passing around those contracts will see.

There has been protest by residents where some of these contracts have been implemented. People have grown accustomed to the Ministry of Works and Transport re-sheeting their roads. What we are seeing happening is when we excavate the roads and attempt to build back the base and the sub-base, the residents have to undergo some form of inconvenience. During that period of inconvenience, if it rains, there will be some slush and if there is sunshine, there will be some dust. Residents in various parts of the island protest for that simple reason. Recently, there was a protest at Chatham. They said that the road was very bad and impassable. It is all part of the construction component of the contract. Within the next couple of months, all those situations would be resolved.

These two contracts that I have just outlined will be completed by January/February 2005. There is a series of other contracts where the evaluations have been completed and would be submitted to the Central Tenders Board by June 09, today. These contracts are called year three contracts, package one. I want to read into the record the five major contracts that would be awarded in July. Work is expected to start on these contracts in September 2004.

- Contract No. 1, under year three contract, would be Caura Royal Road, a distance of 8.25 kilometres. This is approximately 1 kilometre from the intersection at the Eastern Main Road, El Dorado to the entrance to second pool on the Caura River. Along the same lines of the year two contract, there will be rehabilitation, slope stability and drainage.
- Contract No. 2, Morne Coco Road, a distance of 5.4 kilometres from the intersection at Majuba Crossroad and Morne Coco Road to the intersection of Saddle Road and Morne Coco Road in Maraval.
- Contract No. 3, at a distance of 12.6 kilometres on the North Coast Road, approximately 50 meters from bridge one in six on the North Coast Road in the Maracas area straight on to La Filette.

- Contract No. 4, from a distance of 12 kilometres along the Naparima/Mayaro Road—for those of you who know there, one side of the road is Ortoire/Mayaro and the other side is Princes Town. It is from Williams Smith and Mantacool Road straight on to George Village and then to Poole Village.
- Contract No. 5, St. Croix Road, a distance of 3 kilometres. It is on the intersection of the St. Croix Road to the Naparima/Mayaro Road in Princes Town to the intersection of the St. Croix Road and the Ciperó Road at Lengua Village.

Mr. Speaker, the other packages that will come out after that, where construction is expected to start in November—I would not go on to all the details, there are nine additional contracts coming out:

- Tarouba Link Road at the intersection at the Naparima/Mayaro Road in Palmyra to the San Fernando Bypass at St. Joseph Village, a distance of 2 kilometres.
- San Francique Road, a distance of 3.2 kilometres.
- Southern Main Road, Cap-de-Ville; from Dunlop Roundabout to Cap-de-Ville, 7.5 kilometres.
- Moruga Road, from Burton Trace—where we stopped the year two contracts—into Grand Chemin.
- Naparima/Mayaro Road, from Poole to Rio Claro.
- St. Croix Road continuing.
- Toco Road, from Valencia Main Road to Salybia.
- Another 10 kilometres on the North Coast Road, from Mitchell Trace, La Filette onwards to Blanchisseuse.

Mr. Speaker, again I make the point that the projects have a national spread. They have been evaluated based on the current road conditions, and selected on a ranking basis. A package of bridges would be coming out very shortly. The construction is expected to start in August of this year. The total number of bridges is 17. I do not want to bore the House with the list of all the bridges.

We continue to have a national spread. In package one there are bridges from Claxton Bay, Retrench, Penal, Cedros, Icacos, Rancho Quemado, Los Iros, Morne Diablo, Navet, Guayaguayare, St. Mary's, Grand Chemin, Blanchisseuse, Santa

Cruz, Warrentville, Grande Riviere and Sans Souci. At the completion of this bridges programme very few, if any wooden bridges, will be on the main roads of Trinidad and Tobago. The highest percentage of wooden bridges still exists between Toco and Matelot. All those would be repaired under this programme, which would start in August.

The second package of bridges contains 18 more. They would be spreading around the areas as follows: Blanchisseuse, Caura, Salybia, Balandra, three bridges in Rampanalgas, St. Helena, San Rafael, Ravine Sable, Longdenville, Brasso, Gran Couva, Navet, Grand Chemin, Palo Seco and Piparo.

Mr. Speaker, the National Highways Programme is well on stream. We are in the process of completing the year two contracts. Year three contracts for road construction should begin around September. Year three contracts for bridges construction is expected to begin in August. At the completion of this exercise, we expect a significant improvement in the physical infrastructure, roads, drains and bridges throughout Trinidad and Tobago. This is the rehabilitation of roads, bridges and repair of landslips, which we call slope stability and slope rehabilitation programme.

The other significant component of this programme is what we call the Trunk Road Expansion Programme. The first part of it has been completed, when we opened, about six months ago. It is the new part of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from Tarouba to Golconda. Presently, we are inviting tenders for the second major contract in that regard, which is the dualling of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, from O'Meara to Wallerfield. Those tenders will go out within a couple of weeks. We expect to start construction on that dualling project in the latter part of this year.

The continuation of the Trunk Road Expansion Programme, after the dualling from the actual piece of work that would be funded by the IDB. The next phase of the infrastructure development programme is what we will have to deal with, come 2005 onwards. For the time being, the IDB agreed to fund the design component only, of the major highways expansion programme. Contracts have been awarded to design consultants to design the following three highways. Priority number one is the most significant highway expansion programme, which we would undertake in 2005—2007. It is the continuation of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from Gloconda to Point Fortin, via La Brea, with a spur that will parallel the Siparia/Erin Road to Debe, Penal, Siparia and very likely right down to Erin. The design contract for that has already been awarded. The route selection has not been done in detail as yet. Conceptually, the design consultants will decide the

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selection of the route. Selection of the route would be driven by topography and probably more importantly by right of way access and land consideration issues.

When we designed the highway to Point Fortin—We are really doing two highways in one. One going to Point Fortin, via La Brea that will take into consideration the new industrial expansion of La Brea and Point Fortin; then we move with a spur coming off that somewhere just before Oropouche, to take care of the mushrooming business communities of Penal/Debe onwards into Siparia. For the sake of infrastructural expansion and the opening of the country, especially in the deep south, the design will take the highway right down to Erin on the south coast. That is estimated to cost between \$500 million and \$600 million.

8.25 p.m.

With respect to the second major design contract that was awarded, the letters have not been formally sent out by the Central Tenders Board, so I would desist from giving you the name of the consulting firm. The second design contract is the design of the highway from San Fernando to Mayaro: Phase I to Princes Town; phase II to Rio Claro; and phase III onward into Mayaro. Again, only last week, the Central Tenders Board awarded that contract.

The third contract awarded by the Central Tenders Board is the design of the continuation of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway from Wallerfield onward into Sangre Grande. Actually, the highway would end somewhere at Sangre Chiquita, with a turn off into Sangre Grande. People who are going east into Mayaro and Manzanilla would not have to pass through the busy town of Sangre Grande. When Mr. Yetming, the Member for St. Joseph comes to Mayaro for a weekend in 2006 or 2007, to help campaign for me, he would have free access going into Mayaro from Port of Spain. Those are the three major contracts.

During the last month, probably the most significant contract awarded by the Central Tenders Board—I think I would be free to call this name—is the contract for the National Transportation Study, which would determine the transportation needs of this country for the next 20 years. That contract has been awarded to Parson Brinkerhoff in a joint venture with Trintoplan. Actually, Parson Brinkerhoff is the company which did the last national transportation study way back in 1967. Ladies and gentlemen, that would set the template for this country to move forward for infrastructural development in the next 20 years.

A significant component of the National Transportation Study is the three design contracts under the Inter-American Development Bank. Two of the important components that would be done early in the National Transportation

Study would be the design of a freeway from Port of Spain to Chaguaramas, and then the second component would be a full feasibility study for a light monorail system along the two major corridors of Trinidad and Tobago, the East-West Corridor and the North-South Corridor.

The Member for Diego Martin West just reminded me that the Diego Martin Highway contract was actually awarded last week. Construction work is expected to start on the Diego Martin Highway within a month or two months' time. That contract was awarded to Junior Sammy at a cost of about TT \$40 million. That is also part of the IDB year three contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I want Members to picture in their minds the national physical planning perspective of what would happen to the infrastructure and transportation system in Trinidad and Tobago within the next five or 10 years. There would be a national highway grid that would be linking north, south, east and west. The planning framework of that National Transportation Study indicates that no part of Trinidad and Tobago should be more than two and a half hours to three hours from one part of the island to another part of the island, especially during the night or early in the morning when there is less traffic. People should be able to drive from Cedros to Toco in less than three hours.

We would have highways into the deep southwestern peninsula; we are going to have a major highway cutting across the southern quadrant of Trinidad in an east-west direction from San Fernando to Mayaro; we are going to have almost a loop around the island with the north-south highway, into the major East-West Corridor and into Sangre Grande. There would also be major rehabilitation work on the Manzanilla Cocal Road as we loop Trinidad in an infrastructural way that we have never seen before.

The remaining problem would be traffic management. Traffic management is a function that is related to many issues. It does not only have to do with the physical infrastructure of the road, but it has to do with people's attitudes and perceptions to mobility. Unfortunately, I pass no judgment on anyone, but Trinidad and Tobago continues to be a car-culture society. People have not optimized on public transport for whatever reasons. One could claim that it is not the most optimum, but once the middle class man in Trinidad and Tobago owns a car, he does not jump into a maxi-taxi or a bus, no matter how efficient is the service. That is the challenge that we are faced with.

There is also the challenge with the influx of foreign-used vehicles. Mobility is now accessible to the common man, or whom we would have normally called

the poor man. Everyone has access to a vehicle. The challenge that we are faced with is along our two major corridors. That would be the major focus of the National Transportation Study. Initially, we feel a light rail/monorail system may be the solution, but I do not want to pass judgment on that matter too early.

The government of India, in a government-to-government relationship with Trinidad and Tobago—the RITES group, which is a state Railway Company of India—has done a concept paper and free feasibility study for the Government. I must put on the record that we want to thank the Indian Government for doing that, and it was a tremendous and wonderful report. In fact, the report strongly recommended the construction of a light rail and/or monorail system along the two major corridors of Trinidad, the North-South Corridor which is from San Fernando to Port of Spain, and the East-West Corridor being defined from Arima to Diego Martin.

Mr. Speaker, before I leave the National Highways and Transport Programme, I want to give the assurance to this House that the infrastructure of this country is in good hands under this administration, and the planning perspective is there. The implementation schedule has been a little slow this year, and this is so because of the procurement process under the IDB, which is almost by definition slow. The IDB has been very particular about transparency. It is a price that we have to pay to honour the rules and regulations of the transparency. I do not want to go along the route like some of my predecessors in the Ministry of Works and Transport to fast track this and fast track that, under the pretext that we could get contracts awarded more quickly. There is a consequence to that and it cannot stand scrutiny.

Ultimately, as we modernize the country and the infrastructure, Mr. Valley, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, is working on the new policy position paper for procurement for the Government. For the time being, I make no apologies for it. I am willing to go on the side of being slightly slower to protect the integrity and transparency of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, than to go and play bravado with the Government's money and fast track things, and then I cannot account to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a few more comments on our drainage programme.

Mr. Partap: Last year, a contract for a landslip at the 28-kilometre mile mark on the Cunapo Southern Main Road was advertised. Could you throw any light on that matter now?

Hon. F. Khan: I do not have that in my notes now, but I could promise you a personal explanation on that matter in due course. I am going to check it when I return to the office.

I would like to discuss the drainage programme because I feel it is one of the areas where the Ministry of Works and Transport—especially members of staff of the drainage division—has done quite a credible job. I remember distinctively when I took office in October 2002, within one month of ascending to this portfolio, there were major rainfall and flooding in November 2002. I personally had a baptism of fire with respect to flooding. At that point in time, the Cabinet took a decision to immediately allocate \$50 million for flood mitigation programmes throughout Trinidad and Tobago, but with special reference to the areas that were affected by the floods of November 2002.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that since then, major flood mitigation works have been done within the Caroni Basin. The flagship project of that whole exercise has been the construction of new embankments from Kelly Village to St. Helena. That is in the constituency of Caroni East. If you want to give kudos you could do so.

Mr. Singh: I really want to thank the hon. Minister. I think the work is excellent, and it is going to be tested during this flood season, but barring that, I think excellent work is being done in that area.

Hon. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, the flooding problems in the flood plains of Trinidad and Tobago reside in three major catchment areas namely: The Caroni River Basin, the Caparo River Basin, and to a lesser extent, the Oropouche Lagoon, in the deep south, which is in the Penal/Debe area. I am talking here about flood plains type flooding events, and not flash flooding that is restricted to the mountainous valleys of Trinidad and Tobago. The 2003 programme was initially designed to tackle that problem. I think we have gone a long way in doing remedial work in the Caroni River Basin, and to a lesser extent, in the Caparo River Basin.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I just want to warn that a certain part of the river basin is called a flood plain, and by definition it means that it will flood. That is how the geomorphology of the area operates. It does not matter what you do in terms of engineering designs, but once rainfall is sufficiently intense and heavy, you would have to expect some amount of flooding. We have designed a 50-year cycle design. So, based on the statistical rainfall patterns—statistically once in every 50 years you would still have flooding. You could design one in 10 years or

one in 25 years. What should not happen after this phase of work is that every little rainfall in June or November should not cause any major widespread flooding events on the island.

In Caroni, we are hoping to survive the rainy season. We do have a problem with the Caparo Basin. Cabinet had approved the Mamoral Dam, which is really dealing with the Caparo River. The Mamoral Dam will deal with flooding in that area. It is a major project and it is estimated to cost \$110 million. This year we would be finalizing designs and doing some of the preliminary works. We have allocated \$50 million for that project. We have also brought in a consultant, which is one of the top Dutch engineering firms. I think they are rated one of the best dam construction firms in the world. The company's name is Royal Haskoning. They have a Dutch Royal Charter.

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Minister, I am very happy for the information that you are giving us, but do you have a time frame for the completion of the Mamoral Dam?

Hon. F. Khan: It is supposed to take about two and a half years. The Dutch engineers are here, and they are finalizing the designs. What would take a few extra months is that the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) has indicated to us that one of the more poorly served areas in Trinidad is the Caparo/Mamoral/Brasso area, and if there is a possibility that we could build into the design a water treatment plant in the facility. That is what the engineers are looking at now. If it is feasible, we would include it as part of the design. However, I want to make the distinction that the dam is being designed as a flood mitigation project, and not a water-winning project. If they both could live happily together, we would obviously welcome it. If PNM could live happily with UNC, and if that cannot take place, then obviously we would go with the PNM. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Member for Caroni Central, the solution is expensive. People have been bombarding me with requests to dredge the Caparo River upstream Brasso. The Caparo River upstream Brasso is largely agriculture. If we dredge Caparo upstream, we would flood the town of Chaguanas. The drainage engineers at the Ministry of Works and Transport have to be doing almost a dance to delicately balance how much channel capacity they would allow upstream of the Caparo River, and also how much channel capacity there is downstream. The economic consequence to a flood in the business district of Chaguanas is significantly higher, than flooding into the upper reaches into the agricultural plains of Mamoral.

Mr. Speaker, through you, two and a half years would take us right into 2007, and the Member for Caroni Central, one could never tell what could happen down

in your area. Under that programme we also did major works like control structures and dredging in the Guayamare and the St. Joseph areas. All those works have been completed. We have installed pumps on the north bank of the Caroni River in the Bamboo area.

Mr. Speaker, this year, we switch the focus from the Caroni plains and the Caparo Basin into the upper reaches of the river systems of Trinidad and Tobago. In the budget, close to \$50 million has been allocated to undertake river improvement works, with a special focus along the foothills of the northern range.

Presently, we are doing work on the Richplain Ravine, which is in Diego Martin, at a cost of \$4.9 million. That work is approximately 60 per cent completed. We have also done extensive work in the San Fernando area, and that work was well reported in the press. Major contracts have been awarded. I would give Members some of the details. With respect to the Ciperó River, there is very impressive masonry work being done at the San Fernando Roundabout.

Mr. Manning: Oh yes. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. F. Khan: The contract for the Ciperó River has been awarded for the sum of \$14 million. The work is about 30 to 40 per cent completed. We would be walling from Cross Crossing straight onto the Gulf City Link Road, and we would then dredge the other parts onwards into the Gulf of Paria. The Vistabella River improvement work is being done at a cost of \$17 million.

Mr. Manning: That is also excellent work. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. F. Khan: That work is about 25 to 30 per cent completed. This has nothing to do with the fact that the Vistabella River is in the constituency of San Fernando East. It has absolutely nothing to do with that. Finally, the Marabella River was completed and opened one month ago at a cost of something like TT \$9 million or \$10 million.

Mr. Speaker, these drainage works are different from what we have done in the Caroni Basin. We are not doing the work in a *vaille-que-vaille* manner, but on a scientific basis and decisions are then taken. We have divided the river system into its various components. There are particular engineering designs that are concomitant to the part of the river course that we are dealing with. As I said, this year, we are focusing on the upper reaches of the river. Contracts worth about \$3 million have already been awarded and work is in progress at the Blue Basin Ravine, the La Seiva Ravine and the Abdul Circular Main Drain, all of which are in the Diego Martin area.

This programme is being administered through the Maintenance Training and Security Company (MTS). We have invited contracts for works to be done on seven major rivers. These contracts should be awarded within one month at a total cost of \$20 million to \$30 million. These rivers are as follows: the San Juan River, walling and paving; the Beetham Main Drain, which is the drain that runs along the Beetham Estate, along the Priority Bus Route, from the Vehicle Maintenance Company of Trinidad and Tobago (VMCOTT) right into Port of Spain; certain components of the Maraval River; and the Blue Basin River. There are two rivers in deep south namely, the Goolcharan River in Debe and the Mitchell Drain in Barrackpore. Major walling and paving works would also be done on the Tacarigua River.

Mr. Speaker, I chose in this debate not to talk about everything that we are doing at the Ministry of Works and Transport because, obviously, that would take a whole night. In my view, I focused on two critical components. I have not dealt much with transport, but there are many things happening with respect to transport. We are becoming ISPS compliant by July 01. My understanding from the Director of Maritime Services and from the designated authority which is now the coast guard, is that all the administrative and security systems are in place for a compliance date of July 01. That matter was discussed at a Caricom Heads of Government meeting, and Trinidad and Tobago has taken the lead in that area. We would have everything in place by July 01, save and except some key hardware which would be the scanning equipment that would have to be replaced at the port. Under the ISPS code, once they have approved the systems—that is what they are interested in—we would have a three-month grace period to procure the hardware. We feel that from July to September, we would be well on the way to procuring the scanning equipment for the port. There is an allocation here of \$17.2 million for the equipment.

There are 14 ports in Trinidad that would have to comply with the ISPS code. The two key ports would obviously be the port at Port of Spain, and PLIPDECO Port at Point Lisas. So there would be 12 other ports. Those other ports are not as complicated as the two major cargo ports, because the other 12 ports are really single commodity ports. For example, Ispat would only be dealing with steel and iron; or Atlantic LNG at Point Fortin, would only be dealing with LNG tankers; and the Galeota Port would be dealing with the export of crude oil out of BP Amoco production system off the east coast.

We would be making a major statement with regard to the acquisition of a ferry to modernize the inter-island transport system between Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker: Would you be much longer? Your time has run out. Are you winding up?

Hon. F. Khan: Yes, I am winding up. We are putting plans in place. An inter-ministerial team has been set up to make firm recommendations for proposals to improve the air bridge service between Piarco and Crown Point Airports. We would be making a major announcement on that matter shortly.

