1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation for the financial year ended September 30, 1999. [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 Eastern Regional Health Authority for the financial year ended September 30, 2000. [Hon. K. Valley]

3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the San Fernando City Corporation for the financial year ended September 30, 1999. [Hon. K. Valley]

4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the San Fernando City Corporation for the financial year ended September 30, 2000. [Hon. K. Valley]

5. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on a special audit of the system for the storage of records at the San Fernando City Corporation during the financial year 2004. [Hon. K. Valley]


CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) CUBA TRADE AND ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BILL

Bill to give effect to the Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement between the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Government of Cuba, [The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance]; read the first time.
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 28, 2005]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: When last we met the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs was on his legs and he has an extension of 30 minutes.

Hon. R. Boynes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues, for giving me the opportunity to continue in this debate. On the last occasion, that is last night when I was debating this very important Bill, I made the contribution to the point that we on this side—the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago—have demonstrated quite categorically that we have supported sportsmen and sportswomen and the national sporting organizations in this country. The support that the Government has given to all these sporting organizations has borne fruit.

I mentioned in my debate a list of sportsmen and sportswomen that have made us proud. They have taken the resources that have been given to them; used them wisely and they have been able to represent their country abroad. I mentioned karate, track and field, gymnastics, boxing, sailing, golf, volleyball and cricket, to name a few. The Soca Warriors will be on show over this weekend. We have given them support and we wish them well because we hope and we believe that we can make it to the next World Cup.

In terms of the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board, they have been able to produce double champions to the senior women’s team and the men’s under 19 team. The men’s senior team did tremendously well in 2004. This speaks volumes to their development programmes. We have always said that the West Indies as a whole needs to take a page from Trinidad and Tobago’s cricket board; look at their development programme and apply same to what we can do in the West Indies. We need to lift our game and take it to the next level. As we prepare for Cricket World Cup 2007 and make it the best ever, we need to ensure that we have the best team.

We also mentioned that the Government has given approximately $14 million to the national sports organizations through the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. They have also given approximately $1.2 million to the Elite Athletes Programme and a commitment to meet with the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic
Committee and attempt to establish criteria, so that all athletes that make the qualifying time can be part of that programme; be encouraged and have the necessary resources to train as we prepare for the next Olympics in China.

We also appeal to corporate Trinidad and Tobago. This is not the Government’s job alone to do in terms of sport and youth affairs. We are preparing and providing an enabling environment so that our sportsmen and sportswomen would excel. More than that, this is a job for all of us to encourage our young sportsmen and sportswomen. We invite corporate Trinidad and Tobago as we usually do, to adopt a sport and take on board one of the sporting disciplines and let us all work together, as we take sport to the next level and make Trinidad and Tobago proud.

We mentioned that the Government in its wisdom established the National Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago to assist the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs in the execution and implementation of its programmes. The manner in so doing will take place with a memorandum of understanding whereby we can identify several deliverables with a time line. We want to give ourselves a particular time to ensure that it is properly executed. The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs will retain the duty and responsibility of monitoring and evaluation.

The National Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago took on board 10 sporting disciplines which include football, cricket, basketball, netball and volleyball, to name a few. I have been liaising with several national sporting organizations and they have remarked that they have benefited from unprecedented assistance through the National Sport Company. I wish to applaud the National Sport Company for so doing. [Desk thumping]

In the area of football, they have presented a holistic and comprehensive development programme which was taken on board by the National Sport Company and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. We have had a technical director, Mr. Lincoln Phillips, and his team training coaches throughout the length and breadth of this country. Through the sport company we ensure that we have the cadre of coaches that will speak to the development and coaching of our young ones throughout the length and breadth of this country. We are training coaches and then filtering them throughout Trinidad and Tobago, so we can train the young Brian Laras, Daryl Browns and George Bovells throughout the country. The sport company also retains the ability to bring the type of coaches whether locally, regionally or foreign based. Their mandate is to utilize the best coaches in Trinidad and Tobago and train our young ones.
I dare say that this Government in its wisdom has been able to approve $85 million for this process. It does not only speak to the development programmes with respect to these sports from an elite perspective or a high performance enhancement perspective, but also the communities. The National Sport Company in conjunction with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has been ensuring that there are community sporting programmes.

On that note we wrote to every Member of Parliament. We have been talking to every Member of Parliament over the past months, so much so that one Member of Parliament on the other side wanted to know why an official from the sport company was coming to him. He went to consult with him about what he would like to see in his constituency for his constituents and he chased him. Then they come to Parliament and cry discrimination. It appeared in the newspaper and he was proud of it. The Member for Barataria/San Juan held up the The Probe and indicated that he chased the official from the sport company. We asked the sport company to go to every Member of Parliament and ask what they would like to see happen from a sporting perspective in their communities.

Sporting programmes are for the people of this country in every single community. We ask in the interest of your constituents to work with us as we bring community sporting programmes to the doorstep of your constituents. We ask you to cooperate in the best interest of your constituents.

1.45 p.m.

As we, through this sport company, have community sporting programmes throughout the length and breadth of this country—hopefully with the support of all Members of Parliament—as we have development programmes that speak to coaching of our sportsmen and sportswomen, our potential stars throughout the length and breadth of this country, as we do that and provide that, where do we go; where is the next step?

We are providing $120 million through the sport company to upgrade community sporting facilities throughout this entire country; the Cabinet approved that. The Member for San Fernando East and the hon. Prime Minister mentioned in his deliberations that we have approved over $100 million that would repair, upgrade and establish community recreation grounds and sporting facilities throughout this land.