Mr. Speaker, all in all, I hope I have complied with the Standing Orders by staying within the context of the Motion, and it was a pleasure sharing this information with the Parliament.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Adesh Nanan (Tabaquite): Mr. Speaker, what we have before the House today is a recommendation for reallocation of financial resources. You would recall that late last year an estimate was given for expenditure and revenue, and it met with the approval of the House. Notwithstanding the recommendation for reallocation of financial resources, the Government should plan properly. We should not be here today to vary anything. The Government must understand that they should take budgeting seriously. This variation of appropriation is a reflection or an admission of total incompetence and failure by the Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, today, we have lame excuses about delays like the shortage of staff, a weakened public service and areas performing and non-performing. These are the kinds of excuses that we are seeing in the financial report.

We heard earlier about a reduction in the allocation to the Ministry of Education by the Member of Parliament for Oropouche and the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph. One hundred million dollars is being removed from the Ministry of Education. When we look around the country today, there are schools without chalk, toilet paper and desks are in a deplorable state, but the Government is taking \$100 million away from the Ministry of Education. Do you know how many preschools could have been built with that \$100 million? I am asking that question in the context of the UNC's cabinet decision that \$250,000 should be allocated to a preschool. The PNM Government found that \$250,000 was not sufficient, and they have not built a single preschool under the World Bank loan. Do you know how many school meals poor children could get from this money? Do you know how many "breakfastes" could be served with this \$100 million? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, today, when one looks at the responses by the Minister of Finance, I have to pull him up. I want to make a quick reference to a particular response by the Minister of Finance. I am just deviating slightly here. I ask the question with respect to Brasso Village, and that is on the allocation for the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. The credibility of the Government is at stake here today. They cannot come here with these *vaille-que-vaille* answers. When the Member of Parliament for Ortoire/Mayaro, the Minister of Works and Transport said that he is not doing work in a *vaille-que-vaille* manner, probably he should be the Minister of Education in terms of that Ministry.

I asked the question in the context of Brasso Village which lies at the foothills of the Central Range—a village that has been without pipe-borne water for several years—and this was the reply from the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance said that the catchment area of Brasso Village presently receives a pipe-borne water supply three days per week. Brasso Village receives no pipe-borne water. Brasso Village only receives truck-borne water on a daily basis. The Member was clearly misleading the Parliament. The Minister of Finance must understand that when these answers are being presented, they must be correct. For the Minister to come here and say that Brasso Village receives a pipe-borne water supply three days a week is wrong, and it is misleading the Parliament. There are Standing Orders with respect to that matter.

Brasso Village receives a truck-borne water supply on a daily basis. I have asked the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment to see how he could utilize, in the short-term, water projects to assist the people of Brasso Village. It is a tragedy to see this kind of response coming from the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to the Ministry of Education, it is a very sad state of affairs when in Trinidad and Tobago, a Minister of Education could tell this country, month after month, that the Icacos Government Primary School would be constructed. When the mask was cleared from the Minister of Education, one sees that the Icacos Government Primary School would not be constructed this year. They have discriminated against the children of Icacos; they have said that the school would start in May, and now they have gone to June. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I would advise that Member to pay his mortgage. I did not come here to be disturbed, because we are dealing with facts in front of us. This is not a joking matter; this is a matter dealing with the finance of the country. We have heard from the Member for St. Joseph in terms of the revenue situation in this country, and we have also heard from the Member for San Fernando East about projections for the future.

Mr. Speaker, today, what is happening in the country with respect to allocation of funds is that last year Parliament approved a mid-year review. In fact, under this mid-year review, the Ministry of Education is the non-performer of the mid-year.

I want to point out that the students of Icacos Government Primary School are being housed in two churches in Icacos. I do not know if the Minister of Education is aware of Icacos. The Minister probably thinks that Icacos is a part of Venezuela, and Venezuela should deal with that matter. They have also treated the fishermen in Cedros the same way. That is a similar situation down there. They do not care about the people in Cedros and Icacos. They are taking \$100 million from that Ministry, and they have not addressed that particular situation there. The flippant excuse is that they could not find a representative from the Ministry of Works and Transport to sit on an evaluation committee. That is what we are faced with today; that is the excuse coming forward from the Minister of Finance with respect to the Icacos Government Primary School.

When one looks at the reduction in the Ministry of Education, I would have to call the names of these schools, because it is important to put on the record the primary schools that are being kept back. This is non-performance by the Ministry of Education, and it is being covered up here in terms of finding a representative from the Ministry of Works and Transport on the Evaluation Committee. The primary schools that are now being left behind are: Arima West Government Primary School, Arima New Government Primary School, St. Mary's Government Primary School, Enterprise Government Primary School, Tranquility Government Primary School—Tranquility Government Primary School has been protesting almost every single month. Discussions were held and the Ministry said yes, they were going to build the school and the moneys were allocated. Today, Tranquility Government Primary School would not be constructed, or no construction would begin on that school until the end of the year. That is what we are seeing on this document.

Mr. Speaker, New Grant Government Primary School is another school. If one sees the condition under which these children operate one would cry. In the 21st Century, this is what we are seeing in this country under this PNM Government. That is how they are treating the children of this nation and they are saying that they are supporting education.

We heard the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education speak about initiatives in the tertiary education sector, but what is happening to the primary school sector and the preschool sector? There are also Palo Seco

Government Primary School, Icacos Government Primary School and La Pastora Government Primary School.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what is even more hurtful—the poor physically challenged students of these special schools like the Wharton Patrick School, the School for the Blind in Santa Cruz; the School for the Deaf in Cascade; Lady Hochoy Centre School in Penal; Lady Hochoy Centre in Gasparillo and Lady Hochoy Centre in Cocorite. Mr. Speaker, you would recall that they broke into that school twice and stole all the computers and vandalized the school—that the Ministry said that they were going to do repairs at the end of the year, and now there is this flippant excuse about a Ministry of Works and Transport representative not showing up on an evaluation committee. I did ask for the name of the member of that evaluation committee, but they did not give me a proper answer with respect to who was the member. There is also the Audrey Jeffers School for the Deaf in Marabella, the Princess Elizabeth Centre, and the School for Special Education in Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Speaker, under the UNC, there was an allocation every year in the budget for these special schools for renovations to take place, and now we are seeing that these special schools are being left behind by the PNM Government. The Government is saying that they have a windfall in terms of oil and gas revenues coming into this country. What about these poor children who attend these different schools? What about the children of Icacos and New Grant Primary Schools? What are we telling their parents?

Today, the children of Icacos are being deprived of a proper education; they are being housed in churches in Icacos. The parents of the children in Icacos are not as fortunate as the parents in other schools where the Minister could call a prestige school and say, “I want you to take my child in that school.” The children of Icacos are being deprived of an education. That is what is happening. We are seeing an allocation of \$100 million being removed from the Ministry of Education.

What we are also seeing, besides the non-performance or poor performance in the education sector, is a major component—the UNC government negotiated and signed an IDB loan in 1999. We are now in 2004, and the PNM cannot get it right. The PNM cannot distribute textbooks to the poor children in this nation; they cannot distribute these textbooks under the loan agreement. It is here in the document, and it is quite clear. They are moving money from that particular area. I know it hurts them because they come here with their “bravé dangé” to say that they are handling the resources of the country, and they have a windfall coming in, but this is not having a ripple effect.

What is happening in the country at the level of preschool, the primary schools and also the secondary schools? In 2004, the loan negotiation included the deshifting of schools. I asked a question with respect to schools that are not being considered for rehabilitation. I would call the names of those schools because it is important for the country to know that they are getting left behind by the PNM administration. This is discrimination at the highest. The names of the 20 secondary schools that were initially scheduled for technical upgrade to establish multi-media learning centres are as follows: Arima Government Secondary School; Bishop High School in Tobago; Couva Government Secondary School; Iere High School; North Eastern College; Point Fortin Junior Secondary School; Rio Claro College; San Juan Government Secondary School; Ste. Madeline Secondary School; Toco Composite; Arima Senior Comprehensive Secondary School; Chaguanas Junior Secondary School; Cowen Hamilton High School; Mucurapo Junior Secondary School; Penal Junior Secondary School; Queen's Royal College; Sangre Grande Junior Secondary School; Scarborough Government Secondary School in Tobago; St Francois Girls' Government Secondary School; and Tunapuna Government Secondary School.

Mr. Speaker, the admission of total failure and incompetence with respect to PSIP falls squarely on the Minister of Planning and Development. We know that the former Minister of Planning and Development was busy playing golf and cursing the Prime Minister on the golf course, and we know that the current Minister of Planning and Development, the Member for Arouca South, is absent in her constituency. This is a clear reflection of poor planning. *[Interruption]* *[Laughter]* Mr. Speaker, this is not a laughing matter. I better wish the Minister belated birthday greetings. I would forget about that matter. Someone asked the question with respect to the establishment of multi-media centres for 20 secondary schools. I am just making reference to the schools. Multi-media centres must include computer labs.

Mr. Speaker, when UNC built the 10 secondary schools there were many comments about the secondary school construction programme. When I asked the question with respect to the computer labs which were to be installed in these secondary schools, the Minister of Finance replied that the 17 schools have to be upgraded, or that they are supposed to be upgraded. These schools are: Brazil Government High School, Valencia Government High School, Coryal Government High School, Blanchisseuse Government High School, Debe Government High School, Vessigny Secondary School, Rio Claro Secondary School, Bon Air High School, Speyside High School in Tobago, Matura High School, Manzanilla Government High School, Waterloo Government High School, Tableland

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[DR. NANAN]

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Government High School, La Romain Secondary School, Preysal Government High School, Goodwood High School and Guayaguayare Government High School. Mr. Speaker, if these schools were not constructed by the UNC, the contracts were awarded by the UNC. We have to give credit where credit is due. To date, the PNM Government has not built a single secondary school. [Interruption] Mr. Speaker, I am hearing an aside, but I would deal with Tobago in a short while.

Mr. Speaker: Before you do, perhaps this is an appropriate time to take the dinner break. We will now suspend the sitting of the House for dinner, and we will resume at 9.45 p.m.

9.05 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

9.45 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, when we took the break I was dealing with the multimedia labs in secondary schools. This Finance Committee Report shows a reduction of \$100 million with respect to the education ministry. There is a programme for de-shifting of the secondary schools. This received an allocation of \$60 million in the budget. This allocation is being reduced by \$40 million and as at March 31, 2004 expenditure on this project amounted to \$3.38 million. The project is still in the pre-tender stage; that is like a pre-feasibility study. What is happening in the Ministry of Education? Designs are expected to be completed towards the end of fiscal year 2004.

When this particular loan was being negotiated, there was a major plan, that is why so much was allocated for the de-shifting process. Today, in this House, we see the allocation reduced by \$40 million and an expenditure of \$3.38 million on the project. We have to ask: Is the PNM Government serious about de-shifting or is it quite content to keep the shift system in our secondary schools? This loan was signed in 1999, we are now in 2004 and the allocation is being reduced by \$40 million.

I ask the Minister of Finance about the sequence of de-shifting in 2003/2004: St. Patrick, Siparia Junior Secondary; Victoria, San Fernando East Junior Secondary; St. George East, Five Rivers Junior Secondary and Aranguez Junior Secondary; and Caroni, Carapichaima Junior Secondary. They certainly cannot be serious. We are talking about over 100 secondary schools and a large component of them, about one-third actually, are to be de-shifted and the others rehabilitated. The Minister of Education came to the Parliament, beat her chest and told us, "We are going to be building new blocks in secondary schools." I am sure you would

recall that, Member for Diego Martin Central. She gave a whole list of all the schools that would have new blocks. Today we see that this project is stymied or almost non-existent. As it was in the end at Palo Seco, where it almost cost the life and limb of a teacher and students, this kind of *vaille-que-vaille* planning in the Ministry of Education should not be allowed to continue. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Planning and Development must seriously look into the Ministry of Education to ensure that there is proper delivery of education services to the nation's children.

I spoke earlier of the situation in the country with respect to minor equipment and furniture. This is not for repetition, I just want to paint a picture of what is happening in the nation's primary and secondary schools. Earlier this year there was a report on indiscipline and violence in schools. The Minister of Education told the Parliament that there was no crisis in education, that we have a small percentage of violence in our secondary schools. When a flash flood of evidence came forward with respect to violence and indiscipline in our schools, the Minister was forced to come to the Parliament to outline possible intervention strategies for reduction. We are quite aware that they were only paying lip service to the schools intervention strategies programme.

If we look at the allocation for the particular ministry, we would see that there was an allocation for the schools intervention strategies programme coming after the fact, after they sent Mr. Alleyne to do their dirty work. According to Mr. Alleyne, he was sent to run the programme, but he was not given any funding, as the allocation would have shown. He came forward and said that it was the UNC's plan of universal secondary education that was responsible for the indiscipline and violence in our nation's schools.

Mr. Speaker, the UNC's vision for education was to put children in school; that was the first premise. Curriculum structure would come after, but we must have these children in our schools. What did the Minister of Education do? On a report of indiscipline and violence between the Tranquility Government Secondary School and St. Mary's, she closed the Tranquility Government School, so the children were prevented from going to school. If you look at the conditions of that school, it is relevant here, because this particular allocation is for the rehabilitation of secondary schools and the Tranquility Government Secondary School needs to be rehabilitated. You have pigeon droppings, classrooms without windows and classrooms that become flooded in the rainy season. Those are the kinds of conditions the children have to undergo at that particular school. That is not the only school; there are other secondary schools in this country that need to be upgraded.

So when you see a large allocation being taken out of the Ministry of Education for the rehabilitation of secondary schools, you have to ask the question: What is happening in the Ministry of Education? Why is this particular programme not taking place? Is the Minister not aware that these schools must be upgraded? The Minister came to this Parliament and gave us a long list of all the schools that needed to be upgraded and not only rehabilitation with respect to classrooms and the upgrade of building facilities, but within the school environment there is supposed to be a technical upgrade taking place of the multimedia and computer capability.

Mr. Speaker, the question was asked: How many schools have had or are going to have computer labs? We got a reply, but I want you to recall that there was a question on computers and the Minister of Education gave us an entire list, pages 1, 2, 3 and 4, of the computerization effort in our primary and secondary schools. At that time I raised the situation with the Minister about the computers at Mayo RC Primary School. To this day, the situation remains. The Minister said that I should have a discussion with her or with the Ministry; I had a discussion with the Ministry before I asked the question. I would have thought that the Minister of Education would have asked somebody to check into that, but up to today nothing has been done at that school with respect to the computer lab. The computers are there, but there is no software to accompany the programmes. That is the situation we are facing.

When you see the computerization efforts in the Ministry of Education stalled because of the reallocation of resources and targets cannot be met, yet moneys are being moved out of the ministry, you have to ask: What is happening? There is total incompetence and non-performance in that sector. Some may argue that it is about rehabilitation of buildings, but it goes further than that.

It is my understanding—and I have said it openly—that the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) was supposed to be a pilot project, because in other Caribbean islands it was introduced as a pilot. That is relevant because I asked a question on curriculum matters. It is here in the financial report and the reply is here with respect to curriculum. The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination must be introduced in Trinidad and Tobago as a pilot; you cannot have some kind of compulsory action taking place. That is an abuse of power by the PNM Government. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot force schools in this country to shift to CAPE. There is a report which says that if the secondary schools do not accept CAPE they will not be funded; that is an abuse of power and, to coin a phrase, it is a celebration of mediocrity. [*Desk thumping*]

In terms of curriculum matters, an important aspect of CAPE is the GCE A'level examinations. I said this before and I will say it again: The students should be allowed to write both examinations in 2005, because they must be afforded the opportunity to be marketable. We have seen the University of the West Indies put out ads saying that it accepts CAPE; we have no problem with that, but we do not want it to be a Caribbean oriented examination. Why are we limiting our students with respect to the Caribbean environment? They must be able to access the international arena. We call upon the Government to reconsider. In fact, they are trampling on the Constitution; they are affecting the rights of a citizen to choose. We are seeing a creeping dictatorship with respect to the introduction of CAPE into our secondary schools.

I am sure there is going to be a strong lobby against such a move by the Government. It is okay to bring in the exam as a pilot, to have 19 secondary schools doing the examination. You said that in 2006 all schools must do CAPE, but now you are saying there will be no funding if a school does not accept it. That is unacceptable; the UNC will not tolerate that kind of approach by the PNM Government.

I also want to deal with another matter with respect to this particular allocation. There is a committee set up in the Ministry of Education called the Site and Site Evaluation Committee. This committee gave a report. I want to draw a reference to Standing Order 19(7). Mr. Speaker, you will recall that there were several questions on the Order Paper to be answered by the Minister of Education and time ran out on that particular day. The answers were supposed to be circulated that particular evening or at the next delivery of the Order Paper. It has since been one month. It is only when the matter was in the public domain with respect to a Privilege Motion against the Minister of Education that an answer came forth. The Minister of Education has contempt for this Parliament. If you read the reply coming from her, you will see that the Minister never read the answer she circulated in this Parliament. I am not speaking from the top of my head; I have the information here.

Mr. Hinds: You never know.

Dr. A. Nanan: I want the Member from Laventille East/Morvant to stop. I will ask for injury time. I will tell him that he has to start paying his \$300,000.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. Hinds: My portfolio is to make the jail more comfortable.

Dr. A. Nanan: Are you threatening me, Member for Laventille East/Morvant?

Mr. Hinds: I would not waste my time.

Dr. A. Nanan: We got a reply from the Minister of Education.

Of course, this is relevant because it deals with the certificate of environmental clearance. Let me make it relevant, in case you have any problems with the relevance of this matter. You will see that there is an allocation here for an increase for the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) is asking for more money. I asked: What about the Beverage Container Bill? What about the water pollution rules? I am drawing the link here in terms of the increase in expenditure to the EMA. I will come back to that particular reference with respect to the EMA.

I want to deal with the Site and Site Evaluation Committee in the Ministry of Education. When I asked whether a certificate of environmental clearance was required for the Torouba South Development, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment came to this House and said, "Yes, there is need for a certificate of environmental clearance, but it has not been issued as yet." The Member could correct me if I am wrong.

Mr. Sharma: This is a very proper Minister, unlike all the others.

Dr. A. Nanan: I agree with you, Member for Fyzabad. This is the reply coming from the Minister of Education to a question posed on the Shiva Boys' and Parvati Girls' Colleges. I will not read the whole reply, just one particular area. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Read it!

Dr. A. Nanan: Member for Tunapuna, you were found guilty and discharged, so I do not think that we should have this discussion with you in the Parliament. Mr. Speaker, I will not ask for injury time.

The reply was as follows:

- “8. On September 25, 2002, an application was made to the Town and Country Planning Division for outline planning permission to develop the site for the construction of the schools. A reply dated September 26, 2000 was issued to the Ministry of Education stating that the Town and Country Planning Division had no objection to the use of the site for institutional purposes. However, a Certificate of Environmental Clearance was required before outline planning permission could be given.
9. An approval of the Certificate of Environmental Clearance was received on March 24, 2004. After the receipt of the Certificate of Environmental

Clearance, an application was made to the Town and Country Planning Division on April 06, 2004. The planning permission was granted by the said Division of April 23, 2004.”

Do you see what is happening here? A certificate of environmental clearance was required before outline planning permission could be given. When I asked a supplemental question, in terms of the Torouba South development, how could the Member for Diego Martin West say, “Yes, we could build houses.”? It is clear who is telling the truth. It is a matter of credibility with respect to this Government. The Government must clear the air. Who is misleading the House?

Mr. Singh: He is lying.

Dr. A. Nanan: It is an unparliamentary word, so I will not say that.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. A. Nanan: I went to the Site and Site Evaluation Committee to draw reference, in terms of the certificate of environmental clearance, because the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) is asking for an increased allocation. Why? What has the EMA been doing for the last two years under the PNM administration? A big sign on a placard, “Wanted Dead or Alive”, the EMA, tells it all. Is the EMA a political tool for the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment had great problems deciding whom to give the Green Leaf Award for environmental upliftment. Environmentalists are non-existent in this country; probably the Ministry gave it to the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) gangs. [*Crosstalk*] I am dealing with the EMA.

Mr. Valley: Rambling rose—[*Member sings*]

Dr. A. Nanan: I am dealing with the question of increased allocation with respect to the EMA.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for San Fernando East, the Prime Minister, stumbled across the Beverage Container Bill when he was reading his budget speech, as though he was seeing it for the first time. In fact, when I asked for the status of the Beverage Container Bill, they still were not sure. The Beverage Container Bill is supposed to deal with containers. Their reply was something like this: The draft Beverage Container Bill was prepared by the EMA based on a process of public consultation. They did not say how long ago. Under the UNC, this Bill was in draft form; it was just to be brought to Parliament. What is the keep back? They are telling me the history of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill is predicated on the polluter pay principle and a fundamental pillar for the national environmental policy. But nothing has been said about when an important Bill like this would be brought to the Parliament and the EMA has said nothing about it. It was drafted by the EMA. They cannot be serious. [*Crosstalk*] I know that they are aware of the environmental laws; they are trampling on them. They are breaking the environmental laws for their own purpose.

I also asked about the Water Pollution Rules. The reply was:

“The water pollution rules are currently before the Legislative Review Committee of Cabinet and are scheduled to be laid in Parliament before the end of the current fiscal year.”

The water pollution rules were already laid in Parliament. Once it is laid in Parliament it takes effect; it was for negative resolution, but under the PNM administration it had lapsed, never to see the light of day. We are seeing pollution of our waterways throughout Trinidad and Tobago, yet this piece of legislation cannot come to the Parliament.

I also asked about the Environmental Management Agency Act. This seems to be a standard format for replies:

“The Environmental Management Agency Act is currently under review and will be submitted for the consideration of Cabinet for its tabling in Parliament.”

No time frame was given. [*Interruption*] When, in 2020? The CEC rules are already on the books. The CEC rules which were implemented two years ago are also under review. Apparently everything is under review at the Ministry of the Attorney General.

There is no legislative agenda. They have come to fool with us a Shipping (Marine Pollution) Bill, about 200 pages, a copycat bill from the UNC administration. If you see the size of that Bill; we will have to speak for days on that particular Bill, probably weeks. This important legislation is stuck in the Ministry of the Attorney General and not coming forward for pollution, but you have these small programmes going on like “I love my beach,” and there is another small one coming up again, by the Solid Waste Management Company. The major piece of legislation to prevent pollution is not being brought forward. [*Crosstalk*]

My friend, the Member for Diego Martin Central thinks that he could put me off, he may or may not, but I want him to remember that an allocation is here

under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP). I negotiated with the IADB, together with the Ministry of Planning and Development, and we signed the loan. I know that particular loan document from beginning to end, so I could speak from now until my time runs out and beyond, because there is an allocation here.

Mr. Speaker: Your first 45 minutes have just run out. The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Nanan: Thank you, Members.

Mr. Speaker, I also asked a question in the Finance Committee about the radar system in Tobago. I did not see a reply here. I asked that in the context of the situation of our country in the hurricane belt. It is true that we may be sheltered, but we heard from the Director of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) about the possibility of our being struck by a storm. We have no confidence in NEMA; we have seen the non-performance of NEMA when there were disasters in this country.

I recall that in my constituency 73 roofs were blown off and, today, not one cent has been given by NEMA. It is a paper organization. I do not want to attack public servants, so I will deal with the Government, because NEMA comes under the Ministry of National Security. We have a situation with flooding. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro in his contribution spoke about flood alleviation and programmes to deal with flooding. But a major part of the exercise is the proper coordination for NEMA. Although there are flood mitigation measures in place, Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, we still have such heavy rainfall within a particular time frame that there is flash flooding and major flooding because of the overload of the water courses.

Mr. Speaker, what I heard last night on the TV6 news really got me upset:

“Flooding—the Carapo River overflowed its banks.” [*Interruption*]

No, the reporter said Carapo. You see, Mr. Speaker, once they cross the Caroni River, they forget the geography. The other reporter in commenting on the story said that it was because of heavy rainfall in the Northern Range that the Caparo River had overflowed its banks. Everybody knows that the Caparo River is fed from heavy rainfall in the Central Range, but these people do not know their

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geography. *[Interruption]* That is the possible explanation then. I was speaking about the need to do something with respect to NEMA.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, NEMA had the benefit of a grant, which came through the Ministry of National Security to assist with flooding and other areas of disasters. In fact, the UNC government changed it from a national disaster to a local disaster area. There was a Cabinet decision; I do not know if they rescinded it. Where you have a local disaster, with respect to a particular situation, NEMA could come in and give resources. We called on NEMA to deal with a matter in the constituency and we could not even get the Director, he was in Tobago and did not answer his phone. That is the kind of response we are getting. It happens continuously, so I brought that into the debate because you had dealt with flooding and I wanted to deal with NEMA—well, the so-called organization NEMA.

As I look through this Finance Committee Report, the explanations are unbelievable with respect to non-performance in almost every sector, every ministry. If you look at the decreases you would see that. It shows the poor performance of the Government in terms of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). When the Member for Diego Martin Central quoted some figures with respect to the PSIP and percentages, we know that he does not even know the percentage of performance in the Ministry. I do not know if he has been extrapolating to the end of the year; we are only in the mid-year review. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Valley: I did not.

Dr. A. Nanan: You did say so. *[Interruption]* Anyway, I will not argue about what you said, but you talked about a percentage in performance.

Mr. Valley: Of the gross domestic product (GDP); I said \$312 million was .47 of the GDP.

Dr. A. Nanan: No, you did not say that; I wrote it down. I will not debate that with the Member for Diego Martin Central. Probably he forgot, that was since about 2.00 this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, \$100 million is being moved from the Ministry of Education. If you are linking the PSIP, which is infrastructural and development projects, you are looking at short-term employment in the construction sector, because a lot of these projects will be construction based. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. A. Nanan: When you remove \$100 million from the Education Ministry, you are reducing the employment opportunities for small contractors and, by

extension, the skilled labourers. So when you have poor performance in the PSIP and you keep moving the allocation and putting it where you do not have much infrastructure, in terms of construction projects, you will see a decrease in employment opportunities. That is why when there is not performance in the PSIP, you have all these possible ramifications with respect to employment opportunities; you have a decrease in employment taking place. That is a major factor in the PSIP.

I specifically asked about the computerization effort of the Ministry of Education with respect to the magnet schools. Some may ask: What are magnet schools? In 2004 Trinidad and Tobago is supposed to be a model for the rest of the Caribbean, in terms of the education sector upgrade. The magnet schools are supposed to be special schools with linkages to the business sector, like the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. Specialized equipment that are used in these industries would be in those schools. Of course, there must be selection criteria, not the affirmative action being put forward today. So this particular school would have the benefit of machinery. *[Interruption]* What happen, Member for Laventille East/Morvant?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, just keep talking to me.

Dr. A. Nanan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. You have these magnet schools that will be the link between the business or private sector and the particular school environment. They can actually bring in the specialized machinery from, probably, the Point Lisas Industrial Estate into the particular school environment for the students to have a hands-on approach.

When I asked the question, lo and behold, I got this response:

“The magnet schools in the areas of physical education and the performing and visual arts and information technology are to be constructed under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme.”

That is the contempt that the Minister of Finance has for the Parliament. It goes on:

“The decision on sites of the schools is still under consideration by the Ministry of Education.”

They are still making a decision on the site in 2004 for these magnet schools. That is why I make reference to the Site and Site Evaluation Committee of the Ministry of Education. We have to ask the question, Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, you are a geologist: Is the Site and Site Evaluation Committee set up to prevent the construction of these schools? Is this committee another block so that these things

would not take place? We have to ask because they have not made a decision on the sites. It is the same situation with the Shiva Boys' and Parvati Girls' Colleges. If I really go through that answer, you would be shocked to see what is happening there.

The EMA, terms of reference, from the Ministry it goes to the EMA. The EMA says, "No, no, no, this is not correct," it goes back to the Ministry; from the Ministry, it goes back to the EMA and then it goes to Petrotrin for confirmation. It is like a ping pong match taking place in that ministry. Money is allocated but the schools are not being constructed. That is why I asked the question, Member for Diego Martin Central: Is the Site and Site Evaluation Committee set up to frustrate the whole exercise? *[Interruption]* I am hearing an aside from the Member for Arouca North.

Mr. Speaker: Disregard it.

Dr. A. Nanan: That will stimulate me even more to speak.

We heard from the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro about main roads. He gave us a whole listing of all the work taking place under the Ministry of Works and Transport. The Member spoke very highly of the Inter-American Development Bank, in terms of its satisfactory report in that ministry. I want the Minister to understand that those programmes were already planned by the UNC administration. All those roads he listed were planned by the UNC under that same IADB programme. The only thing he could say today is that the performance was satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

For example in the Gran Couva area, the plan was the bridges, water and then the road upgrade. He was speaking about main roads and the Ministry of Works and Transport, but what about the Ministry of Local Government? The former Minister of Local Government did not recognize the importance of secondary roads. That is why I want to make a special appeal, in terms of the situation with secondary roads in the country. It is all well and good to have your main roads smooth and highly upgraded, but you cannot get out of your community to get onto these paved main roads, because of the situation of these secondary roads.

The Minister of Local Government must be aware that these secondary roads fall under his portfolio. It is not suitable for the Minister to make a statement that the regional corporation must budget for these roads. These roads require tremendous upgrading; because of the kind of terrain they traverse there is a lot of land slippage. So the allocation coming from Central Government to the regional corporations must be increased if we have to see any upliftment in terms of access

in and out of our communities. I make a special plea to the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro that the Piparo Main Road has been neglected. Because of the volcano, the Piparo Main Road has been cut off from the rest of the village.

You would have seen recently the kind of hardships the Piparo community undergoes. There were certain proposals put forward, one of which was for the upgrade of the Piparo Main Road by the Ministry of Works and Transport. It can be used as an access route.

Mr. Khan: You have caught me in a very generous mood tonight. Hussainy Trace where the people protested is the new access into Piparo since the mud volcano erupted and cut off the Piparo Main Road. In our view, Hussainy Trace is now the de facto main road, because the original main road has been cut off. We have decided to take the responsibility to fix Hussainy Trace, although it falls under the purview of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation. Give us a few more weeks and we will send out a contractor.

Dr. A. Nanan: I always acknowledge when my colleagues show that kind of generosity. *[Interruption]* Who is discriminating now? I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro on behalf of the Piparo community. In 1997 they had a terrible experience with the eruption of the volcano.

Before I close I want to deal with technology upgrade and education, because it is a major part in this Finance Committee Report and it is also an area where we are seeing non-performance. When this loan was being negotiated the components were to rehabilitate the secondary schools and to put in the multimedia facilities in computer labs. I find it strange that in the existing secondary schools they are going to upgrade science labs; I do not know for what reason. If they are doing that, why is it taking so long? This is the 21st Century.

The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro pointed out that my organizer is outdated, my palm diary 1971 is no longer a top of the line product and it was purchased only a few months ago. We are seeing the kinds of rapid advances in technology. That is why I make a plea to the Government, as a whole, to recognize the importance of technology. The Member for Diego Martin East spoke about the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago, the multi-campus facility and the University of Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of Education should be linked to all education outposts in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, we made a special plea through the House Committee for the offices of the Members of Parliament to have Internet access. We are also asking for the Parliament to be wired for computer, because we recognize the importance of computers in today's society.

When a finance report comes in and you see that the Ministry of Education is falling back in setting up computer labs in secondary schools, we have to ask what is the reason. Are they serious about this particular programme? When the loan was being negotiated, that was a major component of the loan. If you looked at the curriculum aspect of that IADB loan you would see that about 85 per cent of the allocation was going into the teaching and learning strategies. The construction component was another part. In terms of the Government's contribution—85 per cent was from the IADB and 15 per cent was government revenue. So there was an allocation; it is not that the money had to be found; the money is already there with respect to drawdowns on the teaching and learning strategy component within which the upgrade of the laboratories fall.

We have to ask about the withdrawal of money from this particular area. Why is that happening? What has the Minister of Finance seen, in terms of the targets set for this particular programme, that has caused him to reduce the allocation for this particular area? We are seeing a failure by the Government, as a whole, in all aspects of the education sector. You may agree or disagree. If you look at the Finance Committee Report and the \$100 million reduction, you can extrapolate in various areas and see that the primary and secondary school targets—and I am staying within those areas—are not being reached. It is a sad day when the Education Ministry cannot perform.

I want to end on a particular note. It is not comical; it is a statement and I feel I have to say it. There was a big discussion about whether the Education Minister had passed her examination or not. From this performance, it shows quite clearly that she has earned letters after her name; the letters are T and F for “total failure”.

Thank you. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Sharma: He is the biggest racist in this House, after me.

The Minister of Housing (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Mr. Speaker, even before I say a word, my colleague on the other side began to insult and annoy me. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I care, because we are late in the night and we will have some order. Let us avoid calling one another names, please.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I got up to—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: To make a racial statement.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I got up to provide some information to Members on the other side, because during the Finance Committee certain

questions were asked and I did promise to provide some information with respect to certain—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be annoyed at this hour of the night.

Mr. Speaker: One minute, please. You can rest assured that I am going to take very serious concern as to any remarks that are out of order. I am begging Members, please; it is late in the night. If you continue to abuse one another, use insulting language or abusive unparliamentary language, there are powers in the Standing Orders which tell me that I can put you out. I do not want to do that at this hour of the night. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: In fact, let me redirect my contribution, since that is how we intend to conduct the night. I get up to talk and before I say anything, some idiot on the other side called me a racist, a racist, a racist. [*Crosstalk*] The reason for that is because he is probably afraid that I might draw your attention to something. [*Crosstalk*] Maybe I should draw your attention to it. One of the reasons for that statement is that Members on the other side have been making a habit of telling the population that the Government, of which I am a part and which I represent, is discriminating and doing so along racial lines and is oppressing half the population, according to their calculations.

I want to draw your attention to something, Mr. Speaker. I want to draw the attention of the Minister of Works and Transport as well. I sat here and heard the Minister of Works and Transport outline the development programme in the Ministry of Works and Transport largely funded by the IADB. [*Crosstalk*] Half of the country's population live in the East-West Corridor; two-thirds of the vehicles in the country are to be found in the East-West Corridor. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The development programme this evening was so good that I heard my colleague from Caroni East congratulating the Minister of Works and Transport. It is the first time since I have been in this Parliament that I have heard Members of the Opposition congratulating the Minister of Works and Transport for the wonderful development programmes. Do you know why? Because the entire development programme is being spent outside the East-West Corridor, where the majority of the seats won by the PNM exist. [*Desk thumping*] That made them very happy.

I want to draw to your attention that the Minister of Works and Transport spoke about the programmes that are being addressed and for that they are very

happy. But just for the record, while they shouted “racist” at me, I want to identify for you the projects that do not form part of the programme.

Mr. Sharma: Non-performance of the PNM!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You can call it non-performance. [*Crosstalk*] I simply want to draw to your attention, the projects that are not bigoted. I came out of my office a couple of days ago, twice this week and last week. If you try coming from East Port of Spain to go to West Port of Spain to go to North Port of Spain, virtually any time of day, you are in gridlock. This is the capital city. You talk about discrimination and serving your own interests? There are about four or five parliamentary seats around Port of Spain, and if I add Diego Martin there are three more.

One of the projects that was on the drawing board for quite some time is an extension of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, past the lighthouse, down Dock Road to take traffic onto Wrightson Road and create a free flow of traffic down there. I did not hear the Minister of Works and Transport mention that today anywhere in the development programme. [*Crosstalk*] It has not been done. We are accused of discriminating against ourselves. That is a project in the capital city which, in fact, has been designed. [*Crosstalk*] I am talking about the projects that are not being done in the face of accusations of discrimination from the other side. [*Crosstalk*]

I am putting it in the context that as we do Government business, they say that we are discriminating against their constituencies. I am showing you how well we are discriminating, that while we spend \$48 million on three roads in Tabaquite, the main thoroughfare from east to west across the capital city is not yet on the programme. [*Crosstalk*] The Government will have to find resources to do that if there is to be balanced development.

Another design that is on the drawing board that was not mentioned this evening is the extension of the Western Main Road to Chaguaramas. [*Crosstalk*] That was part of the IADB programme. [*Crosstalk*] That was not mentioned this evening.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The upgrade of the Maraval through road to bring relief to the people in the Maraval Valley was not on the programme. [*Crosstalk*] If we are to ease the traffic flow in Port of Spain to make movement in and around the capital city palatable and passable, we have to begin to think about new movements in the city. One of the possibilities we have to consider is the whole

question of going with an elevated roadway over the Dry River to take traffic from East Port of Spain to North Port of Spain. [*Crosstalk*]

We are always talking about the creation of a link road between North Port of Spain, the Audrey Jeffers Highway, down the Maraval Parkway. The Maraval Parkway has been an integral part of the transportation planning for Port of Spain, for quite some time. The time has come for that to come on the drawing board. [*Crosstalk*] I raised these. I can also mention the whole question of Santa Cruz into Malick, into East Port of Spain. These are some of the developing programmes that will have to be effected, if we are to bring any improvement in the movement of traffic. [*Crosstalk*]

Every few weeks we import hundreds if not thousands of used Japanese vehicles. [*Crosstalk*] In fact, in the last—[*Interruption*]—Oh, shut up!

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I mean, he is making a continuous commentary.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, please; I know he is provoking you, but that also is unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw it, please. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Keep on that way.

The bottom line is that we have added 100,000 vehicles to our vehicle population in recent times, without the creation of new roads, and most of those vehicles are added to the transportation system in the East-West Corridor. So it follows that we have to find avenues to increase the road network and the carrying capacity of those roads. [*Crosstalk*] In fact, the traffic requirements between Port of Spain and Arima now demand that we go beyond the following highway.

10.45 p.m.

Now, all these observations are simply to make the point that we have all these projects to come, and I am simply alerting my friends on the other side that when they see these development programmes in North Trinidad, do not come here and accuse us of preferential treatment and discrimination, because they would have to be done. They were quite happy this evening to hear that what has been allocated so far, all of it has been in their constituencies. But that is not the entire programme.

Some questions were asked about the housing programme, again in the context of some thought that something unfair, unreasonable, clandestine is happening in the Ministry of Housing, and I promised to give the information today and I propose to do that now.

The Members asked to provide the list of contractors who were engaged in the housing programme and I would crave your indulgence to provide that information to Members.

The joint venture contractors engaged in the housing programme for the period 2003—2004 and they did ask what these contractors were doing and so on. Under the joint venture contractors we have 20 contractors.