There are Members on that side who have complied. They have been able to identify several of their community facilities that need to be upgraded and they have sent them in. Every single Member on this side has done so. In the best
interest of your constituents, I am asking you all to do the same thing. As I have said, several of you all have sent it in; the Balmain committee with the Member for Couva South has done so.

As we prepare to assist, “toute bagai”, everybody, we are asking, through you, Mr. Speaker, to encourage Members to ensure that in the best interest of their constituents, they can give us the list so that we can go and assist each constituency in terms of development of their sporting facilities.

The community sporting facilities and that $120 million upgrade is not all. The Cabinet also approved the sum of $20 million for the upgrade of playing fields for the children. Again, if you can identify in your communities where you need to have playfields for the children, please, send it in to the sport company so we can address it immediately.

Mr. Speaker, might I also add that we have also asked the sport company to look at the existing stadia, all five of them, and upgrade them because several of these facilities do not have provision for field events and there is a need for that. The four stadia that were built were really football fields with a track around them, so we need to fix that.

Mr. Speaker, as we bring our coaching programmes throughout this country, we would be utilizing community facilities; we will be utilizing all five stadia so we could have our young people coached properly. We have development programmes, they could use the gym and that is our intention. I also wish to indicate that, as the hon. Member for San Fernando East mentioned, that is not all, because you have the stadia, national facilities, we have the community facilities but in between, we have regional facilities.

We have been given the approval and we have funds in the Infrastructure Development Fund in order to address several regional facilities. Princes Town, I am sure you will be happy to know that the Youlade Pompey Recreation Ground, after 13 years we have been able to settle on a design with consultation with persons in your particular constituency. You know about it? Mr. Speaker, we have finally settled on a design for the Youlade Pompey Recreation Ground—could you imagine—after 13 years. We came together; we have met with the people and we are finally satisfied with what is in the best interest of the people of Princes Town. This is what they want and this is what they will get.

The Prime Minister further mentioned Irving Park which is in Siparia. Where is the Member for Siparia; is she here? Is she Patriot or Progressive? [ Interruption] Progressive/Patriot? I understand she is counting votes; there is a recount. In terms
of Irving Park in the constituencies of Fyzabad, Siparia, and La Brea—[Interrupt]

Well, it services those three particular areas as a regional facility. That particular facility is also earmarked for construction.

If I may also mention, Laventille is not to be forgotten, Mr. Speaker. In the Laventille community we have established the Morvant Recreation Ground for the establishment and upgrade of a regional sporting facility. Yet, again, in the Laventille community there is a particular ground called Sogrem Trace Recreational Ground. We are establishing a regional facility at Sogrem Trace Recreational Ground in Laventille.

Let me also mention that there is a recreation ground in Charlieville that will also be part of the upgrade as a regional recreational ground; Lange Park, Patna Village, Mahaica is on the agenda and that will be starting shortly. Toco is earmarked, the Brian Lara Recreational Ground in Santa Cruz, Northern Savannah in Diego Martin and Pleasantville in San Fernando. I heard a Member call upon the hon. Prime Minister yesterday: “What are you doing for Pleasantville?” The Prime Minister is doing tremendous work; so Pleasantville with a recreational facility.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, we have the Eddie Hart Recreation Ground. [Desk thumping] I wish to commend Mr. Eddie Hart for giving 43 years of service in terms of sports to this community of Trinidad and Tobago; the country of Trinidad and Tobago; the family of Trinidad and Tobago. You have done this nation proud. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, may I also mention that the PSIP, our development fund, has climbed from $23 million last year to $172 million this year. The intention of this Government is to ensure that we have the necessary resources to upgrade and establish sporting facilities throughout the length and breadth of this country: upgrading our national facilities; upgrading and establishing regional facilities and dealing with the community facilities.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan that speaks to the coaching of our young ones; we have a plan that speaks to recreation by all our citizens in Trinidad and Tobago—total participation in sport. We are training—with the finest coaches—our young ones throughout the length and breadth of this country. We are taking them from a young stage and training them to be potential Daryl Browns and Marc Burns. What do we do with this amount of talent that we have now, Mr. Speaker? We are training them wherever they are.
We have suggested establishing a Caribbean Sporting Academy where they will go to school with their own curriculum; where they will be housed and trained right there and be exposed to the latest technology! That is what we propose! That is what Tarouba is all about! That is what the Caribbean Sporting Academy is all about!

I heard the Member for Chaguanas come to this Parliament and say it is one stadium we are building for $850 million; one practise pitch! Mr. Speaker, that is so far from the truth. We are building the talent in every part of the country and we propose, as time goes on, to be able to house them, to train them, to keep them and to educate them with their own curriculum. We will be in a position also to have different teams coming to Trinidad and Tobago to train. We will be a training centre of the world.

I wonder when the University of the West Indies was setting up if they got this problem because really and truly that is what it is. It is a campus of sports! It is an academy of sport! [Desk thumping] That is what it is! Mr. Speaker, I know change is hard; it has always been hard! Point Lisas was hard; Brian Lara Promenade was hard! We understand that but we are doing it in communities and we are building to a campus level. That is what it is all about!

We have dreamed the dream; we have the vision! If we are to go to developed status, Mr. Speaker, we need to dream. This is our country; a blessed country. We can do it and with the help of all we shall succeed!

Mr. Speaker, let me also indicate that as we prepare our country to move to the next level in sport, we have to take into consideration the jewel of this nation, our greatest resources. We have oil; we have natural gas; we have the best beaches; we have ecotourism and we have tourism. Mr. Speaker, the best resource we have in this country is our human resource.