Joint Venture Contractors

No.	Contractor	Site	No. of Units
1.	Pace Construction Services Limited	Pleasantville 1A	103
2.	Rainbow Construction Limited	Pleasantville 1B	109
3.	Doc's Engineering Limited	Pleasantville 1C	96
4.	Trinity Housing Limited	Pleasantville 1D	136
5.	Central Project Management Limited	Mayaro	15
6.	Gasco Limited	Palo Seco	28
7.	Mattzack	Rio Claro	38
8.	Basco's Hardware & General Building Contractor Limited	Malabar	40
9.	P.R. Contracting	D'Abadie	26
10.	Rainbow Construction Limited	Mount Hope	115
11.	Therml Impac	Barataria	82
12.	NH International Limited	Tarouba North	419
13.	H. Lewis Construction Company Limited	Carlsen Field	250
14.	Basco's Hardware & General Building Contractor Limited	Ojoe Road, Sangre Grande	21
15.	Winchester Industries Limited	Ramgoolie Trace	368
16.	H. Lewis Construction Company Limited	Oasis Site B	70
17.	Building Concepts & Construction	Oasis Site C	24
18.	Trinity Pre-Fab Homes Limited	Pleasantville (Geranium, Dove Walk, Flamingo Crescent, Ibis Drive)	97

19.	Port & Maritime Services Limited	Edinburgh 500	50
20.	Hanover Construction Limited	Couva North	300
TOTAL			2,387

These are the joint venture companies which are currently engaged in the programme for 2003—2004.

**2004—2005
Joint Venture Contractors**

No.	Contractor	Site	No. of Units (Approximate)
1.	Pace Construction Services Ltd.	Corinth	800
2.	Trinity Housing Limited		
3.	Rainbow Construction Company Limited		
4.	Super Industrial Services Limited	Retrench	300
5.	Gasco Limited		
6.	T. N. Ramnauth & Company Limited	Golconda	300
7.	Central Project Management Limited		
8.	Bolt Trinidad Limited	Carlsen Field West	400
9.	Harricrete/Ashtrom		
10.	H. Lewis Construction Company Limited	Edinburgh South	1,200
11.	Carillion (Caribbean) Limited		
12.	I.C.P. Pascal	La Horquetta South	1,600
13.	Home Construction Limited	Goya	130
14.	Atlas Engineering	Harmony Hall	90
15.	Uniform Building Contractors	Bates Street	140
16.	Hanover Construction Limited	Couva North	300
TOTAL			5,260

I was also asked by the other side to provide information with respect to proposals which are under consideration and there we are in discussions for a joint venture arrangement with the following:

Reviewed Joint Venture Contractors (Proposals Being)

No.	Contractor	Site	No. of Units (Approximate)
1.	Agostini Marketing	Wellington Road, Debe	320
2.	C. G. Construction Services Limited	Mount Hope	97
3.	Port & Maritime Services Limited		
4.	Building Concepts & Construction	Caura Royal Road	100
5.	Basco Hardware & General Building Contractor Limited		
TOTAL			517

These are the larger contractors involved in the joint venture arrangement in the housing programme.

I was also asked to provide the total picture with respect to the small contractors. These small contractors are engaged in, what we call, an in-fill programme where they are doing a variety of small numbers of lots in existing developments but where there are unbuilt lots within those developments. That is called our in-fill programme. The number of units would range from, in some instances, five to fifteen or thereabouts, or probably 20. If I am permitted I can indicate to you the list is as follows:

LIST OF INFILL CONTRACTORS STATUS REPORT

SITE	NO. OF CONTRACTORS	NO. OF UNITS	CONTRACTOR
Edinburgh 500	1	15	Alico Company Ltd.
	2	11	Seventh Level Consultants
	3	11	Pro Eng. Services Ltd.
	4	6	Eugene Construction Co.
	5	5	Pical Services Ltd.
	6	5	Budget Homes Ltd.
Couva North Phase III	7	13	L.C.B. Contractors Ltd.
	8	10	Jaisuree Enterprises Ltd.
	9	5	Adjoha Singh Construction
	10	5	C.W.R. Construction Services Company
	11	6	Excelsior International Ltd.

SITE	NO. OF CONTRACTORS	NO. OF UNITS	CONTRACTOR
	12	6	H.S. Builders
	13	5	Ramsawak Sooklal Construction
Dyette Estate, Cunupia	14	16	Maharaj & Assoc. Contracting Agency
	15	3	Choons Construction Co. Ltd.
Malabar Phase III	16	9	Beedes Construction Co. Ltd.
	17	5	Base Construction Co. Ltd.
	18	5	D&B Engineering Co. Ltd.
Malabar Phase IV/I	19	9	Mitchelli's Construction Co. Ltd.
	20	4	Paharry Hardware & Construction
	21		
Buen Intento	22	32	Carl King Co. Ltd.
	23	19	Douglas Contractors
	24	6	J.E. & Daughters Limited
	25	4	Teejai Enterprises Ltd.
Union Hall	26	7	Ashana Civil Mechanical Contractors Ltd.
	27	7	Oilfield and Marine Sales & Services Ltd.
	28	10	Komas Company Limited
	29	12	Kabel Limited
	30	4	CP's Plumbing & Hardware Ltd.
	31	6	Ian Fook Building Contractor
	32	20	Carl King Company Limited
	33	10	Edward & Associates
	34	10	Allahu Enterprises Limited
	35	10	On-site Construction Services
Caroni Village	36	24	Triple Bique Company Ltd.
	37	13	Cardil Construction Co. Ltd.
	38	15	Advance Construction Ltd.
	39	50	HYPE Construction Services Ltd.

SITE	NO. OF CONTRACTORS	NO. OF UNITS	CONTRACTOR
	40	28	Nardel Company Ltd.
	41	20	R2K Engineering Ltd.
Couva North Phase II	42	12	S.L. Limited
Boy's Lane, D'Abadie	43	6	Equator Limited
Bon Air West	44	5	Accel Financial Group Limited
	45	5	King Company Enterprises
Graham Trace, Sangre Grande	46	6	Starblock Limited
Striker's Village Point Fortin	47	2	O'Brian Alexander General Contractor
Harmony Hall	48	8	OLAB Construction Ltd.
Plaisance/ Mayaro	49	6	N.R. Construction Ltd.
Charlieville	50	5	Shacon Limited
Valencia	51	2	Wayne Martin Construction
El Guyanapo, Rio Claro	52	7	R.E. Matthews & Associates
Cedros	53	3	Links Limited
Debe	54	3	Johnston's Construction & Engineering Ltd.
Sam Boucaud	55	4	Modern Fabricators Co. Ltd.
	56	6	Dean Bhandoo
Santa Cruz	57	3	Right Move Promotion
	58	6	Albert & Norbert Dominique Construction Co. Ltd.
	59	4	Bartholomew's Quarry Limited
	60	6	Compjwell Contractors
Bien Venue	61	3	Ultimate Construction Services Company Limited
	62	4	Andrew Manwaring & Sons Ltd.
Mowll Village, Fyzabad	63	5	Sharoz Enterprise Limited

SITE	NO. OF CONTRACTORS	NO. OF UNITS	CONTRACTOR
Hickleng Village, Fyzabad	64	5	J.H. Reviero
Bushe Village, Fyzabad	65	4	L.&L. Contractors
Southern Gardens, Point Fortin	66 67 68 69	80	Pace Construction Services Ltd. Bramco Enterprises Limited Carl King Company Limited Patrick Gordon Construction Ltd.
TOTAL	69	661	

What you would have observed, contrary to what has been promoted by our colleagues on the other side, is that the housing programme is comprehensive. I did not mention Tobago at all in this listing; this is only in Trinidad. We have three sites in Tobago where construction is taking place.

From what I read out to you, you would have gathered without even thinking about it; just by hearing the distribution of the programme, that the housing programme is nationwide. There are very few contractors in the country, large or small, who are not involved in the housing programme. The small contractors I mentioned last, the Government has stated a policy to encourage small contractors and, in fact, to commit 10 per cent of Government work to small contractors. I could tell you, in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, that policy is alive and well and is forming a major part of our development programme with respect to the housing construction.

So when you hear it being said that we are building houses with ulterior motives and we are voter-padding and it is social engineering, and whatnot, those are the facts. All over Trinidad and Tobago, from Diego Martin to Barataria, to Mount Hope to Valencia, to Rio Claro, to Mayaro, to Couva, to Tabaquite, to Point Fortin, all over the country where there is building land available and where there is a demand for housing, the National Housing Programme is seeking to meet those needs by encouraging housing construction in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is the housing programme that exists today.

I was also asked about the housing grant. We had 17,249 applicants. I was also asked to tell the House what was the criteria for the selection of persons. It was published in the newspaper as outlined by the Cabinet. The applicants must

have a household income not more than \$24,000 per annum—by household income we mean whoever is in the household earning money. If the gross earning for the year is over \$24,000, you do not qualify. You must also be a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and be over 18 years old. Applicants must be the owner of the property or must have permission to occupy the property. Applicants must not have benefited from any similar home improvement grants under the National Settlements Programme of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), because we have another programme of the IDB where there is counterpart funding arrangements. So if you benefit from that programme, you will not qualify to benefit from this \$10,000 grant programme, which is really meant to help those persons who are at the base of the pyramid, who, having used their resources for basic needs, cannot find resources to direct towards housing maintenance and for which a \$10,000 grant would bring about some relief in fixing a roof, windows, plumbing, electrical, and so on.

The process that would be used is that all applicants would be entered into a database and a random selection/need process would be involved. We use the computer programme to select persons. When we looked at the first pass, we realized that a number of persons who applied really could not qualify, either because they did not own the property; they were very young people seeking to get, probably, at least \$10,000 or they were earning more than the qualification amount of \$24,000 and, therefore, of the 17,000, thousands of persons really do not qualify.

When we did the pass, placing emphasis on persons above 50 years old, aiming to find those pensioners, in particular, who are the older people, whose pensions have been reduced and devalued over time and who are the ones who would own their property and not be able to maintain it, which is a qualification of this programme, we found in the first pass, we attracted 600 persons. And the process does not stop there. The NHA officers would interview those persons to verify that what they put in the form is there, and also we have an inspector who goes out and looks at the physical situation and only then is it determined that this person has qualified and we would begin to disburse those money, hopefully before the end of this month. We are hoping to use all of that money that is available in this fiscal year. We are hoping to serve about 1,000 persons.

If, after having done that, the database shows that there is more need, we would approach the Cabinet for the next fiscal year to do another phase II, and if

the Cabinet so agrees, the programme will be continued. I am just talking about intentions and not a confirmation. But if, as we look at the database, we see the need there, the programme probably can continue.

The funds that are going to be made available, half of it, \$5,000 on the initiation of the programme and the other half would be disbursed halfway through the project. And, of course, there would be some observations to ensure that what is said to be done is being done before you get the other half. So that takes care of that.

I was also asked whether the work would be done by contract, because the impression was being given that we are going to be hiring all these contractors to go and do these works for these people. No. The NHA, under this programme, will not be involved in any contracting. The beneficiary would have to determine who does the work and once the work is being done, that issue is between the beneficiary and the contractor. All the NHA would do is to determine that the beneficiary qualifies.

I can tell you, one of the things that we have done, we went on the radio stations that are listened to largely by the East Indian population and we appealed to them to put in applications if they have needs and we have seen a very wide cross section of people, unlike the housing programme, where some of our colleagues have been encouraging people not to apply for housing because—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: That is not true!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I have heard it myself and I have been shocked to hear my parliamentary colleagues on radio stations telling citizens not to apply to the NHA because they would be discriminated against. But I could tell you, with respect to the grants programme where we did actually appeal across the country, we have got a wide cross section and we are ensuring that persons across the country are served by this programme. But the housing programme, what we have seen on the application base is that two-thirds of the applicants on the National Housing database come from the East-West Corridor. Again, that is understandable, because the larger urbanization in the country is in the East-West Corridor. That is where a lot of people have a demand for housing. But interestingly enough, we have very limited land space within that area to meet those needs. In fact, here you have two-thirds—I think the last figure

we had was 51,000 applicants, and if two-thirds of those come from the East-West Corridor and we are to provide housing for those persons, a significant number of those persons are not going to be housed in the Corridor.

So one of the things we have done is to look at the policy to maximize the use of whatever building land is available in the Corridor. One of the things we have stopped doing is building bungalow-type units in the East-West Corridor. The land is just not available and it is just too expensive for public sector housing. So we are maximizing by going towards condominiums and apartments. That means we have a design where on one parcel of land we can get eight units, four above and four below on the corners. That is a design that UDeCOTT has come up with and the Ministry of Housing is using it in some of our construction, as well as a number of standard apartment/condominium types.

You would see that many applicants come in and ask for a single house, but the nearest location where single houses are being built is Carlsen Field. So if you want a single house and you live in Diego Martin, you have to go to Carlsen Field or Sangre Grande. But in Arima, Arouca, Barataria, Diego Martin, what we would be doing more and more, whatever land we have in those areas, we would be doing apartments, because the demand is just too great in the Corridor and the land space is not available.

Around San Fernando, we have adequate land space and a lot of the housing that is going on around there is family bungalow-type units because land is available and that consideration is not there. In fact, you would have heard from what I read out, that in the Corinth/Pleasantville area, we have the largest component of the housing programme, because that is where the land is available and the demand is also great in the context of San Fernando and its environs.

I was also asked to provide information and list all the lands that were purchased by the NHA, because once again it was being said that the NHA was somehow involved in land purchasing of questionable arrangements, and so on. I do not know where they get that information from, because one of the things NHA is reluctant to do is to buy land. We are minimizing land purchase, because the one thing you do not want is to put pressure on the land market and force land prices up. The minute the Government gets involved in a huge land-buying programme, that automatically puts pressure on prices. If land prices are forced up, by the time you provide the units, the very people that you are aiming to cater

for, to provide affordable housing, would not be able to afford the unit because the land component was too high. Therefore, we are very circumspect and reluctant to do land purchasing.

So far, the NHA has purchased two parcels of land: One in La Horquetta South; and that was done in fiscal 2003, 167 acres, and that was purchased from Tumpuna Development Limited for a consideration of \$12 million. The reason the NHA purchased that parcel of land, it was one of the few large parcels available which would allow for some kind of building system to be used so that we could reduce the cost of housing. So we are aiming to have a large-scale project there, and given what is earmarked for the Wallerfield area, with the industrial complex and the university, the area around La Horquetta South would be the natural dormitory area for the complex that would be built in Wallerfield. So we did purchase that parcel of land and we expect to have one of our major construction programmes there.

Secondly, we purchased a 10-acre parcel at Goya Road in Tacarigua. Again, you are fortunate to have a 10-acre parcel available in an area where there is tremendous demand. This was being purchased from the Incorporated Trustees of the Anglican Church. This transaction is not yet complete. A downpayment of \$1 million has been made and I think the purchase price is \$3.1million.

I was also asked about the total number of units which have been developed and built on. What I was asked for was the total number of lots being prepared. I want to make a distinction. What was happening before this housing programme started in 2003 was that the Government Housing Programme was a programme centred largely around preparation and availability of building lots, and there were a number of building lots available around the country in developments where infrastructure was put in and no housing construction was taking place, because the previous government had a policy as espoused by Mr. Humphrey, that the government really should not be building houses; that if lots were made available, that the population would access those lots and build. That programme had not provided any significant number of houses. In fact, it was an abject failure, because the expectation that persons would move onto empty lots and build, with some kind of incentive, did not result in that.

In fact, in Buen Intento, even as we are being accused of house padding, the fact is the vast majority of units we are building now are being built on infrastructure which pre-existed this administration. Therefore, what we are doing

is building houses in areas that were already earmarked, and in some instances, like in Tarouba, the infrastructure was there for years. One of the things that the current contractor has to do in Tarouba is to revamp and refurbish the sewer treatment system, the sewer lines, which were in Tarouba—

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask the hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, whether under the UNC administration or not, the site, Circular Road, San Fernando, was earmarked by the UNC for the construction of the NHA apartment blocks?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I do not think so, and that is why I said the vast majority. I did not speak in extremes. I said, the vast majority.

So Tarouba, which is one of our bigger sites and some of the Pleasantville sites, the infrastructure was there for years and the current project involves revamping of the sewer lines which have been there for so long unattended that they have to virtually be rebuilt. In Buen Intento, there was a situation where the roads had been built; the drainage built; the sewage treatment plant built and never used because the project had never gone towards the construction of houses. It was a policy of building infrastructure and waiting for *laissez faire* to take place. No *laissez faire* happened; no houses were built.

Under our initiative to build houses, we have since gone into Buen Intento, we have refurbished the sewage treatment plant; we have put small contractors in to build on the lots and housing construction is taking place there now and in the not too distant future we would have houses to distribute and homes to be had by those who need homes. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister if he would give preferential treatment to the displaced Piparo villagers who are being located in Buen Intento.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: If that situation would bring relief, certainly. We have not determined yet the allocation there, but one of the things in Buen Intento, though, is that some of the lots were actually allocated to persons who did not build and one of the things that we have done now is to go to those persons and say: “Would you have the NHA build for you now”. Some of them have said, yes. So some of those houses are being built for owners who had a claim on the site before. So I do not know how many would be available, but if that need arises, certainly we would consider it.

I am sorry my friend from Couva South is not here, because he had gone from one extreme to the other. I went to the other place a few months ago, very early in

taking up this tenure, and a certain Senator in the other place was saying that we have been fooling the people about building houses and no houses were being built and a deficit of 19,000 houses now exists because the Prime Minister did not deliver, and so on. That was one extreme. I come into this House and my colleague from Couva South is accusing me and the Government of building houses with obscene haste. Well, both things cannot be true. In fact, I feel particularly pleased when my colleague speaks about the obscene haste of house construction in Tarouba, because what that tells me is that the programme is well underway. Because in Tarouba, which is one of the larger sites where there is infrastructure, the contractors on that site are using a modular system which is supposed to turn out a house a day. So each month he should turn out about 30 houses.

If you could have that kind of production and productivity, that should result in a reduction in the cost per unit and make those houses more affordable to the people of Tarouba and environs who would access housing in the area. So I am very happy when we are accused of building houses with obscene haste, because to build the ambitious figure of 10,000 houses per year—we know it is a very ambitious figure for the country because we know how much work we are putting in to turn up with 6,000, and if we are aiming to do 6,000 or 8,000, it would require a tremendous amount of effort and the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, the NHA and our associates, are putting that effort out and the contracting fraternity is measuring up largely to the call to deliver houses and to do it efficiently and within the kinds of budget that we negotiate with the NHA.

In 2003—2004 we built on 41 sites, NHA doing 2,453 units and UDeCOTT on four sites, approximately 600 units. In 2004—2005, we are dealing with 39 sites and aiming to do 6,000 units. On the drawing board for 2005—2006 is a further 6,000 units, and as we identify new green field sites and get the approvals and so on, we would try to ramp up our target as high as we could towards the target of the national figure of 10,000 units.

We have been working quite assiduously on this programme and I am quite pleased to tell you that the people involved at the NHA are trying to create a new culture of service to those persons who access public housing, a new culture of accountability, both for those persons who have accessed houses, to ensure that they pay their mortgages and rents. The NHA would also try to provide adequate servicing to housing estates so that they are not breeding grounds for the nefarious kinds of activities that we spoke about. We also have gone off the drawing board. Construction has begun at Maloney for a commercial-type mall which was always an integral part of the intention for the community, where business-type units

would be available within that community and all the housing areas of that size would have that kind of commercial centre or mall where small businesses can be generated within in the community: Maloney, La Horquetta, San Fernando, Diego Martin. The intention is to complete these constructions so that these units can become available so that some people in the areas who want to heed the Government's call and to get into small business, of whatever kind, whether it is hairdressing, small retailing, small manufacturing within the community, that they would have a place to operate from. Those projects are, in fact, under way.

I have heard it said and I have seen—because some people do believe it—that the allocation of houses is being done in a partisan and discriminatory way. We have not yet started distributing the houses and those allegations are being made based purely on colleagues putting the worst construction on what they expect us to do. I want to give my colleagues the assurance today that we are going to disappoint them. In fact, they are asking us for systems of transparency, fairness, equity, and so on, and I may ask, they had the opportunity to complete and distribute Savannah Villas—I cannot remember when we were in the Opposition that we accused them of doing anything nefarious and whatnot, and I may ask for the assistance on the other side to loan me the distribution system and policy that they used to distribute Savannah Villas and I would use it to distribute the houses now and then there can be no argument.

But you see, we may even get a difficulty there because if we use the system that they used to distribute Savannah Villas, we may find them going largely to known party members who are favoured to get even more than one unit there. We are not doing that. We are using our computer programme to randomly sort out our database and apply our applicant to the kind of unit that is available in the geographical area in which the interest is expressed. And even more, for the first time we have brought the local financial private sector into the National Housing Programme. The local banks have formed a consortium and that consortium which is led by Republic Bank, has committed to provide over \$2 billion in funding to support the contractors who are involved in the first case and, secondly, to provide mortgages to low-income groups. It is the first time you have that in the country, mortgages for low-cost housing provided by the local banking sector on a large scale.

To do that, we have to screen and prepare our applicants so that as soon as the units are ready, the transactions that are required would be available so that we do not have increased unnecessary costs with respect to the bridging financing, and

so on. So the database is being improved at the NHA; we are spending a lot of money on hiring new staff and training staff to deal with the whole question of using IT systems to ensure that we have a sound and accurate database to find out who is where; who is doing what and prepare people to move into these units as quickly as possible, because the whole idea is efficiency.

I simply want to end by telling my colleagues, this is our country; your country; my country. We have no ulterior motive other than to provide for the citizens of this country, a service that is sadly lacking. That service is providing them with housing units built in cooperation with the public sector and the private sector and we try to do it as efficiently as possible to ensure that affordability remains the centerpiece. We want it to be that, notwithstanding that some people are beyond recall and there is nothing that you can say to convince them that their fears are groundless and there is no foundation for the accusations. We want to ensure that as we carry out this programme, we cannot be justifiably and accurately accused of doing the kinds of things that they accuse us of doing, because we are doing this according to our oath, to operate without fear, without favour, without malice, without ill-will, because we acknowledge that we are the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker. It was not my intention to speak in tonight's debate, although I was prepared so to do, but nevertheless, having regard to the contribution of the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, I was prompted to get up. You see, I would really like to believe the sentiments and principles enunciated by the hon. Member, the Minister of Housing, but when I test what he is saying, having regard to recent events in this country, I find that the hon. Minister is wanting.

You see, during the period May 11 to May 21, the hon. Minister of Housing attacked one of the contracting firms he mentioned today. He went into an attack mode against one of the contracting firms. This is what was said in the news reports of May 11, 2004—Channel 6:

“Well, the Housing Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley, is tonight accusing the former UNC government of practically giving away 300 acres of Caroni land to a private contractor. Dr. Rowley told the media the land was given as part of a joint venture with the National Housing Authority to build homes in Couva North. He says because of a contract there has been very little in return.”

Finance Committee Report
[MR. SINGH]

Wednesday, June 09, 2004

The reporter continues:

“Housing Minister Keith Rowley says that the UNC government signed a contract handing over 300 acres of land formerly owned by Caroni (1975) Limited to a private company known as Hanover Construction Limited. The contract was to build houses in the constituency of Couva North. The Minister says that this was part of a joint venture with the National Housing Authority in which the NHA paid \$41 million for infrastructure development. Now the Minister says the NHA has not been able so far to collect profits from the sale of the houses.”

The newspaper report continues with respect to Hanover Construction. They are quoting the Minister of Housing:

“300 acres of land to the contractors were free—\$25 million plus \$16 million. And if you can add that, \$25 million and \$16 million—\$41 million in contract with the NHA having not received a cent and not likely to receive anything at the end of the day.”

And it goes on. You have from May 11 to 21 on-going debate forcing a local contractor to then take up arms, so to speak, against the Minister of Housing.

You see, it is the deceit. The content of that report against Hanover Construction Company forced the company to engage in a full-page newspaper advertisement because of the deception, the outright untruths told by the hon. Minister of Housing, the Member for Diego Martin West. I want to believe what the hon. Minister is saying, but when I test it against this Hanover Construction matter, I realize that you cannot take what he is saying. unless you test it, because the deception and the deceit is inherent in his approach.

He says that the sale is \$325 million. Hanover Construction, in its advertisement says:

“What \$325 million?”

They go on to say, something like \$85 million alone was provided for the payment for these houses, and the payments were made to the National Housing Authority. In his press conference he said nothing about that. It is only when you interview the people in Roystonia, they said: “What is the Minister talking about? He is talking nonsense; the payments were made to NHA. We did not make any payment to Hanover.” This is what the people said.

Dr. Rowley: Would the Member understand that if you can point out one of the inaccuracies—of all the issues that he raised there, just tell me one statement that the Minister made which is wrong. Because, you see, the \$325 million—I do not print the newspapers—projected sales at \$325 million was submitted to the NHA by the contractor. That was the contractor’s spreadsheet to the NHA. And with respect to payment to the NHA, yes—nobody ever said it was not paid to the NHA—the contractual documents require that the money be paid directly back to the contractor forthwith. So to say money was paid to the NHA does not change the fact that the NHA does not get the money. The NHA is simply a post office in the contract—your contract.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, you know, the hon. Minister had the opportunity to say “projected”. Nowhere in the newspaper reports; nowhere in the television broadcast, both of TTT and TV6, there is anything about projected—\$325 million. You know why he was creating that diversion and deception. He was under pressure for demolishing the squatting community in Union Hall, Duncan Village, Cashew Gardens and elsewhere.

It goes on to say in what areas he did not tell the truth. Three hundred acres of land given by the former government—it says here: “300 acres of Caroni lands given to a private company known as Hanover Construction Company.” That is a total untruth. You know, if you engage in any intentionally deceptive message which is stated, you engage in a misrepresentation, you engage in basically a lie. But it is unparliamentary to say “lie”, so therefore you are engaged in deception; you are engaged in an untruth; you are engaged in deceit.

What is the fact of the matter? The 300 acres of land he says were given by the UNC to a private developer, untruth, deception. The sum of the three phases is 250 acres of land. The 1997 contract is for 40 acres, but the lands are in the hands and are vested in the NHA since 1991. *[Interruption]* No, not lawyer, this is dealing with truth. This is dealing with facts. This is the head lease which the 325-plus acres of land is provided and it is in the hands of the NHA.

11.30 p.m.

So when you say that this contracting company, land is given, you are not telling the truth to the people. The land is in the hands of the NHA and the NHA entered a contract. *[Interruption]* You had your time. I gave you enough time already to explain. You are not giving—

Mr. Valley: Standing Order 69(2).

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I made a ruling earlier. When the Minister opened, I think he was answering questions that Members in Finance Committee had asked him. You know the Standing Orders. I have given you sufficient time on the Hanover issue. Let us get back to the matter before us.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the housing issue. We are dealing with contractors and the listing of contractors and the credibility of the hon. Minister. *[Interruption]* You are not going to bludgeon me!

Mr. Speaker: Please, hon. Members! I made a ruling earlier. I think the hon. Member for Caroni East was here. For those Members who were not here, I will repeat it. They are Standing Orders 69(2) and 70. Standing Order 69(2) says:

“On the debate on the motion ‘That the Report of the Finance Committee be adopted’, Members may raise points as to specific details of Heads of Expenditure in the report but may not raise any matters of general principle.”

When you are dealing with the Bill, debate must be strictly confined to the matter for which additional expenditure is required. I will allow a certain latitude, but do not go beyond—*[Interruption]* No. Please! The Minister only mentioned Hanover as a contractor doing— *[Interruption]* But you cannot expand that. *[Interruption]* Wait, please! A question was asked in the Finance Committee to list the contractors and all the Minister did was list Hanover as a contractor. What you are going on with, Member for Caroni East, really does not form part of the business before us. I have allowed you certain latitude, but I think you have exhausted it.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, with great respect, I am saying there is discrimination against Hanover. The hon. Member was allowed to deal with the issue of discrimination.

Mr. Valley: On a point of order, if the Member wants to do that, he has to bring a Private Member’s motion.

Mr. G. Singh: *[Shouting]* No, no, no. You cannot bludgeon me into sitting down here! You cannot!

[Shouted crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: The sitting is suspended for five minutes.

11.33 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

11.40 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, whilst I was on my feet prior to the break, I was indicating that because of the lack—I would want to believe the pronouncements of the hon. Minister of Housing in his contribution in this honourable House, but because of his interface with a particular contractor, we mentioned here this evening, there is a credibility problem. I made the point, Mr. Speaker, *[Interruption]* You do not tell me how to speak; I do not tell you how to run your affairs!

Therefore, the context of the debate in which the hon. Member, both of the Bill and of the report—and in the report we requested that the hon. Member present us with a list of the contractors, which he did—and Hanover is one. However, the hon. Minister—which carries this point of deception even further—in the report, at page 24, it says that the NHA purchased 164 acres of land at La Horquetta at a cost of \$12 million. He further said that at present, the NHA is no longer pursuing the policy of land development.

So instead of the problem along the East-West Corridor being land and there is insufficiency of land space in the East-West Corridor, but there are 164 acres in La Horquetta; he is not pursuing that development, but he wants to go to Goya. *[Interruption]* I do not know what is in his brief. There are many things he does not know. He wants to purchase in Goya Road, because it is in the constituency of Tunapuna and having regard to the manner in which they stole the elections in Tunapuna, they now want to engage in house padding to secure subsequent elections. That is what it is about. In that environment also, the Minister is guilty of deceit and deception.

The Minister requested that I deal with the various aspects. Goya Road was one, and then there was Bates Trace, St. Augustine. It is a misnomer really because Bates Trace is also in the constituency of Tunapuna. It is 10.5 acres. So we have 164 acres in La Horquetta, they are not developing that because it will not suit their social engineering purposes; their house padding purposes, so they engage in looking for land in any nook and cranny in the constituency of Tunapuna to engage in house padding.

Mr. Speaker, this Minister has a history with the Hanover matter. Hanover is building houses in 2003/2004, 2004/2005, so you understand how the hon. Member has run into problems with credibility as to what we should believe on this side with respect to the attempt by him to defend the house padding issue in the Hanover matter.

When he said that he is not house padding, how do we test this? Why is there this deception? Why is there this lack of credibility? If we use as the benchmark,

the contract, which the Minister enunciated and we are saying that the land for the Hanover Construction through Roystonia and whoever is building houses, is owned by the NHA. It is, because we have the lease.

But the Minister did not say that. He gattered about the place, but he did not say that. Here it is that all payments are going to the NHA; the NHA puts the money into an escrow account and subsequently, once it is verified, then it pays out. That is my understanding of it, but the Minister did not say that. So we have a situation where there is a credibility gap; and I am not going to get involved in the discrepancy between the NHA and the developer.

What I am saying with respect to that is that there is a credibility problem when the Minister says they are not going to engage in house padding in those areas and that there is construction all over the country.

When you do an analysis, cursory as it might be, as the Minister mentioned, the areas and the contractors and the number of houses, you would recognize that they are building in communities in constituencies in which it is clear that there is an attempt to influence the electoral process.

Take the area of Ortoire. In Ortoire there is an imposed community. The closest area of activity to that Ortoire development is the cemetery. It is an imposed community. There is nobody for miles, so they impose this community in a place that is totally bereft of any linkage to major civilization and communities.

I am saying that this Minister was careless with the truth in the Hanover matter. Based on the newspaper reports that I have seen, based on the whole page ad that came out by the contractor. If he can be careless with the truth in those small matters as the relationship between the NHA and the contractor, then how are we in this honourable House going to take your word that when you do the allocation for the houses, it will be done through a very open, transparent and fair mechanism?

I have noticed that the Minister has a way of saying that it is the computer. The computer will only deal with the data that is inputted. If they are inputting data that is skewed, based on the applications they have, because they want to place it high, then they will have a skewed outcome. For example, where are the NHA locations accepting applications? Where are they? What is the access of persons from various communities? The Minister by his own admission has indicated that, based on the broad and open advertisement on the housing grant, there was a tremendous response, on a national scale.

I am saying that they have found the formula. If, based on their housing grant approach, there is a national response, then they ought to use that formula to deal with the allocation for houses so that people would know and the access to applications would be easy.

I want to be convinced because I have respect for the Minister. There is an advertisement in the newspaper of Monday, June 07, a whole page advertisement allocating houses to the nation. You see that there is a housing demand in Trinidad and pinpointing the arrow to San Fernando, there is the demand of 270. Do you know how many they plan to build based on their projection? Something like 15,000 or 16,000 houses. What am I to believe? What is the great disparity? I have been reliably informed—and I do not know how to test it, but I intend to—that lots have already been allocated. The houses have not yet been built but people know their lot number and the house to be built on it is theirs.

Contractors are telling them that they have already allocated it. This is what the NHA is doing. If these lots have already been allocated, if the houses have already been allocated, then what is it we are being told—that this allocation will be done on an impartial basis; it will be computer generated and so on. Then there is the allocation policy, but I do not want to get into that. That is a ministerial responsibility.

When the hon. Minister, with great fanfare, announced the housing grant programme, I recalled clearly that the initial sum was \$20 million, based on the first set of news conferences and the hoopla that was associated with it. The figure that stood in my mind was \$20 million for this grand programme. *[Interruption]* He has not even read it and it is part of the report. Subsequently, the \$20 million was lowered to \$10 million. Now, it is lowered to \$5 million. But there was a 17,000 applicant response and the Minister went to some pains to indicate that it was over a period of time and that they may extend it further and so on. These 17,000 persons would have responded because they would have looked at the quantum and they would have said that they had a fair opportunity of accessing this.

We asked about the decanting centre at Picton Road, Laventille, and the Minister in his response indicated that 40 to 50 apartments, residential units and community facilities are proposed for the site. In any principle of urban renewal, you cannot afford that. I am very fearful of a decanting centre becoming a permanent environment— *[Interruption]* Hold on! I know that years ago when there was a fire, persons were placed in a community centre and they remained there for years; they suffered for years. Therefore a decanting centre points to the fact that you have temporary accommodation based on urban renewal. I want to

point to the fact that this is something that we really ought to take a close look at to ensure that the implementation is clear because we do not want people remaining permanently in a decanting centre.

I now want to deal with the report. [*Interruption*] I was dealing with the area of housing. I want to deal with other areas now. We have given, over a period of time, \$254 million dollars to BWIA from May 20 to June 16, 2004 in guarantees, Letters of Comfort and a series of issues. The Government must articulate a clear policy on BWIA. I read a lot in the newspaper about the sale of two BWIA planes to some Jordanian or Star Airline or something, but we are guaranteeing money to BWIA over an extended period of time. We know the strategic importance—and my colleague, the Member for St. Joseph, spoke about it and received support on the other side for that kind of approach—but certainly we require a measure of disclosure. If they are going to fund this airline and make major capital interventions, then they must tell this Parliament for how much they are selling BWIA planes and to whom. They were sold to Air Jordan or Jordan Air or Star Airlines. I do not know. All I am saying is that the newspaper report—

Mr. Valley: Thank you for giving way. I wonder whether the Member could tell us how many planes BWIA owns.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, that is a question that the Minister, who has responsibility for BWIA, could tell us. He can tell us whether they own any, whether they are leased and whether they have any rights. So if BWIA owns no planes, what are they selling? The rights issue? Why should anybody or I engage in this rights issue if BWIA has no assets whatsoever? Are there assets only the rights to land at Heathrow and JFK and other areas? Is that what it is about? I, therefore, find this rights issue, which the Minister spoke about in his opening very questionable. I certainly would not tell anybody to invest there. There is need for a clear policy of articulation on that issue.

Another issue is this Military Led Academic Training programme (MILAT). It says in the report that this programme would be conducted in a quasi-military residential environment over a term of 48 weeks. This is reminiscent of the boot camp that the Prime Minister spoke about on a previous occasion. So this is boot camp. MILAT is boot camp. I want to warn the hon. Minister, who is implementing this, about sexual exploitation by military personnel of young people. When they place them in that quasi-military environment with the regimentation, they run the risk of major sexual exploitation and, therefore, there must be the necessary controls in that area.

Of course, we have the National Youth Service Programme. It is a new programme. We are not told the purpose of this programme and how to access it. My colleagues also spoke about the special force issue, so I would not go over that.

It is clear to us that the hon. Minister of Housing had a brief to carry out. When he raised the issue of Hanover he said that they were paying \$1.58 profit. I do not want to get involved in that, but is the Tarouba housing going to realize a profit? Has any NHA programme realized a profit? When they speak of the hon. Minister's attitude; if he is applying the principle of profit, is he not applying it across the board or is he singling out a particular corporate developer? Is NH making a profit for NHA in Tarouba? If Hanover made a profit of only \$1.58 and \$1.28, I do not know.

Dr. Rowley: Could I answer? Do you want the answer or are you just asking—

Mr. G. Singh: I am asking rhetorical questions. You will get your chance to answer.

Therefore, what he is engaged in—and I am happy to hear the Minister saying that they are now going to build commercial complexes in Maloney and La Horquetta. How many years after? Twenty years after the initial building? Communities have already become a kind of ghetto. I am happy that he is doing that because hopefully he will be able to utilize the moneys from NEDCO to provide access to loan funding so that they can engage in a measure of entrepreneurial development.

What you have, is that you have a Minister coming here and attacking the private sector whom he partners in one incarnation, but because of perceived political allegiance, he attacks openly and then curry favours, so to speak, to others who are politically inclined.

Mr. Speaker, I raised in this House the issue of Heron Lewis Construction and I notice that Heron Lewis is one of the biggest contractors for the NHA. I have no problem if it is won fair and square, but when we brought the documentation it showed that Heron Lewis bid \$1.6 million, Seereeram, \$1.4; another developer \$800,000-plus and General Earth Mover, \$432,000; yet Heron Lewis got that contract and now they are one of the largest developers of the NHA programme and he is one of the contractors. You do not hear whether profits from Heron Lewis are going to the NHA. Profits are not an issue there. Is it subsidized? Maybe it is subsidized.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the pronouncement of the Minister and you test those pronouncements against the reality of, let us say the Roystonia project,

you begin to understand the level of deceit and deception that takes place. They say that land was given and it was in the NHA; that the contractor was paid this sum of money; then you are told that it is a projected sum of money; that the contractor was paid, when the people say that they paid the money to the NHA and that the NHA and the contractor would work out their business and do the quantity survey and whatever resolution.

You see there is a problem of the pronouncement of the Minister and the credibility associated with that. Therefore, in those circumstances, we cannot believe what the Minister is telling us today. Time is on our side and we will be able to judge the pronouncements of the Minister and as we did with Hanover Construction, we will come to this Parliament, as we did with Heron Lewis Construction, and say it is not so; that there has been deceit, misrepresentation, and an intentional attempt to bring about deception.