We have approximately 31 per cent of the population that qualifies as youth; approximately 400,000 of them, Mr. Speaker, who look at us for inspiration; who look at us for direction; who look at each and every one of us as a role model. We have a duty to work with them; to challenge them even so that they can take our country to the next level. The youth has energy, dynamism; he has a certain amount of belief. The passion that he has can take a country leaps and bounds and we must be able to provide an enabling environment to be in a position to encourage that belief, that dream and that energy. We must marry the wisdom and experience of the old with the talent and energy of the youth.
2.00 p.m.

Sometimes the youth hears the roll of thunder in his ears; he has light in his eyes and we have to be in a position to utilize and capture this energy and put it in a positive direction as we move this country to developed status—and that is the job of every one of us; and we as a Government have been able to ensure that there is a structure to provide that enabling environment. What is the structure? I will tell you.

In April 2004, we were able, as a Cabinet, and as the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, to approve a National Youth Policy—and I will tell you something—because we have been working with all the youth NGOs over the past year or two. We have been doing tremendous work and I take this opportunity to applaud every single youth NGO in Trinidad and Tobago. They have done fantastic, they have done phenomenally well: the Trinidad Youth Council, the Tobago Youth Council, the Girl Guides Association of Trinidad and Tobago, the Scouts, the UWI undergraduates; and we have been able to deal with all faith-based organizations, the YMCA; there are so many to count which have come together and worked with this Government to ensure that we approve a National Youth Policy and a three-year strategic implementation plan.

Mr. Speaker, after years of consultation—approximately 82 sessions of consultations, we then continued the level of consultation resulting in three workshops: one in Tobago, one in San Fernando and one in Port of Spain. We then were able to take a redraft youth policy to the social sector committee dealing with social programmes chaired by the hon. Prime Minister who insisted that we have a strategic plan to go with that National Youth Policy. We went back to the drawing board, we went to Tobago and liaised with the Tobago House of Assembly and came back to that committee and passed a three-year strategic implementation plan together with the National Youth Policy with a budget of $36 million. I will tell you the youth NGOs are totally happy.

They have been working night and day, each and every one of them are part of this process. We are strengthening them, we are strengthening their offices; we are helping them build their buildings to have their youth programmes because we do not intend to reinvent the wheel. We would use our youth NGOs to have youth programmes throughout the length and breadth of this country. They understand the problem and we are facilitating all of our youth NGOs to work with the youth of the nation. We have been able to put forward institutional strengthening programmes, because we need them strong. We need them to have a secretariat, they need to make youth work a business to address the youth of this nation in today's world
and, we have all hands on deck; all of us; the youth NGOs, this Government of Trinidad and Tobago, we are committed to dealing, helping and working with our nation's youth. We believe in the energy of the youth and we believe in the talent of the youth and we believe that the young people of this nation can take this country to Vision 2020 and to developed status.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Winston Dookeran (St. Augustine): Mr. Speaker, before I deal with the economics of the budget, let me comment on what I consider is the greatest tragedy of our nation.

It is now clear that this Government has lost control of the safety and security of this country—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. W. Dookeran:—much of which has already been said in this debate and many, many lives have been lost, injured and traumatized by our failure to provide safety for our citizens. Ten-year old Vijay Persad from Indian Walk, Moruga, was never found; 14-year old Anisha Simmons was killed while engaging in her hobby at a pan yard in Arima; the barbaric death of Dr. Eddie Koury, father of two young children; there are but glaring testimonies of a society now on the edge. There are hundreds and hundreds of people whose lives are lost and traumatized in this age of terror of our country. We should be ashamed as a people. We have now become immune to these nefarious acts. Where indeed is the outrage?

There are 112,000 citizens who signed the petition of the Keith Noel Committee and this outrage is expressed silently in the hearts and minds of all our people. But there is no national leadership response. It is not sufficient to blame each other, but we must never escape the fact that the responsibility of the Government in this matter cannot be forgiven or forgotten. History will not be kind to this Government. Our society is bleeding in desperation and exasperation on the issue of the safety of our citizens, and we remain today fearful for our lives.

It is against this fundamental tragedy that this budget focuses on what they call the basic needs. But what is the most important basic need in today's society? It is restoring trust in the nation. Nation states exist to deliver political goods, security, education, health services, economic opportunity, social mobility for the poor and disadvantaged, the healthy environment, the legal framework of order and a judicial system to administer it. Nation states fail because they can no longer deliver political goods to their people, and in almost all cases, the root causes lie in ethnic, religious and other inter-communal conflicts and in the growth of
criminal violence. In a sense, restoring trust in the nation, is what the President of this Republic called for in his address on the occasion of the ceremonial opening of this Parliament a week or so ago.

Mr. Speaker, you will recollect this is what he said:

“Positions of trust were designated to all Members of this Parliament singly and corporately, who were seen as guardians of the public thrust. Responsible governance requires the coming together of all persons so charged in the interest of our nation. Denial of this approach cannot but result in further disastrous consequences, especially in the matter of crime fighting.”

In order to start a new engagement process on the issue of crime, certain basic terms must be agreed upon. Such terms must include measures to ensure that the police service is not brought into the realm of politics and used to advance narrow self-serving interest of any political organization. There must be a cessation of indirect public funding of criminal activities. There must be full protection of civil liberties. One cannot surrender one’s fundamental rights in order to gain another. The political process must be, and must be seen to be, free from the influence and involvement of criminal and violent elements. The population must not be hoodwinked into believing that legislation is a solution for crime or that if some of the legislation is passed, crime will decrease.