With these few words, I thank you.

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to join this debate at this hour in the morning. I had to, after listening to the Member for Diego Martin East, who came to this House and tried to create the impression that something was done by the United National Congress while in office. What he said yesterday was totally untrue.

Trinidad and Tobago Youth and Social Development: An Integrated Approach for Social Inclusion was printed in June 2000. The first time I saw this document was in August 2000. It was never commissioned by the government of the day. I just want to read the process:

“This report is about investing in the youth of Trinidad and Tobago, especially those at greatest development risk, which is important for building social and human capital and improving the country’s economic situation in the future. It builds upon and complements previous World Bank economic and sector work in the country, which focused on the financing of education...poverty and unemployment...”

This was done in 1995 June and October respectfully and public sector reform, June 1996.

“A team led by Maria Donoso Clark and consisting of Eveling Bemudez, Ian Mac Arthur, Harry Patrinos and Miriam Schneidman prepared the report. Chadwick Fleck, Aline Brito and Staci Orie provided team support. Joy Dryfoos, Linda Dove and Kate Schecter are the peer reviewers. Shelton Davis—” [*Interruption*]

They are from the World Bank.

“Shelton Davis is Sector Manager, Social Development. The main mission to Trinidad and Tobago benefited from the collaboration of several governmental and non-governmental organizations.”

Mr. Speaker, the World Bank came into this country and did this report. It was handed to me in August 2000. At that time, election was a couple months later and this was never brought to Cabinet, never introduced to Parliament and never an official document of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Having said that, this report should still be used, as far as I am concerned, to develop the youth in Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to read this to dispel the myth that this was done along racial lines. I quote from page 11 of the said report.

“Box 2.1: Laventille: Challenges in a Poor Urban Neighbourhood

A government survey of youth issues in the neighbourhood of Laventille, Port of Spain, illustrate the types of constraints and risks facing youth in low-income communities. Firstly, the relatively high concentration of youth growing up in poverty in Laventille places heavy demands on both their families and the state institutions intended to address their needs—youths aged 15—24 years in Laventille represent almost 43% of the total population compared to a national average of about 30%. Second, a greater proportion of youth face the risk of family dissolution, which is common among households in the neighbourhood. Third, a greater proportion live in families where the household head is unemployed—30% of all households did not have anyone employed in comparison to a national rate of about 17%. Fourth, people’s perception of the quality of life and future prospects highlight a high level of pessimism—close to 60% of respondents thought the quality of life in Laventille had deteriorated over the past decade, and nearly half felt that there would be further deterioration.”

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing here about African youths. The 15 to 24 years age group was mentioned. When a Minister continues to tell untruth, I want to put it on the record once more—[*Interruption*] The report is here.

Mr. Speaker, prior to this report, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs had three pilot projects in three marginalized areas. The three areas were crime, unemployment and everything else that was not right in this country. We piloted three projects—one in Gun Hill, Point Fortin, Vegas, Laventille and Datsonville, Chaguanas. We had programmes to deal with training the youth, trying to wean

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them away from a life of crime and to put them on a straight path. This was done in 1998 and 1999. This report was done in 2000.

To say that we introduced racism as an affirmative action in Trinidad and Tobago is wrong. This was done by the PNM, by the Member for Diego Martin West and they must not blame the United National Congress. We have based our report on everything else but race.

Someone might say, “Who lives in Laventille?” That is not the point. We went there as a government to deal with the problems. We did not leave out Laventille and Enterprise. We went into all these areas to try to improve the quality of life of the young people of Trinidad and Tobago and we would say that all over.

If you read this report, Mr. Speaker, it will tell you that we were dealing with the development of the young people in a holistic manner. It is not that we were neglecting our duty. We were doing the work. This document attested to the fact that we were doing certain things in the country that were right.

I want to read one more paragraph because it is important that the people in this country understand what the UNC was about and what is happening today. The whole question of marginalization of our youth started in the school system where every year prior to the abolition of the Common Entrance Examination thousands of young people would fail and face life without hope. They would have to fend for themselves and compete with hardened criminals. Today we are facing that decay in our society. To make this matter worse, this country continues to witness a rapid decline in spiritual and moral values. For example, when the hon. Member for Diego Martin East came to this Chamber and deliberately misled the nation. Would this not lead our youthful population into the path of decay? I would like to warn Members opposite that what they do and the example they set, people are looking at us and they would see that you lie and mislead the population. It would be unfair to talk about other things here this evening, Mr. Speaker.

12.15 a.m.

We must understand that the author of spiritual and moral values should be one so guilty of encouraging the Government of the day in payback time, as it deals with the purse of the country. When you look at the former President—I have in front of me a Cabinet Note, which I found in my mailbox this morning. I want to read the report into the record:

“June 12, 2003

Provision of assistance to Mr. Arthur N. R. Robinson, former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Note PM2003/74 was considered.

Cabinet agreed to the provision of the sum of \$24,164 per month for Mr. Arthur N. R. Robinson, former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, to enable him to recruit the following staff on a month-to-month basis at salary rates indicated.”

Mr. Speaker, this is a former President, not a President.

“1 research officer: \$5,000 per month.

1 registered nurse: \$4,000 per month.

1 secretary: \$3,500 month.

1 chauffeur: \$2,400 per month.

4 patient-care assistants: \$2,316 each, per month.

The sum of \$24,164 be met from Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister; Subhead 2, Goods and Services, General Administration, sub-item 18; expenses and the funds be provided from the draft estimate.”

Here we have goods and services. Whenever the Minister of Finance comes to this Parliament to lay his document, I always warn him. Here we have the country’s scarce resources, which 1.3 million of us have to compete for. Forty per cent of the population is living under the poverty level and the Government comes here and continues to pay back Mr. Robinson for having put them into office. This is a scandalous waste of taxpayers’ money. I have a problem with that.

When you look at the salaries the CEPEP and URP workers take home, they are employed and they cannot make ends meet. As far as I am concerned—using the definition of the unemployed persons living under the poverty line—40 per cent of these people and more are struggling every day. This is an addition to the huge pension that the President duly deserves. He worked for that. To make matters worse, I would like to read Cabinet Note 2368, which is dated September 11, 2003. This is just one of the many trips. This deals with a trip to Washington by Mr. Robinson and his team. Of course, the PNM paid for it. It cost \$81,000 for three days in Washington for a former President. The question I would like to

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pose for the Minister of Finance who always seems to know everything is, where did the money come from? From which vote was the money taken? Was that a vote to deal with poor people? What is the problem? When you read the UNC's Cabinet Note, you would see where we paid tribute to the former Presidents and Prime Ministers. We went across the board. Why did the Government of the day not include all past Presidents? They are much older than former President Robinson. Why were they not given the same treatment? Why was it not across the board? Mr. Speaker, this is nepotism. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Member for Chaguanas is on his feet. Perhaps, if the hon. Members for Tobago East, Nariva and Oropouche want to have a conversation, we have a sufficient quorum to carry on.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Sorry, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, I beg your pardon, Fyzabad. Please, continue.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I am raising this issue in this debate of the Finance Committee Report. Look at the total sum of money given to former President Robinson. I believe we should have another look at it. If we want the country to be run in a way that will solve the problems of the country, we have to be honest.

Do you know what is sad about this? We have to discover, by someone coming to us and giving us a Cabinet Note; that was done in 2003. The Government is hiding things under the carpet. Why did the Government not come publicly and say, "We are doing this"? Why hide it? The Government should come in the open and say what they have done. Why hide it? Mr. Speaker, that is my point. The Government is talking about transparency, honesty and the levels of crime. The young people in the country, I hear them, are saying whatever is being done by their leaders, they will do the same. We are seeing squandering and waste as this Government continues. They believe whatever the former President says they must be obliged to do and that they should continue to pay him for the deed that he has done. That must stop. I would not want to see any more like that. As a matter of fact, this should be reviewed. They should either pay for all former Presidents and give them all the same treatment, or stop this one. The Government talks about everything else under the sun, but what does it practise? It practises nothing that is good.

The Member for Diego Martin East, in his usual fashion said something that I want to debate. He spoke about GATE. He said the GATE is fairer than the Dollar for Dollar Programme. He continues to boast. He spoke about a needs basis. He

said 100 per cent would be given to those unable to pay on a needs basis. A student entering university is normally 18 years and over. He or she is a young adult entering university. Pray tell, how would this Minister determine if an 18-year-old is able or unable to pay his or her tuition fees. He or she is an adult. An 18-year-old is an adult and is no longer a dependent. He or she could be put out of his or her father's house. He or she could be a millionaire and must get tuition free. You tell me, I would give way. The fact is that there is a difference. Persons are trying to hide themselves. They are doing foolishness and are remaining there. Mr. Speaker, think about it, an 18-year-old is an adult. His or her parents are no longer in control. One hundred per cent of the students in this country will have to get free tuition. Think about it. How could you account for an individual 18 years and over? That individual is no longer under the control of his or her parents. [Interruption] No. You are foolish. I think that is very foolish. Think it over and you will see who is foolish. Look in a mirror and you will see who is foolish.

Mr. Speaker, I am just warning the Government. In my mind, the laws of Trinidad and Tobago define a child as under the age of 18. Once someone is over 18 years, that person, in my opinion, is an adult. An adult is an independent person. When he or she claims the 100 per cent under GATE, I want to see who could prove that person does not have anybody to depend on. He is independent. This is what it is about. Mr. Speaker, this will haunt the Government. I am sure if persons think about what I am saying, they would understand that an individual 18 years should be treated as an adult. I am waiting to see what will happen.

The Minister also brought Dr. Cudjoe into this debate. Dr. Cudjoe, their guru, is someone whom they defend. I want to read this into the record. This is an article from today's *Mirror* written by Dr. Cudjoe. I would quote part of the article. I indulge your guidance if I say things that may be unparliamentary. The headline is:

“True story about them deceitful Indians”

Mr. Speaker: I think you are going a little off course. Try to get back to the Finance Committee Report before us please. What you are alluding to has nothing to do with this.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the Ministry of Education has returned \$100 million. We have Dr. Cudjoe who sees himself as—he said it in this article—an educator above average. He is also—we are talking about money—a Director of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and a prominent supporter of the Government. He says it in and out of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker,

this is a quote of what he said. The issue of racism in the country was raised here over time. The Members for Diego Martin East and West spoke about it. I am just responding.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Chaguanas, I am ruling that as irrelevant.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, you are anticipating.

Mr. Speaker: I am ruling irrelevance. Get back to the Report or the Bill before us.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, we talk about crime in the country, breakdown in the society, four murders in the last 24 hours, the deterioration of life in Trinidad and Tobago and the headlines in the newspapers. The Prime Minister, as if he is a blight, went to Enterprise Village, Chaguanas. I have a letter which was written to me on June 03. It states:

“Dear Sir,

As a resident of Crown Trace, Enterprise, Chaguanas, I would like to bring to your attention a matter in this area. The Prime Minister recently toured this area. Projects were being undertaken in this area, as we all know. However, to my understanding, these projects were stopped and the road, right now is blocked. To date, work has not resumed.

I would also like to mention that the Councillor for the area, the PNM Councillor for Enterprise North, was threatened with a gun by someone seeking URP employment.

I would like you, Mr. M. Ramsaran, to investigate this matter and to ask the hon. Prime Minister to please go back into Enterprise and see what confusion that place is in.”

This evening, when I was absent from Parliament for a while, we heard on NBN news at 7.00 p.m. that a T&TEC gang responded to an emergency call at 12 o'clock midnight on June 08, 2004. A gang of 12 men chased the electricity van from Enterprise and told them do not reconnect the electricity. What is this country coming to? Where is the law and order? What is happening? When we come to the Parliament and attempt to debate these things, we are being stymied.

I would like to quote something that was given to me a couple of days ago.

“What does the Parliament do for the citizens?

Your elected representative is supposed to represent you and your concerns. He or she comes to the Parliament to discuss matters that affect the whole country and you.”

Mr. Speaker, I am not challenging your ruling. In this country today, we do not deal with the issues. We heard from the two Members for Diego Martin, about division in the country and discrimination. The Members for Diego Martin blamed us for creating racial division in the country. In another debate, he said that we are happy when people commit murder. I am just debating, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I got in trouble with you once. I paid the price. Today you asked me to apologize for the same thing. I did that. The hon. Member for Diego Martin West shouted to my colleague from Fyzabad: “Shut up!” You asked him to withdraw and he never withdrew. Never! Check the *Hansard*. This is the arrogance we deal with in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to put on record something that, I believe, could be the cause of racial division in the country. Again, I want to ask your indulgence. Maybe I would read one paragraph to show what is happening. *[Interruption]* Let the Speaker do his job. You did not obey the Speaker a few minutes ago. Mr. Speaker, did you read the article? If you did, I would not read it. I want to inform the House of what we are subjected to in this country. What is happening? We talk about law and order. We have to sit here and—thank you very much. I will come back to it.

Mr. Speaker, I now move into the various areas of this Bill. When we look at the Bill, with the consistencies and inconsistencies, we must ask ourselves what sort of government do we have? If you look at the expenses and the reduction, you will see a pattern developing. All we see in this Bill is that moneys are being allocated for handouts.

There is a fund in the Ministry of Community Development called the CARE Fund. Many people have told me that this fund is a personal fund of the Minister of Community Development. That Minister does whatever she wants. I raised a question in this honourable House. For your information, I asked the first question in the life of this Parliament. Up to this day, that answer has never been filed in this Chamber. The question had to do with CARE and what is taking place with the CARE Fund. We understand that the Minister treats the fund as if those moneys belong to her. There is no accountability or transparency. The applications are dealt with. No public servant.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members to the lower end, that is not permitted. Hon. Member for Tunapuna, if you are going to the tearoom, please carry on.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I want to quickly go through some of these figures. It was said before, when we look at the track record of what has taken place in the country—There was a decrease of \$100 million in the Ministry of Education. There was a decrease of \$44 million in the Ministry of Health.

Today the hon. Prime Minister came to the Parliament and announced that there would be a commission of enquiry into the operations at the Ministry of Health. I now know why. It is incompetence across the country. I have to agree with the 11 recommendations of that commission of enquiry. Healthcare in this country has been reduced to a joke. Healthcare is not what the UNC intended it to be. Today, when one goes to these health facilities, there are “no” services offered. You are treated as though nothing exists. Today I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Health to please do the honourable thing and resign. How could we have a sitting Minister [*Interruption*] You being there does not affect me. I am advising you. How could a Prime Minister appoint a commission of enquiry into a ministry when there is a sitting minister? It does not make sense to me at all. When we go about with arrogance—it happened in Guyana. The Minister of Home Affairs did something that was not right and the President appointed a commission of enquiry. He offered his resignation until the enquiry was completed. Why, in Trinidad and Tobago, we only talk about politics? Why do we talk about what is right and what is wrong and not act? I think the honourable thing for the Minister to do is to resign and let the Prime Minister conduct his commission of enquiry. [*Interruption*] It was alleged that he did something. You corrected me. Thank you for your correction.

We move on. Again \$20 billion was voted in a budget. Here we are nine months later, coming back to get another \$700 million. This is for handouts. This is happening again, with no developmental theme in mind. There is nothing, except some roads are being paved. Only that would be seen as tangible. I am again warning this Government. We are receiving millions from the oil sector, but we are not seeing an improvement in the quality of life of the people of the country. We have to face it. The level of unemployment is rising and the prices of food have skyrocketed.

Someone asked me on television this morning, what I think of former Minister Brian Kuei Tung saying that he cannot live on \$2,000 per week. I want to ask anyone here: what is your personal expenditure per week? Be honest. With the cost of living today—we would answer that question fairly and you would see what is happening. Poverty is up to 40 per cent. What is the Government doing? The Government is giving handouts and CEPEP. There is nothing to make the people believe that they can improve their quality of life. The Government must take another look at what is happening around us. The country is decaying quickly. When we leave this Chamber and drive home one would think that we are driving through a ghost town. It is very late now so that might be acceptable.

In Chaguanas, from as early as 8 o'clock there is no visible sign of people on the roads. Are we living in jail?

Recently in Chaguanas, a business woman was kidnapped in broad daylight. When we talk about it, there are all sorts of excuses. The woman was assaulted, punched in her face, thrown off the driver's seat, driven away by three men and tied on a tree in the Mahaica Forest. One would think that we are living in the "Wild Wild West" or deep in the Amazon. When the matter was reported to the police, the family sympathized with the police. The police said there were no cars or equipment. The policeman went to the home very tired. He said he was under pressure, because he was the only officer who had the experience to deal with that problem. We are talking about a First World nation and developing this country by 2020. We are spending \$22 billion a year and there is nothing to show, as far as the development of the people is concerned.

When these articles appear and we are debarred from reading them in the Parliament—we want to show what is happening and the language. Maybe you read the article. That is why I asked for your guidance. Most of these words are unparliamentary. This was allowed by a Director of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and a close friend of the PNM. When the young people read this article what would they think of Trinidad and Tobago? What would they do? We have to stop this nonsense! My friend from Tobago West, turn to the article, read it and see what kind of language is being used in a newspaper in Trinidad and Tobago. This is not acceptable. When we talk about it, they try to defend the indefensible.

There are murders, mayhem and millions are being spent. I am warning the Prime Minister and Government of the day that this country is heading for a place where we would not like it to be heading. This country is ripe for a revolution. I had a meeting in my constituency last night. The mood of the people is one that is indicating that they are scared. I want to put it on record that they believe they are not being protected. They reported to me that two or three cars were seen in the village. They reported it to the police and no one attended. They told me last night that they are going to take the law into their own hands. I had to beg them to give somebody another chance. They are totally fed up.

The driver of the Member for San Fernando West was going to get something to eat at 3.00 a.m. and was almost bludgeoned to death. We are here trying to defend that? *[Interruption]* That is what the Government is doing. It is not doing anything to alleviate the fears of the people. What has the Government done? You are trying to get my support for a Bill. I wish if that Bill comes in the morning

crime would stop. It does not happen like that. The Government does not have the will to do it.

The Government does not have the will to speak to Mr. Cudjoe about this article and the language that is used. The Government does not have the will to talk to the community leaders and the leaders of the criminal activities in the country. How could crime be solved? Pray tell me. How is it, when certain elements are not involved in the kidnapping, kidnappers are arrested within 24 hours? I am not calling names, but we know. It is in all the newspapers. When certain persons are kidnapped, nothing happens. Whenever the famous kidnapping gang is not involved, persons are caught and the police are efficient. We were in the middle of a kidnap that turned to murder in Barrackpore. This is in reference to my colleague, Mr. N. Baksh. We were there.

It is amazing, when the budget—

Mr. Speaker: Please come back to the Motion before us or to the Bill.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: We understand how a country runs. We understand how revenue is collected and spent to ensure that a country runs in a particular way. We collect revenues. We do a good in collecting revenues. We presented billions of dollars to the Government. When that money is being spent, it does not improve the quality of life of the people. Crime is very close to us. If the money is spent correctly—imagine there was a kidnap in San Fernando. Although it was connected to a Member of the Opposition, the PNM Mayor of San Fernando provided vehicles for the police officers. This was indicated in the newspapers. He provided vehicles to assist the police. This is what we are coming to. They are saying that we do not have the will to pass a Bill. All the Government is saying is: “Pass this Bill, pass this Bill.” They offer the policemen no tools and incentives. The policemen wanted to march. I read in this document that the police were given another \$60 million. What did they do with that? We have to ask these questions.