It must be recognized that it is the Government of the day that has the resources and constitutional responsibility to deal with the criminal elements that now hold a nation in the grip of terror.

Mr. Speaker, these are but some of the terms of a new engagement process. The call by the President is a sound one, and as the designated political leader of the United National Congress, I will support any initiative of the President, under his leadership, to bring the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition together to address the issue of crime.

Hon. Member: When you are ready.

Mr. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, our greatest tragedy, the safety of our people has made this nation to feel that it is now living on the edge. Not only in the field of crime, but also in how our institutions actually work and in our daily lives, whether we go to the hospitals or we travel on the roads, or in the schools, homes and in the communities.

There is no doubt that we have been blessed with good fortune. Over the last four years near to $115 billion have been available to this Government to change this nation. This amounts to almost two years of the total GDP of this country for
2002, and represents something in the order of $100,000 for every child, woman
and man in this country. By any standards, for a small country like ours, these are
huge, huge resources which provide us with a great opportunity.

As Minister of Finance, in any part of the world, our Minister of Finance
should be delighted to have had such a great financial opportunity. We got to this
point after many years of recovery which started in the 1980s and astute political
management during the 1990s.

2.15 p.m.

We can discuss those issues to get the facts whenever we require, but we have
been blessed with strong financial flows both externally and internally. There is
no doubt that the imperatives facing us in managing this windfall are pretty
straightforward. There are only two goals that must influence us in deciding our
approach to this problem—the development of sustainable wealth creation
sectors, in addition to the energy sector; and, secondly, linking the economic
fortunes of the energy sector to address the poverty problems in the country.

In my view, the Government did not have to spend four years dealing with a
2020 vision to agree that those are our two basic goals. Once we establish the
goals, the road path to get there can be easily defined. It is, Mr. Speaker, somewhat of
another tragedy that we have been spending the last four years talking about what
has been called a 2020 vision. It is almost as if the year 2020 will get on us and
there shall still be no documentation of that vision.

Today we are discussing another major public matter—the budget for 2006.
What are our expectations and what can we really look forward to? The real test
of effective economic management is whether it results in an improvement in the
quality of life of all our citizens. What do the people say?

In anticipation of today's budget debate, I did an unscientific sample of how
the common people respond to four basic questions. We spoke to the farmers in
Boundary Road, San Juan; vendors in Pasea Road Extension, St. Augustine; a
housewife in Southern Main Road, Couva; a businessman in Southern Main
Road, California and we asked four simple questions: How has your standard of
life been over the last five years—better, worse or the same? In 75 per cent of the
responses, the perception was, worse; in 25 per cent, it was better.

The second question: How do you feel about your safety now compared to
five years ago—scared, very scared or the same? I guess you know the answer.
Of the total, 50 per cent said very scared and 50 per cent said scared. How do you
feel about the transportation now compared to five years ago—better, worse or
same? Twenty-five per cent said the same and 75 per cent said less. Finally: How do you see the future of your children—better or worse? One hundred per cent saw the future of their children as worse.

I have no doubt that if we extrapolate into the thinking of the wider society, these responses would be near to accurate. It tells us that the “feel good” index in Trinidad and Tobago, as they call it, is deteriorating. I have no doubt, if you ask that question directly, that a large majority of our people would tell you that they no longer feel good. So the end result of economic management is on the quality of life of our people.

We have had challenges of the past. Between 1986 and 1993, we have had collapse and recovery in our economy, and it took us a long time and hard economic decisions to get our fundamentals right. Between 1993 and 2003, we saw the creation of a dynamic growth process in our land and a rapidly rising economy. Mr. Speaker, over the last year, 2004 and 2005, what we see is the emergence of a bubble economy in Trinidad and Tobago. I will give you the evidence of that as I proceed.

There are only two issues that influence how the cycle moves, Mr. Speaker. They are domestic economic policy and external energy flows. So we have the two objectives and we have the two issues that must be manoeuvred. [Interruption] I will tell you it did not require four years of discussion of 2020 to develop an effective plan for transforming this country. [Interruption]

So what is the result? What is the result of that great opportunity that a minister of finance would like to have? A quality of life, after spending $115 billion, is now falling behind, even against the yardstick of many of our Caribbean neighbours. The Bahamas, Cuba, Barbados, St. Kitts, Nevis are all ahead of us in the UNDP ranking of quality of life and these countries have not been endowed with the natural resources that we have. What is most worrisome is that in spite of a phenomenal growth in public revenues and huge investments in the energy sector, we continue to fall in the quality of life index. In other words, as our resources rise, the quality of life falls, according to the UNDP studies.

The only way we shall judge the effectiveness of the Government’s economic policy is on its impact on the quality of life. In this respect, yesterday, when I listened to the Minister of National Security talk about his solution to the crime problem, I was very amazed that the solutions he identified were the input into the
process, not the output. It is one of the conceptual problems that the Government has had—measure the input and hope for the best on the output.

Thirty per cent of our people live below the poverty line, according to the Human Development Report, 2005. This means that about 500,000 of our people survive on less than $13 a day according to that report. Is the end of poverty any nearer in this society after $115 billion, a gift that any Minister of Finance anywhere in the world would love to have?

Mr. Speaker, the evidence does not support that the end of poverty is any nearer. If we go into a detailed analysis of the measures that are promoted as if they are attacking poverty, we would see that, in the end, they would create a new generation of poverty. We will leave that until later.

The tax proposals that have been outlined in this budget have been put forward as if they were going to increase the real income of our nation and our people so that they would have more real money. The increase in personal income from $25,000 to $60,000 is purely illusionary, as this increase has been equally matched by the removal of other personal allowances such as mortgage allowance, tertiary education allowance, credit union deduction and child maintenance allowance. As a result, the tax burden faced by the middle class has remained virtually unchanged. Instead of a number of allowances adding up to $60,000, they have said that there is now going to be a personal allowance of $60,000 and the country believes that there are tax incentives and more disposable income.

Someone earning $11,000 per month would already have been able to claim $60,000 in tax allowance, comprising $25,000 in personal income allowance and about $35,000 in other personal allowances of which I spoke. Thus the increase from $25,000 to $60,000, coupled with the removal of the other tax allowances, is purely an illusion. In fact, the figures are there. The effective tax rate for this group will remain unchanged.

2.30 p.m.

I hope my friend from St. Ann’s East, who did not quite understand what I meant by populist economics, will now begin to understand what I was trying to get at—illusions.

Mr. Imbert: San Juan East?

Mr. W. Dookeran: St. Ann's East, yesterday in this Parliament. Will savings increase for tomorrow? That is another important question. The evidence will suggest that as there is a rise in spending, there will be a fall in savings. The budget has reduced the incentive to save:
• the elimination of the deduction of up to $18,000 for mortgage interest payment;
• the elimination of $10,000 for the first time homeowners who acquire a home on or after January 01, 2006; and
• the removal of the deduction of up to $10,000 in respect of shares purchased in a registered credit union.

The disturbing thing about this is that instead of the nation spending more in a time of plenty, we will also now be saving less. These are but examples and there are many others which support the view that the statement of the Minister of Finance lacks elementary economic logic.

In a time in which there is excessive expenditure on the part of the Government and on the part of the energy investment in this country, they will add to that expenditure by dealing with the tax system, so we end up with illusionary systems. In other words, the Government is addressing, not the feel good index but the feel rich index. People will feel rich, but they will not feel good.

Mr. Hinds: Big point, big point.
Mr. Valley: “All ah have is yuh name, not ah point.”
Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, the financial liquidity of a system is going to lead to the emergence of speculative capital, once more becoming a factor for the management of our economy, which reflects itself as it is already doing in higher house prices and later on in higher food prices and shortages.

What is the most startling fact of all this? I want to say it slowly, the Minister of Finance is confusing positive financial indices in the country as evidence of sound economic management. I would show that the economic fundamentals are in fact falling.

Mr. Speaker, many have commented on the budget over the last week or so and most commentators have been making this point in different ways. This, to me, is the greatest flaw in the economic logic of this budget. I repeat to the Minister of Finance that we must not confuse positive financial indices, reflected in reserves and surpluses, as if they are in fact supporting strong fundamentals. Economic fundamentals are in fact deteriorating. The last time this happened to
the economy, it took a change in government to restore hope in this land and it appears that after four years in office, that is the only hope to restore economic discipline in this land. [Interruption] Look at the facts. I am prepared to give you my notes to reply.

Mr. Valley: I do not want your notes, you have said nothing.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. Ramnath: Valley, you would have your time to talk.

Mr. W. Dookeran: I guess that is what goes for debate and that is why the people have lost faith in this Parliament. That is your—I guess each person is responsible for his own act.

The current windfall is approximately 12 per cent of the non-oil GDP. Some of these resources are placed in the Revenue Stabilization Fund, but the governance of that fund after four years remains an open question. The Member for St. Joseph spoke about this in this debate and he has always been speaking about it. The policies relating to transparency, accountability, rules and asset management strategy, after four years, remain untouched and it is also the view that the resources placed there are perhaps not sufficient.

There is rising permanent entitlements. Look at the budget details. Transfers and subsidies are weakening the structure of the budget, limiting the Government's flexibility to respond to negative shocks. The amount of inescapable entitlements is rising. There is a swing back in the pendulum, from the Government being a facilitator to a prime expenditure partner. By the early 1990s, the State began to change its earlier ideological stand, gradually withdrawing from the role of prime mover in the economy to that of facilitator and regulator. As a result, it speeded up the divestment process in the mid 1980s.

Mr. Valley: Mid 1980s?

Mr. W. Dookeran: In the mid 1990s, thank you. Is it not surprising, therefore, that today the Government has majority control in more state enterprises than it did in 1982, at the peak of gaining control over the commanding heights of the economy?

Mr. Valley: Nonsense!

Mr. W. Dookeran: In 2005, the Government has majority control in 37 state corporations and in 1982, that number was 35.

Mr. Ramnath: You do not even know the facts.
Mr. W. Dookeran: The utilities are in the red. Many state enterprises and public utilities continue to generate losses and require budgetary transfers and subsidies to cover their operating deficits: NP, $675 million; Tidco, $135 million; WASA, $903 million; T&TEC, $439 million. These are but the danger points in this expenditure programme that has been going on for the last four years. Over the past five years, agriculture has declined cumulatively by 30 per cent. Sugar has contracted an alarming 60 per cent. Agriculture now contributes less than 2 per cent of the total GDP. How can food security and food sovereignty be attained in such a situation? We still do not know why food prices are rising?

At the heart of the problem is the unsustainable use of energy wealth. This is manifested in the budget deficit that excludes the energy sector. It is the single most important indicator of the deterioration of the fundamentals. The figures in this are clear-cut.

Value Added Tax revenue is approximately 6 per cent of the non-energy GDP, down from more than 11 per cent a decade ago. We are on a slippery slope for an expansionary fiscal policy.