When I was arrested on the day the Budget was being read, that was a day I will never forget. On October 06, 2003, we were having a peaceful walk to support the policemen, I think, in the fight against crime. The quantity and quality of police officers who descended upon us two. They were armed to the teeth for two hapless and helpless MPs on that day. We had nothing in our pockets except, maybe, our wallets. The way they treated us, they humiliated us. They arrested us and threw us into the police jeeps. Ten hours later we were charged. Of course, as you know, the charges were frivolous. At the end of the day, we knew it was political interference. We had evidence that the police officer who laid the charge

against us was seen in this honourable Parliament talking with the Prime Minister. What transpired after that is now history. Had that same number, half or quarter of the policemen been employed with the helicopter unit, maybe Mr. N. Baksh's son would have been alive today. They used state funds to do what they want to do. The Government says that it would deal with the criminal element. Dr. Rafeeq and Mr. Ramsaran were criminals. We saw the largest number of policemen assembled in one place. When the son of an MP was kidnapped, nobody was seen. Why is the Minister of Finance—he comes and reads the Budget and takes the limelight, but the Member for Diego Martin Central does the hard work to come here to pass the Bill.

The Government has come to this Parliament to ask for more money. From where I sit, I would like to feel safe. I would like to be protected by the State. One of the fundamental roles of a government is to ensure the safety of the citizens of a country. The Government cannot come to this Parliament every year with a \$21 billion or \$22 billion budget and not guarantee the safety of the people of the country. We have to wake up to that reality. It is amazing that we come here, from time to time and week after week to talk about it. Look at what is happening.

When we were in Government we sat on that side. The Member for Diego Martin West would come at us from all angles; making up stories about things that he found in his mailbox. Mr. Speaker, you were a part of the House at one time. He attacked us. The Speaker would allow it. It is not that I am knocking you, Mr. Speaker. Today—

Mr. Valley: Who is the Speaker?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: The Speaker, you appointed head of the commission of enquiry. It is payback time again. I do not know. My problem with this Government is that it tries to preach that it is mightier than anybody else and that it is so good. In the history of Trinidad and Tobago, this is the worst period a Trinidadian is living; whether the Government wants to accept that or not. It is the worst! In every sphere of life—

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs has been trying to get things to happen. The MP for Tunapuna would agree that the morale of the young people is at an all time low. The cricketers and footballers—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I have been over generous to you. I cannot be any more generous than I have been. Please, I am begging you, come back to the Motion before us.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I could have gone through the Report and the Bill and read it clause by clause. I could have said the amount of money that was spent in sports. I could also have indicated that \$6 million was spent in Mayaro, but I am just trying to be general. Everything I referred to is in this report.

Mr. Speaker: The particular item before us demand a certain course of action in the debate. You are going on about something that is not the subject matter before us. Please, you have a little more time left. Perhaps, you can address a Head or two.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, let me go to this. We have—just allow me to get my bearings. The theme of my contribution is that moneys are being spent in this country. These are hard-earned taxpayers' money. When a money Bill comes to this Parliament, in my mind, when this money is spent, the spending must be justified. Despite the fact that we spend billions of dollars each year—for the last three years \$60 billion was spent by the State—what about the standard of living? The Member for Diego Martin Central said, in crosstalk, that they are not happy about anything in the country; crime included. My argument is that we are not improving the quality of life in the country. I have not heard any Minister say that. They defended their lack of performance.

Today, again the *Mirror* spoke about the performance of Ministers. I do not want to go into that. What happened earlier today is that the Member for Diego Martin West, despite what he tried to tell us after, attacked the Minister of Works and Transport. In my short life as a Member of Parliament this is the first time I have seen a sitting Minister attack another Minister. It was more than subtle. I looked at the Minister of Works and Transport's face and he was hurt. The Government attacked the UNC. We had problems and the Prime Minister called election. The whole fabric of our society has been destroyed by leaders who send wrong messages to the people out there. When you quarrel with your colleague, I have a problem with that. I believe you are parliamentarians and Members of Cabinet. You are supposed to be, according to the Westminster system, together. *[Interruption]* Do not try that. I do not think you fooled Minister Khan at all. You did not. He is too well-bred to get up and argue with you. To me, that is being rude and against the Westminster system of government.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. *[Mr. C. Sharma]*

Hon. Members: Division!

Mr. Speaker: Are you asking for a division? Leader of the House, are you calling for a division? I do not get that impression. Please continue.

Mr. Valley: No.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I know it is getting rather late. As I mentioned earlier, my basic argument is that I would like to ask the Government to spend the taxpayers' money to develop Trinidad and Tobago. Let us try to improve the quality of life of our people. Let us not come here—the sad thing about this is when you speak individually to the Members opposite, they would agree with you; things are bad out there. We live in a state of fright. We know things are not happening. They admit it, but when they come here they become another beast. I want to ask the Government to put the children in the country first. I want the Government to put our women and people first and just see how it could improve their lives, when the Government comes to ask for money.

I also want to warn a few of the Members who do not know that the Constitution allows for this to happen. If the Constitution did not allow for this to happen, maybe they would hide and not tell us what they are doing with the money; as we would find out from time to time, when we receive Cabinet Notes about what is happening with the former President. We do not know what else is happening. We do not know why the moneys ran out. Maybe when we find out, it might be too late. Let us consider all the problems in the country and deal with these problems.

When one comes to this House and hears insulting remarks, that would make us wonder how these people could be Ministers. The Member for Diego Martin West justified that we should not argue when we get a road next year. That is what a Parliament is about: to debate and discuss, not to frighten anyone. If the hon. Minister is building a road in Ortoire/Mayaro, let him build it. He is the Minister. He will pay the price if he does or does not do his duty. As a collective Government, I want the Members opposite to be responsible and remember politics is not only about winning elections; politics is about delivering goods and services to the people of a country. When you look at their lifestyle, their attitude towards politics is to win elections; whether it is house-padding, voter-padding or treating people in a certain way.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I am winding up.

Mr. Speaker: Wind up with relevance, please.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Instead of marginalizing and dividing the people, let us get serious once and for all. Let us make this country something that we can leave for the future. Let it be something that we can thank our predecessors for. Let us leave something our successors would be happy with.

I ask the Government once more, as it spends the money of the country, let it be done in a way that would improve our life. Thank you.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that the Members opposite will be attentive and they will not disturb us. As I join this debate, I could not help but reflect on the contributions made by Members on both sides. As I listened to my good friend from Tobago, now resident in Trinidad, the Member for Diego Martin West, I could not help but ask myself, and many Members were asking, why was he speaking in the manner he was speaking? It has to do with an article that appears in today's *Mirror*. It states:

“Non-performance of the PNM under fire”

This article went on to identify the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro as a non-performer. It states:

“The Patrick Manning Cabinet is falling as a collective unit. According to well placed sources within the...PNM, the government does not have its bright spots on an individual basis, but as a team...”

Remember what the Member for Diego Martin West said. He started to talk about the roads. He spoke about the way the Minister of Works and Transport is doing his job. He questioned it in this Parliament, as part of the debate.

“There are certain ministries that only make the news when they buy advertising space in the newspapers;”

That is correct. [*Interruption*] Not a Rasta head, I hope.

“it is as if nothing is going on there.”

Here the PNM is saying that it only obtains national attention when it buys advertising space. I will come to that just now.

“Then there are some ministries...always in the news, but nothing tangible is being done.’

The PNM insider...”

Who is this PNM insider? Is it the Member for Diego Martin West? Maybe it is.

“The PNM insider identified the Works and Transport Ministry... Franklin Khan as the leaders within the clique of non-performers.”

This is very instructive.

1.00 a.m.

Mr. Franklin Khan happens to be a constituent of Fyzabad. He was trained under me, and he knows how to do his work. He is my very good friend. This is an attack on Minister Khan. Why is this article appearing in the newspaper? This is about the PNM Government paying money. So, within the PNM, there are fallouts, and they want to use the protection of the Parliament to come and fight. So, the Member attacks the Minister of Works and Transport.

“It is over two years since Minister Khan has been in charge of the Works and Transport portfolio, and not one road has been built in this country.”

So, you see, the Member for Diego Martin West was exposed. The Member came to this Parliament and spoke on matters that were not related to the Bill, thus causing me to respond and waste my time. [*Laughter*] I have more important matters to treat with. I will come back to that matter.

The article continues:

“The man may be the Prime Minister’s blue-eyed boy, but it’s not helping him to get any work done.”

Why are they attacking the Minister? The Member must also ask that question, and he must take off that smile immediately, because he is in trouble. [*Laughter*]

“The Works and Transport portfolio is one of the most powerful and influential ministries.”

Mr. Speaker, do you know why this was said? My good friend, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, bought a house somewhere for \$4 million. So, they are saying that this is a powerful Ministry, and that the Minister made deals and he got money from those deals to buy the house. [*Interruption*] This was totally irrelevant. I would return to the article shortly. I want to go to another place. [*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Fyzabad, I wish to refer you to May’s, and it talks about exactly what you are doing. A Member may read extracts from

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documents, but such extracts and quotations should be reasonably short. So, please, do not go on too long in terms of what you are reading. Again, make it relevant to the Motion and the Bill that is before us.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I am guided. I have only read 16 lines with four words in a line, so that is only 84 words. In today's *Newsday*, there is an article appearing in the centerfold with respect to the location of houses. Now, the Minister went wide and far defending his discrimination in the award of houses and contracts. My colleague, the Member for Caroni East, touched on some of the matters raised by the Minister of Housing. Mr. Speaker, you see, the PNM feels that they are in power and they could do anything in this country and get away with it, but this Opposition is equally elected.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I went to the Member for La Brea mother's funeral. There was not a single PNM colleague attending that funeral. Do you know what was their story? They did not know about the funeral. They know how to fly all over the country and they know everybody's business. They are going to Spain—free plane ride—the United States of America and all over the world, and one of their colleague's mother dies and they do not know about it. This is where this Parliament has reached. The article said that the location policy would be executed in the following manner:

The Member for Caroni East indicated in his contribution that people already know the houses that they would be getting; they know the land that they would be getting. That is PNM corruption. They are giving the houses to their friends and families. All the Members opposite to me have friends and families who are getting NHA houses under the PNM. Every single one of them! Some of them are getting two, three and four houses. They cannot defend that! But hear what they are saying. They are saying that 10 per cent would be on the recommendation of Members of Parliament to deal with special emergency cases.

Not a single Member of Parliament on this side has had one single application treated with, but every single Member on that side had applications treated with. So, now that they are caught, they are putting a little advertisement to hide it. Every Member is giving their friends, families and their outside—

Now, the Minister called out a set of figures and our question was—I cannot say how things should be done here. I understand that when we attend a Finance Committee meeting that we could ask questions and we would be given answers. Yesterday, these documents were sent to our resident offices. Does the Government expect us to be prepared in five or six hours?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. C. Sharma: That is not sufficient time. We must be treated better than that, but that is the contempt with which they hold the Parliament. Anyway, I am coming back now to the Bill and the allocation of houses. In Princes Town, 4,578 houses are to be built. Why? The Minister of Education is the shadow Member of Parliament for Princes Town. So, they are building 4,576 houses there. At five persons per house—mother, father and three children—the PNM would be hoping to win election by 2,000 voters. [*Desk thumping*] You see, the Member knows about this matter. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant is in agreement with me.

Mr. Partap: She cannot run her own ministry, but she could run a constituency. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Singh: That is a racist statement.

Mr. C. Sharma: The Member for Laventille East/Morvant could be how racist he wants, because that does not bother me the least bit; the Member for Laventille East/Morvant could criticize Indians, and it does not worry me the least bit; and the Member could attack Indians or Sai Baba, and it does not affect me. In Tunapuna, 16,289 houses are to be built. How did they arrive at that figure?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please, Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. C. Sharma: The Member is a Minister now and he is getting money, so he should behave himself. The Member has to pay the National Insurance Board. I am coming to that matter just now. So, look at the pattern. In areas where the PNM is weak they are looking to win seats. One only has to look at the number of houses that are being built in those areas. Do you know that in Fyzabad only four houses were built? I want to give notice here that if the PNM feels that they are going to put their supporters in those houses, they would be in serious trouble. This elected Member of Parliament would not take it so easy. Whether there is a Minister of National Security or whether there is no Minister of National Security, we are going to treat with the matter.

Mr. Rahael: What could you do?

Mr. C. Sharma: Who asked that question? [*Words expunged*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no. I would ask you to withdraw that statement and apologize to the House and to the Member, please.

Mr. C Sharma: Mr. Speaker, drugs exported: Are you saying that it is illegal drugs?

Mr. Speaker: I heard you accusing the Minister of doing that.

Mr. C. Sharma: I have not done that at all.

Mr. Speaker: Are you sure?

Mr. C. Sharma: I am very sure. This is the third time—

Mr. Speaker: Member, please, I am on my feet.

Mr. C. Sharma: Okay.

Mr. Speaker: I am going to check the *Hansard* report.

Mr. C. Sharma: Sure.

Mr. Speaker: That is the way I heard it.

Mr. C. Sharma: No problem.

Mr. Speaker: Are you saying that you did not say that?

Mr. C. Sharma: May I reply now? You are still on your feet.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. C. Sharma: I have noticed that this is the third or fourth time that you are putting words in my mouth, and I do not like that. I know English very well and I know what I could say. [*Desk thumping*] This is the third or fourth time.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please.

Mrs. Job-Davis: You said it.

Mr. Singh: You should also call Rowley a liar.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Caroni East, please. I will check the *Hansard*. You are making an allegation against the Speaker. I want to remind you that you were in the Speaker's Chambers not too long ago, and I pointed out exactly what you said. So, please, do not bring the Speaker into this matter, and do not make unfounded allegations against the Speaker. I am taking your word for it, but I am going to check the *Hansard* report. Please continue.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, I am always guided. I am familiar with the Standing Orders, which guide us, and I am also familiar with May's Parliamentary Practice. I also want to make the point that whatever I say here, I say it without fear or favour. I am always guided by any Speaker who sits in the Speaker's chair. The point is that if one says that drugs are being exported, do not jump to the conclusion that it is illegal drugs because cocaine has been exported

by the PNM. There are all kinds of drugs. I will come back to that matter. I do not want to be sidetracked.

Mr. Speaker, I was dealing with the question of housing. In Chaguanas, 3,149 houses are to be built. So, they are targeting UNC constituencies and putting houses in those areas to make sure that the PNM is fixed. This has nothing to do with the consultation of the Member of Parliament. So, when they are caught, they are saying that Members of Parliament would be consulted. Thus far, houses have been distributed; lots have been distributed; and people know the houses that they are going to get. In fact, they are in contact with the builders, and they are telling the builders how they want their houses designed with respect to any interior changes and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, the idea for moneys being allocated to ministries is to add value to people's lives. What we have seen so far is that these allocations are not doing that. We have to look at that matter. But before we go there, let us take a look globally and see how international communities see us.

I want to refer your good self to the Global Competitiveness Report of Trinidad and Tobago for the year 2002/2003.

Hon. Member: What is the relevance of that report.

Mr. C. Sharma: Go in that Chair and you would find out. *[Laughter]* Mr. Speaker, I am talking here about the year 2002 when the PNM came into office. Good competitiveness rank: In the year 2002/2003, we were No. 37. We have moved in 2003/2004 to No. 49. This comes from government's expenditure. This report is treated with all over the world.

With respect to technology index rank: In the year 2002, we were No. 42. Now, when the UNC was in government, we were in a much better position. *[Interruption]* We have moved from No. 42 to No. 47.

Public institutions index rank: This is very interesting. You see, the drugs that were exported by the Government in the diplomatic pouch, contributed to some of these statistics.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I am bringing to the attention of this House, for the first time, that you are being irrelevant.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you. *[Desk thumping]* I am saying that the allocations made contributed to us getting a very low international rating. This is going to affect our economy; it is going to affect income coming into the country; and it is going to affect investments.

With respect to macro economic environment rank, we were No. 25 in 2002/2003, and in 2003/2004, we have moved to No. 47. [*Interruption*]

The Government sub index was used to calculate the macro economic environment rank and out of 102 countries it places Trinidad and Tobago at No. 69 in the world. So, in 102 countries, they were looking at government's expenses; how we distributed money; how we treat with public institutions; how we treat with the welfare system; how we treat with adding value to people's lives and so forth.

The innovation sub index which contributes to investments coming in—

Mr. Speaker: For the last time, please be relevant. If you continue to be irrelevant, I would have to ask you to take your seat. There are certain Heads before us in the Motion, and we also have a Bill before us. Please, come back to the matter that we are debating.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, forgive me, but I do not understand what you mean by being irrelevant. Tell me, and I would be relevant.

Mr. Speaker: You have a report from the Finance Committee, and we are debating a Motion on that report, and there is also a Bill before us. I referred you earlier on to Standing Orders No. 69(2) and No. 70. I am giving you a little latitude but you are being irrelevant. I am asking you to be relevant. I am saying this is the last time that I am asking you to be relevant. If I find that you are going on and being irrelevant, I would have to ask you to take your seat.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, are you suggesting that in future when I have to speak in this Parliament, under your speakership, that I should bring my notes and show them to you? I have done research internationally and locally to get my notes. We are speaking about a money Bill.

1.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I refer to an article written by Peter Quentrall-Thomas that appeared in the *Sunday Guardian* of May 09, 2004:

“Little to show for time in office

Countries that had no money, no education, no oil, no gas; countries that were just pawns in a giant cold war game have become better-equipped than us to compete globally.”

This article shows that when governments, like we have in Trinidad and Tobago, where the PNM Government does not take the people into consideration when it

brings money bills to the Parliament, as it has done with the one we are now debating, and there is no consultation, they just decide to move money helter-skelter, the entire country suffers. [*Interruption*]

The Member for Tobago East is asking how much money they have in offshore banks. Should I answer that? I understand that Members opposite have moneys in all the banks abroad, moneys from ill-gotten sources. I hope that answers the question, Member for Tobago East.

The article goes on and it relates to what the Member for Diego Martin West talked about:

“I know they are building houses, but what about tangible improvements for the rest of us? However, let me get back to my charts and tables again this week.”

He was showing in the charts that people are not enjoying a high quality of living in Trinidad and Tobago. He obtains that from a number of sources. [*Crosstalk*]

We saw today, in response to a question asked by the Member for Barataria/San Juan, that a large sum of money is to be paid to a former President. Does the former President qualify for this money? Based on our understanding, the former President does not qualify. Why is the money paid? How is it paid? Does Cabinet have the right to agree on any kind of payment? The answer is no; Cabinet cannot do that. We are paying the sums of \$24,000-plus per month. [*Crosstalk*] In five years, we would have paid more than \$1 million.

What does a constituent in Fyzabad see when payments of this kind obtains? The constituent sees that an election took place some time ago, when there was an 18/18 tie and the then President appointed the side that got less votes. They are thinking that this is pay back time. [*Crosstalk*] They have asked me to enquire from the Minister how are these payments made. Why are these payments made and under which law? Why have the former Presidents not been paid this sum of money? This is in addition to the sum of \$1,620,027.15 incurred for medical expenses. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Hinds: Would the Member give way?

Mr. C. Sharma: Not yet.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. This Member is misleading the House—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no; give us the point of order, please.

Mr. Hinds: Standing Order 36(5). [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: No, I rule against you. Please continue, Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. C. Sharma: Good try.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of the repair programmes for schools, Members opposite can get up in this House and identify schools that are going to be repaired. How did they get that information? Why do Members on this side not get that information? More than that, when we make representation for schools they are not treated with. In fact, in many, many schools in UNC-controlled constituencies very little moneys are made available for repairs during the summer vacation.

Mr. Imbert: You call 95 per cent very little?

Mr. C. Sharma: This was a question raised by the Member for Tabaquite: Details of additional funding of \$32.2 million required for the special Anticrime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, a Special Force Allowance of \$5,000 per month to all members. This is very frightening; I hope the press picks it up. The Member for Diego Martin East asked if I am against it. Where is the equality? There are 7,000 police officers and you handpick 30, 40 or 50. That is very, very similar to what Hitler did. Do you know that Hitler employed all these tactics that the PNM is employing? All legal! So he wants to pay a group of police officers, as Hitler did, as Prime Minister Gairy did in Grenada and Burnham did in Guyana. What did they do? They killed innocent citizens across the country. [*Laughter*] People had to leave. [*Crosstalk*]

Do you see the racism? He asked if it is Indians. Indians are being kidnapped. Indians getting "lick up"; it might be all Indians; I do not know. What do you think, Member for Diego Martin East? [*Crosstalk*]

Let me tell you the effect of that. It does not stop there. In the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette* under the heading, Renunciation of Trinidad and Tobago Citizenship, the first person listed is Gerard Sidney Stewart, give it up; second person, Renee Diane Blaze-Sabeeney, give it up; Taramatie Boodram, give it up; Ray Baldeo, give it up; Maria Astor Chung-Ahow, give it up. Across the board, Indian, African, Chinese, Dougla cannot live in this country anymore. Why is this happening? It is because of the murder rate, the kidnapping and the failure of the Government to make resources available for crime fighting. When you give \$5,000 to some police officers and you are not treating with the others, that is discrimination. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. C. Sharma: This extra allowance of \$5,000 per month is 2.4 times more than what a Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) worker gets, and almost three times more than an Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) worker.

Mr. Valley: Are you arguing that we should pay the CEPEP workers more?

Mr. C. Sharma: This is in addition to his or her normal salary, so he is being paid \$5,000. Are they going to become agents of the PNM? Are they going to plant drugs in the water tanks of Members on this side or Members opposite, as they did in the case of Sen. S. Baksh? [*Interruption*]

The Member for Tunapuna has confirmed it; he said that it is going to happen.

Mr. Partap: He should be in jail.

Mr. C. Sharma: He should be very, very familiar; he is a minister of Government; it is Government policy. Let the record show that the Member for Tunapuna said that it is going to happen. So when it does happen, we must treat with it. The citizens of Trinidad and Tobago must wake up; the press must report.

Mr. Imbert: There is no press here.

Mr. C. Sharma: "It has no press here?" I would have to make the *Hansard* available to them.

The World Bank has adopted the Trinidad and Tobago TTPost as a model. The PNM came here and criticized the UNC and the then minister responsible for it, Mr. G. Singh. The Member for Diego Martin West went to the newspaper and paid a lot of money to lie to the whole country, but look at what happened. For the fiscal year 2004, the TTPost projection is in the vicinity of \$15 million. They are asking: How has that happened? The PNM "doh talk bout this eh". They keep misleading the country with half-truths.

Mr. Speaker, a 50 per cent increase in tariff not yet implemented. Outstanding terminal dues from foreign countries, \$21 million; cost associated with the changeover from the delegated management arrangement phase, which expires on June 30, 2004, a couple of days from today, for the long-term arrangement phase; cost of 13 per cent wage increase awarded to TTPost employee. So the PNM wants to pay for press, misleading the community, and when you ask questions and the truth surfaces they would not publish it. I call upon them to publish this in the newspapers in full-page ads.

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Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you saw this in the newspapers over the last few days; the Ministry of Local Government placed an ad for the Princes Town Regional Corporation. Look at the level of discrimination; look at the level the PNM would stoop to. I raised this on the last day and a foolish answer was given, a non-answer. They said that they removed all the lifeguards from the Siparia Regional Corporation, so all the beaches under that corporation were left unattended, no lifeguards. What did they do with the money? [*Crosstalk*] They placed an advertisement. [*Interruption*]

I should go there and have a good swim? I hope when I take the company with me, “yuh eh go like it”. [*Laughter*]

Do you know what they did in Princes Town? There is an advertisement appearing in all the newspapers. The amount of money they have spent on it would have paid for all the lifeguards at the Siparia Regional Corporation. The advertisement has eight photographs; seven with the Minister of Local Government and one with the Minister of Education and the former Member of Parliament for Princes Town; every day in all the newspapers.

The Minister of National Security places advertisements in the newspapers talking about the Police Reform Bill, misleading the community again. They must give the Opposition the same money. The Member for Diego Martin East said, “No way.” Let us also put advertisements and say what our position is on any bill for that matter. You cannot run around the country using State resources. All those contracts are without tender; all will go to their friends, supporters of the PNM. This is PNM country.

The Member for Diego Martin West answered a question that we asked: What moneys were spent? He called the contractors, but he did not identify them. Do you know why he did not identify them? That is the level of discrimination and racism that obtains in the PNM, and I will qualify that statement. Contractors were given in excess of \$100 million to build houses, but the Minister got up and attacked Hanover. Why Hanover? When you look at the dollar value from Hanover they are earning money. The National Housing Authority (NHA) is earning money with the arrangement and the cost of the houses is a lot less than what it now costs the PNM to build houses to give their friends and families. [*Crosstalk*]

They have already identified by public advertisement 10 per cent. It is 10 per cent per Member. With 20 Members on that side, that is 200 per cent; that is why they have to build so many houses. [*Crosstalk*] Each Member is contributing 10

per cent. [*Crosstalk*] Here is the advertisement paid for with taxpayers' money; someone asked about the bill for it:

“Address by Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph, Minister of National Security”

Mr. Speaker, you are and I know when we place an advertisement it would say, “Paid advertisement”. This one does not say that, although it is a paid advertisement, because that is the instruction from the Government. Do you know why they want to do this? They want it to appear that they have national support. Here is an advertisement paid for by the Ministry of National Security, but it is not so identified. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Are you not seeing the crest at the bottom?

Mr. C. Sharma: Say again? “Doh talk to yuhself.”

The other matter is the allocation of moneys. I cannot understand why this discrimination continues. The national community has to do something. The Diego Martin Regional Corporation, \$11 million.

Mr. Imbert: For what?

Mr. C. Sharma: San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, \$8.7 million; Tunapuna Regional Corporation, \$20 million; notice that they are all PNM. Poor Couva, \$674,000, cane cutters, “bus dey throat”, fire them, send them home, let their daughters and wives be raped, “doh care”. This goes on and goes on and goes on and goes on. Then the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West said, “Indians have money, kidnap them.”

Mr. Rahael: Mr. Speaker, I never said that.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Princes Town asked about the port and the Member for Caroni East asked about the ship that is going to be on dry dock—the Minister of Works and Transport promised to answer and he has not—the amount of moneys being spent on that ship, the amount of cost overruns on the port and at the airport. We have asked questions; people are being fired day and night, new people are hired, no advertisement, across the board; contracts are given out left, right and centre to friends and families of PNM supporters. When they come here and ask for money—for instance, they did not tell us that they were going to pay the former President \$24,000 a month. They did not tell us that at the airport they were going to fire workers and hire their friends and families.

The Member for Tobago East travels frequently and sees it; she is very disappointed. On the question of the On-the-Job-Training Programme, we all read

about it in the newspapers, but we have not seen any advertisements for it. How are these people recruited? Let me tell you:

“On-the-Job-Training Programme (OJT)—\$12.0Mn

The OJT programme was expected to train 10,000 persons annually in two (2) cycles, each comprising 5,000 over a six (6) month period. The sum of \$67.0 Mn. was estimated...of the programme...”

That is \$67 million to hire people who they feel will support the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, you and I cannot make recommendations; you and I do not get application forms. Members of the Opposition cannot write letters of recommendation, but every Member opposite can get people in the OJT programme and they do. They come back to us and ask: “Hear nuh, how Mr. Valley does get we in anywhere he want, MTS, WASA, OJT; you not a Member of Parliament too?” [*Crosstalk*] The question is: What you want the form for?” The form “eh for we”; the form is only for PNM.

The Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme—\$18 million. How are these people recruited? Through PNM party groups? Multi-sector Skill Training Programme—the sum of \$14 million, \$60 to each trainee. How does it obtain?

Mr. Imbert: The application form is in the newspapers.

Mr. C. Sharma: I saw in today's newspaper that Petrotrin is hiring security guards; no advertisements but, again, only contacts. This thing has to stop. We cannot come to the Parliament and approve money morning, noon and night for the PNM to discriminate against us. We must not pay them to discriminate. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Partap: Eddie, you should be inside.

Mr. C. Sharma: This Government is a joke; it is without vision. The Member for Princes Town requested details with respect to the Community Action Revival and Empowerment Centre and the export centres. How do they treat with the export centres? There are 15 export centres located at Laventille, PNM; Morvant, PNM; Diego Martin, PNM; Maraval, PNM; Bon Air, PNM; Piarco, PNM; Mausica, PNM; Palo Seco, PNM. They are all in PNM constituencies, in case you are wondering why I keep saying “PNM”. Fyzabad, the Lone Ranger—I will come to it; La Brea, PNM; Point Fortin, PNM; San Fernando, PNM; Tokyo Pan Centre, PNM. This is PNM country. How could you have 15 export centres and 14 are in PNM-controlled counties?

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, there is one in Fyzabad, in which this Member has no input; it is PNM controlled.

“Export Centres seek to facilitate Government policy to increase employment levels in Trinidad and Tobago...”

How much employment was created? Zero. They were also to increase the marketability of Trinidad and Tobago as a producer of high quality craft; zero, nothing exported. They are only for their friends and families. They were to provide an avenue for foreign revenue; not a cent was earned. Do you know what it is costing us to run one of these? These are jobs for the PNM; everybody there is a “big boy”: Director, Manager, facility, cell phone, transport, 14 out of 15. It was supposed to act as a support to the tourism sector. “I eh see no tourists in none of these centres yet.” [*Crosstalk*]

We asked what was organized. They organized 17 workshops in 12 centres. I do not have to tell you that they are 12 PNM centres. Do you know what is interesting? No advertisement for the workshops. Who were selected? When they select people to attend meals have to be provided to cater for friends of the PNM. The person doing the teaching, PNM contact; PNM country. And they want us to come to the Parliament and stick to this and stick to that.

Hon. Member: Do not fight it.

Mr. C. Sharma: Say again. You are in serious trouble. Let me tell you why you are in trouble. I will come to that; remind me.

We asked them to tell us about some of the employees, about project financing under the Grant Windows Programme. Their answer was: North-Eastern, five projects, two human resource development, two micro enterprise, one institutional strengthening. This is nothing physical. The quantum of money spent was \$523,081; money for PNM boys and girls again. This is very serious business; this is where the country is going. The PNM is raiding the Treasury. Every man and woman opposite is benefiting. North-Western, 17 projects—10 human resource development, no public advertisement, no UNC people to attend; two social development, three institutional strengthening, two micro enterprise. The quantum of money spent, \$2,809,337. This is what the PNM is reducing the country to. They do not want us to talk about this and no newspaper would report it; they have gone already. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest that you consider a vote—because the Parliament has money—so that when Members make valued contributions like this one and show the discrimination taking place, you can cause it to be

published. I make that request; it is very critical. How would people know that their \$2.8 million was spent to get votes for the PNM?

Project type: one agriculture, four human resource development, one micro enterprise; no other details. We do not know if five people attended with 10 facilitators. The quantum of money spent, \$824,572. What is very interesting is South Western. I am from down there. Ten projects: one agriculture, four social, four human resource development and one micro enterprise. The quantum of money spent, \$757,000. I want to elaborate on this one. In agriculture, I made enquiries, nobody could say where this project took place. I made enquiries into the four social programmes. Do you know what I was told? Four PNM party groups got together under another name, they called themselves something, applied for this and got hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, Tobago, 20 projects: three agriculture, one environment, three micro enterprise, 13 human resource development—\$1.9 million. The Member for Tobago East knows nothing about it; poor girl. There is geo-political racism, because the Member for Tobago East is not favoured; they want to replace her with Mr. London. They spent \$1.9 million and the Member for Tobago East knows nothing about it; this is where the country has reached, even if you are in the PNM and they do not like you, you are in trouble.

There was a lot of hurrah about the Family Court; the Member for Princes Town raised it, but I want to show what happens even there.

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh against that too?”

Mr. C. Sharma: Take a break.

My colleague, the Member for Princes Town, asked about the Family Court. How were the expenses met? [*Interruption*] You would laugh. Masonry work, that is plastering, \$202,000; they plastered with gold dust. This was very interesting, doors, \$49,408. If one door cost \$1,000, that is 490 doors. I sent somebody to check today; there are less than 100 doors. [*Crosstalk*] Keep quiet, “nuh”. Public address system, \$740,000. A public address system is approximately a maximum of \$10,000 at some of the top stores. They have spent \$740,000. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: How much was the door at the airport?

Mr. C. Sharma: They have fixed furniture, whatever that means, \$722,000; furniture, furnishings and equipment, \$998,000. So in one area you have fixed furniture—that would be benches—for \$722,000 and furniture, furnishings and

equipment, \$998,000; that is \$2,000 less than \$1 million. Flooring—I am not sure what that meant, whether carpeting or tiles, \$603,000. Remember I said that they spent \$222,000 in masonry work, but gypsum partitions, which require no masonry, \$461,579.23. Everything for the PNM is a deal. [*Crosstalk*] You sleeping? Wake up.

Mr. Speaker, for professional fees, \$473,000; security, \$574,000. You would realize that these things are never told without questions being asked. But more than that, how is it that such large sums of money could be spent and nobody cares to answer questions, nobody cares to report to the honourable House, where you ask for money to spend in bulk? You never identify where the money went. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Fyzabad has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. G. Singh*]

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 7 Noes 14

AYES

Singh, G.

Ramsaran, M.

Rafeeq, Dr. H.

Sharma, C.

Partap, H.

Nanan, Dr. A.

Panday, S.

NOES

Valley, Hon. K.

Khan, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Narine, Hon. J.

Williams, Hon. E.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Rahael, Hon. J.

Roberts, Hon. A.

James, Hon. E.

Hart, Hon. E.

Callender, Hon. S.

Seukeran, Hon. D.

Job-Davis, Hon. E.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Question negatived.

Mr. Speaker: There is no extension for the Member.

[Opposition Members rise to exit Chamber]

Mr. Speaker: Please, Members, I am on my feet. Hon. Member, if you would take your seat for just two minutes.

**STATEMENT BY MEMBER
(HANSARD RECORD OF)**

Mr. Speaker: I had earlier requested the *Hansard* report relative to a statement made by the hon. Member for Fyzabad. The *Hansard* states:

“I want to give notice here that if the PNM feels that they are going to put their supporters in those houses, they would be in serious trouble. This elected Member of Parliament would not take it so easy. Whether there is a Minister of National Security or whether there is no Minister of National Security, we are going to treat with the matter.

Mr. Rahael: What could you do?

Mr. C. Sharma: Who asked that question? *[Words expunged]*”

Mr. Speaker: So, hon. Member for Fyzabad, it is clear in the *Hansard* that you are accusing the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

[Words expunged] [Crosstalk]

Please, hon. Member, I will ask you to withdraw that statement and apologize to the House.

Statement By Member

Wednesday, June 09, 2004

Mr. Sharma: What am I apologizing for?

Mr. Speaker: You are apologizing for making the statement accusing the Minister of Health.

[*Words expunged*]

You are insinuating by this statement that the Minister [*Words expunged*]

Mr. Sharma: You are saying that; I did not say that.

Mr. Speaker: I am only reading what the *Hansard* report has.

Mr. Sharma: You are assuming that they are illegal drugs. Are there not legal drugs to export? [*Member rises*] How can you make that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, I am on my feet. Are you prepared to withdraw the statement? That is all I am asking. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, if you are saying that your understanding means that the Minister [*Words expunged*], I made no such reference. [*Crosstalk*] If you are saying that your understanding is the only understanding that obtains in this Parliament, then I apologize.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much. Is that apology acceptable to the House? [*Crosstalk*] You are withdrawing the statement and apologizing, is that what you are doing?

Mr. Sharma: What am I apologizing for now?

Mr. Speaker: You are withdrawing the statement that you made.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, I will do anything you want, but I want to make one point: On this side, you always want us to apologize and withdraw. On that side, because they are in the PNM, it is a different ball game. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no, please. I am not going to carry this on. Are you prepared to withdraw the statement and apologize? That is all I am asking.

Mr. Sharma: I indicated that if your understanding means that drugs mean only illegal drugs that the Minister exports, withdrawn. [*Crosstalk*] I could speak English, you know.

Mr. Speaker: You have withdrawn the statement; I think that is what you mean.

Mr. Sharma: About five times you have asked that.

Statement By Member

Wednesday, June 09, 2004

Mr. Speaker: You have to apologize to the House.

Mr. Sharma: Apologize?

Mr. Speaker: The Standing Orders say that.

Mr. Sharma: Read it for me, please. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, let me read the Standing Orders for you. Please, listen, listen:

“(3) The Speaker or the Chairman shall order any Member to withdraw immediately from the House during the remainder of the day’s sitting and may direct such steps to be taken, as are required, to enforce such order—”

And this is the applicable part:

“(b) where such Member has used objectionable, abusive, insulting or offensive words or language or unparliamentary expressions, and, on being called to order, has refused to withdraw such words or language or expressions and has not offered an apology for the use thereof to the satisfaction of the House.”

You have to go on to apologize.

Mr. Sharma: You are forcing a Member of the Opposition, based on your understanding, which may or may not be biased, but I have said, in all goodness, that if you are saying that what I said means illegal drugs, I have withdrawn it. If you are saying it has to be accompanied by an apology, I do not know for what, but apology extended. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I will direct the comments of the Member for Fyzabad as recorded in the *Hansard* to be expunged and not be reported in the press.

1.50 a.m.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

[*Opposition Members walk out of the Chamber*]

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. In view of the lateness of the hour, and the fact that the Opposition has left, I would simply ask the House to adopt the report of the Finance Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this House adopt the Second Report of the 2003/2004 Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2004 Appropriation.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum of the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2004 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be read a third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

METROLOGY BILL

Senate Amendments

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That the Senate amendments to the Metrology Bill listed in the appendix be now considered.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3.

Senate amendment read as follows:

In subclause (2), delete the word “supplementary,” appearing after the word “base,” in line one.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House of Representatives doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Metrology Bill

Wednesday, June 09, 2004

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 7.

Senate amendment read as follows:

In paragraph (a) of subclause (1), insert the words “subject to subsection (5),” before the word “enter” in line one.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House of Representatives doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 16.

Senate amendment read as follows:

In subclause (1), delete the word “only” appearing after the word “instituted” in line two.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House of Representatives doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 23.

Senate amendment read as follows:

A. Insert new subclause (3) as follows:

“(3) Regulations made under this section shall be subject to negative resolution of Parliament.”

B. Renumber existing subclause (3) as subclause (4).

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House of Representatives doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjournment

Wednesday, June 09, 2004

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, June 18, 2004 at 1.30 p.m. We would be doing the Food and Drugs (Amdt.) Bill, as well as the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) Bill. I think we would want to take these Bills jointly because they are connected.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 1.55 a.m.