The Government will have to finance its non-oil deficit by drawing on its balances in the Consolidated Fund at the Central Bank, effectively pushing additional liquidity in the financial system. The Central Bank will be forced to sell a greater volume of open market bills to mop up the liquidity and ease the pressures in the foreign exchange, of which I shall speak a little later. Further sales of foreign exchange will be required to support the nominal exchange rates stability.

There are consequences to the economic mistakes that are being made by this Government in economic management and the Minister of Finance that eventually would translate itself in the quality of life of our people. Domestic economic policy is the source of our instability, in spite of the fact that we have external flows of such large numbers.

I will very quickly go through what these fundamentals are. Firstly, spending without production: the link between spending and production is now disconnected. A noted economist, Dr. Eric St. Cyr, said in an article published a few days ago:

“My criticism of the budget is that the individual measures, as popular, as attractive, as good as they may be in themselves, I do not see that they fit in moving the whole society, the whole economy, in a direction that we have assessed and articulated as a direction we should go. In other words, it lacks economic philosophy.”

[Mr. Valley makes groaning sounds]
Mr. Speaker, this groaning from the Member for Diego Martin Central is bothering me. If he wishes to have the floor to respond, I am prepared to give it to him.

Mr. Singh: It is a sign of intellectual constipation. Take heart, it is one of pain.

Mr. W. Dookeran: You will have your opportunity. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: One minute, hon. Member. Hon. Members, the leader of the party in opposition is making his first speech as such and it is only customary that you lend him your ear and not your voice. Please, let us listen to him.

Mr. W. Dookeran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ramnath: Rowley, you have a problem with that? You tried for leadership and failed.

Mr. W. Dookeran: I have already spoken about the savings issue. Another economist, Mr. Robert Mayers, said on the Stabilization and Heritage Fund, that we have money but it is not known how it would be managed as it has been four years since we have been promised this. This Government cannot be excused for not levelling with the population on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, let us go on to another fundamental: the competitiveness of the economy. The evidence is there. A report that was released one week ago by the World Economic Forum shows that this country has declined for the fourth consecutive year on its competitiveness index.

In 2002 this country ranked 37th; in 2003, 49th; in 2004, 51st and today we now stand at 60th.

2.45 p.m.

On the Business Competitive Index we have also been declining. In 2000, this country was ranked 44th; in 2003, 53rd; in 2004, 59th and, today, we stand at 65th out of a total of 117 countries. It is true that there has been an increase in the number of countries covered in the sample in the population. But what is also interesting is that the actual scores have also declined.

The Public Institutions Index also looks grim. In 2002 this country ranked 43rd; in 2003, 56th; in 2004, 64th and in 2005, 83rd.

Many developing countries in the world like Botswana, Mexico and Colombia have exceeded Trinidad and Tobago over the last four years. Mr. Speaker, you have to measure economic policy by its results. You cannot measure it by its input; it is the output. [ Interruption] One of the big problems of the Government
is that it announces the plans that it would do, but the impact of those plans on the challenge before us is not seen.

The same study goes on to argue that the obstacles of doing business in 2006 which was published a week ago on September 23, 2005—it is on the Internet—are:

1. crime and theft;
2. inefficient government bureaucracy;
3. poor work ethic in the national labour force;
4. inadequate supply of infrastructure; and
5. corruption.

Mr. Speaker, need I say more as to whether we are tackling the issues properly?

On external competitiveness the IDB Country Report says:

“In the context of the booming energy sector, competitiveness of the non-energy tradable sector has become an issue of concern.”

It goes further:

“…Trinidad and Tobago’s real effective exchange rate…indicators suggest that external competitiveness has deteriorated over time.”

Mr. Speaker, this is another indicator of the economic fundamentals. [Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: They upgraded us to a—what is he talking about?

Mr. Ramnath: Do you read? You have not built a yard of road in your life. [Laughter] Everything you built collapsed.

Mr. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, we know that it is inflation that is likely to eat away our income. Two years ago, I spoke on the issue of inflation and identified it as a risk ahead of us. I suggested at that time a public policy response to that risk but, as usual, the Minister of Finance groans rather than listens. [Desk thumping]

So it is no wonder after four years the only course available to this nation now is to change the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Singh: “Bakr call yuh an Uncle Tom did you respond?”

Mr. W. Dookeran: As a result of this tendency, Mr. Speaker—this is Mr. Frank Barsotti, another noted economist who said that if the economy was not overheating before it is certainly going to be overheated now. So in terms of
economic management, shortage will develop in the material sector, the labour sector and the goods sector, reflecting itself in less competitiveness.

Mr. Speaker, you see, things move in different parts. The inflationary approach ends up in shortages which end up in higher prices which end up in lower levels of living. But my good friend, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, was talking about his sport expenditure recently and, once again, he was talking about all the expenditure, as if we would just hope that expenditure would end up with these kinds of tsunami experiences we are having in Marabella. [Laughter]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Augustine 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. Rowley:** Division.

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** Mr. Speaker, thank you and also Members. Another noted economist on this issue has come out in support of the proposal that I made here two years ago on inflation and this is what he said: Mr. Jwala Rambarran—recently at a public forum.

**Hon. Members:** Who?

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** A citizen of this country; a professional of this country; and a person of high professional repute. [*Interruption*]

“…it is unlikely that, the CBTT, in the context of its current monetary arrangements, can truly tame the inflation beast. Most inflationary pressures are emanating from the structural side of the economy (food prices, cement prices etc.)…Raising the repo rate has no impact on aggregate supply and only serves to contribute to raising the overall level of interest rates. What is required is a full reform of the CBTT’s operating procedures through a move to inflation targeting.”

Mr. Speaker, in other words, the Central Bank should now consider seriously that merely dealing with the repo rate is not going to generate the response to deal with inflation, but they must now introduce the regime of inflation targeting. [Laughter]

Mr. Speaker, another frightening development is the issue of capital flight. Capital outflows have been on a dramatic increase. In 2002, capital outflows were $2.3 billion; in 2004, capital outflows were $4.7 billion; and in just eight months of this year, capital outflows totalled $4.9 billion.
Another disturbing indicator is the pervasiveness of money laundering. According to the World Economic Forum the ranking was 57 in 2002; 85 in 2003 and 61 in 2005. Much is at stake here. It does not only affect the notion of Trinidad and Tobago becoming the financial centre of the Caribbean, but it affects our reputation for the soundness of our banking system in our country. It seems instead of us being known as “a possible financial centre in the Caribbean” we may become better known as “the crime centre of the Caribbean”. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, that is the transformation that is taking place with the gift that the Minister of Finance has had of $115 billion up to the last four years that we have taken those lofty ideals of the past and now have simply accepted the basic needs of survival in this country. [Desk thumping] Any Minister of Finance anywhere in the world would feel totally embarrassed that this is where he has led this country by economic policies. There are other aspects that we can talk about, but in due course and in time and in the right forum we shall talk about them.

Mr. Speaker, a very important axis which deals with the issue of the link between offshore and onshore sectors is the proposal on taxation; proposal on local value added content. Petroleum taxation and employment is not working, but the index of that link is becoming weaker and weaker. The end result of the measures is whether it improves the link, but it is doing just the opposite. So I am going behind the headlines to the fundamental workings of the economy and identifying what has been the result of economic policy management.

Mr. Speaker, without a doubt the fundamentals are getting out of alignment. Where is the economic logic in the budget? Financial indices do not reflect sound economic management in Trinidad and Tobago. There are stresses on monetary policy. Interest rates are going to increase further and this country’s exchange rate is also going to change. Mr. Speaker, those are some of the implications and then we know what that does.

Why has this happened? As I said earlier, we have moved from the recovery process to the growth process and now we are seeing the emergency of a bubble economy. A bubble economy occurs when speculation produces more speculation. There is a lot of money flowing around that generates speculations that enter eventually into the real estate market as it has already done.

The recent experience of South Korea is a lesson for us. In a recent newspaper editorial by a leading newspaper in South Korea, the editorial called on the government to guard against the “bubble economy” that was emerging. I hope that some of our editorials would try to deal with issues of this nature. This is what the editorial said:
“We should not give too much weight to the good showing of the financial indices; it may be giving us a false sense of security.”

**Mr. Valley:** Do you understand?

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** Our country is experiencing rapid growth, but I must add temporary growth. Our low employment rates will force employers to pay higher wages that could lead to higher production costs, fuelling inflation.

Our bubble economy is being built on the forces of uncertainty, for whatever reasons there are; on excessive government expenditure without production; on the rise of speculative capital; and on the deteriorating link between the expenditure and the energy sector and its impact on the non-energy sector. Now, it may well be that the Government’s view that if the next election is being held in 2007 that is not their worry.

Projections by the International Monetary Fund in its report suggested that other than major international events which we cannot predict taking place, 2008 would be the point at which the decline would set in. When we on this side of the House take the responsibility to be in charge of the nation’s finances, we shall have to deal with that problem. 

**3.00 p.m.**

Will their bubble burst then and what will become of our nation's expectations in this period? Internationally, do we know the link between this new global economy in which international developments influence us here? *The Economist* in its article talked about “the worldwide rise in housing prices is the biggest bubble in history. Prepare for the economic pain when it pops”—A recent article in *The Economist.*

Going back to that period of nationalistic policy; that period of State dominated economic development; that period ignores the reality of the new relationship between our economy and the global economy. An economic bubble generates spending habits that cannot be sustained. Interest rate rise would become the order of the day. Exchange rate anxieties will now become a lever to manage, and they shall be the first manifestation of the fragility of the bubble economy that is emerging in Trinidad and Tobago.

There is evidence of this in other parts of the world. In the first half of 2003 the rapid growth in China has led many to proclaim the emergence of an economic bubble there. Chinese policy makers have taken steps to restrain the bubble. The
rapid emergence of the bubble economy reveals some unsettling realities about that economy. What it does is that instead of there being wealth creation, there would in fact be wealth destruction.

I come next to the issue of implementation; economic policy and then implementation. It is now well known that this is an area in which the Government has been lacking. Of the 100 projects that ought to be implemented in the 2005 budget statement, only 18 were completely done. A measure of the level of implementation. The response to that has been the use of executive agencies. I want to warn the Government that unless the structures for project management are really put into play, these executive agencies are likely to become conduits of massive overruns in cost; nepotism in the award of contracts; a loose cannon with unchecked authority to spend money and, in the final analysis, a vehicle for repeating the cycle of failure in development programming in the public sector.

We have reached a stage now, that the population is going behind the headlines. I looked closely throughout the newspapers and commentators of the last weeks to see where is the light. I could hardly find anyone pointing to the light. So if the Government believes that immediate public relations impact of emotionally appealing measures are working in their benefit, they are doing so at the expense of putting this country on a sustainable road path. If we have such a windfall and such a gain, the Minister of Finance should now be talking about the fruits of his policy after four years; not the plans for the future in the year 2020.

This Parliament, if it has relevance to this country, should be having an account of the results of the economic plan, reflected, as I said in the end, on the quality of life of all the people; reflected in the issues of equality of treatment of all our citizens; reflected in creating hope, but instead, two acres of land in Caroni (1975) Limited is but the sum total of the Government's agricultural policy in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

I do not understand which electorate will simply accept that within no context of infrastructural development; within no context of marketing; within no context of productivity and food security and rising prices—two acres of land and that is it.

Mr. Speaker, the budget statement although rich in virtue, is devoid of analysis and riddled with apparent contradictions. It is faulty in economic logic. The budget statement appeals to several, if not all the social interest groups and throws money in various directions, frequently without decent aim; raising the pennant of optimism, when reasoned argument is expected; and generally just
hope for the best. Regrettably, it would appear that the document read like a product of a cut and paste exercise, carried out by the editorial intern rushing to report on an assignment.

On the issue of implementation, we must not do what Sen. Enill did, and blame the permanent secretaries for non-delivery of promises made in last year’s budget. The Senator is quoted in the Trinidad Guardian at a Trinidad and Tobago Chamber meeting on September 30, 2005 saying:

"There is nothing wrong with the Public Service system as it is…if you are not interested in delivery."

He went beyond that, Mr. Speaker, he did not stop there. He went on to divorce his Government from the public service by stating that appalling statement. Even a more appalling statement than the one from the Member from Diego Martin Central, when he justified the coup attempt in 1990 by the policies of the then government. This time the Minister says: "No government should be blamed when their policies are not implemented."

I remember the Minister of Education saying something similar sometime ago. So the Government now is saying that they are not responsible for implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago; they are not responsible for the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago; they are not responsible. What are they responsible for? Why are they holding on to the office of Government when they are not responsible for managing this country? [Desk thumping]. Who is responsible? Is it not this Government now admitting that execution is not its fault? Who is then responsible?

Mr. Speaker, from what we have heard and what we have seen, it now appears that this Government is much better at creating excuses than creating performance. [Desk thumping]

**Mr. Ramnath:** Listen to the new leader, "all yuh" wanted to find out.

**Dr. Rowley:** That is why you are falling asleep.

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** Mr. Speaker, I have argued here today that domestic economic policy is the source of the problems of the society when we look at the economic agenda; there are other problems. There are problems as to how we manage the society. The political management of this society has led us in this state of affairs now that the President is calling everyday for somebody to take a leadership role, and others are doing that too. There is no political management of the society. The Prime Minister has said it before, that he views his role as leader
of the party and as chairman of his Cabinet—a bureaucratic response—and the two roles appear to be one. And more often than not, when he intervenes in the debates in this House, he intervenes on issues of procedure—never on issues of philosophy—unlike the Hon. Eric Williams, his predecessor, who spoke on philosophy from which he derived his bureaucratic response. \[Interuption\] You disagree?

So, Mr. Speaker, we cannot sit back in this nation anymore and accept these events aimed at influencing public opinion, but having no impact on managing the economy. I have tried to outline them in a way; I am suggesting what corrective steps must be taken in order to deal with a situation where the bubble is emerging and the fundamentals are beginning to recede. I recognize that external flows are going to be important to this country for a few years, not that we have created it, we are fortunate for it. So you would not see the results in the next year or two, or perhaps three. But what is important if we do a scrutiny of economic policy is to scrutinize the results that have happened so far and the projections of the results that would happen tomorrow.

The Minister of Finance in his capacity as Minister of Finance needs help. He needs a lot of help, for the analysis upon which his prescriptions are based is without real economic logic. Not only have we lost control of safety and security of the nation, but we would soon lose control of properly managing our economy.

On the macro-economic side, the evidence is there and it is not only my view, it is the view of many people who have spoken on the budget. On the implementing capacity, he is wrong. He is wrong on macro-economic side; he is wrong on implementing capacity side; he is wrong on providing confidence for a better future. What is the best test of a Minister of Finance performance, if after four years with those resources, the most important ingredient in our country that is missing today is the confidence of our people in the future of our lives? \[Desk thumping\]

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no better criteria on which we can introduce real accountability in our land. Not to be sidestepped with procurement policy, input policies, not to be sidestepped with the other issues that have always emerged here as debate, but to set the yardstick that confidence of our people in our future is the measurement by which we shall be happy. A Government economic policy has an important role to play in that. All over the world budget policies are seen that way; all over the world that link is being made. At the end of the budget
statement, regrettably, instead of people feeling more confident they felt less confident, regrettably, instead of viewing the proposals before us as if they would make us richer, they know that the troubles ahead are going to be enormous.

As I take on this new responsibility as Political Leader of the United National Congress, I am aware that obstacles ahead are going to be more and more, but like what I do in this Parliament I shall stand up to these challenges as I have never done before.

Thank you. [Desk thumping]

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):
Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. Member: Let good sense prevail.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, whilst I was on my way here this afternoon, a security officer at the finance building said to me of this budget that—he described it as, "it is comely to say that it is good". When it is good in circumstances where in this country we do not know how to say when something is good; we always know how to say when something is bad.

Mr. Speaker, as I rise to make my contribution, I wish to borrow that phrase and say: "it is comely to say that it is good" and to tell the Minister of Finance that this budget is good, it is in fact excellent. [Desk thumping] Mr. Speaker, that is why we are seeing from the other side, from the “so-called” designated political leader, as he describes himself, to the Leader of the Opposition—

Hon. Member: He is not going anywhere.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:—in waiting for—as he says a new role, but we know his new role is as Chairman Mao, who directs everything in the party and will tell the “so-called” political leader what to say, [Interruption] when to say it, how to say it [Interruption] and we are very aware that what we have seen, that is passing for a response on the other side, is in fact a knee-jerk reaction to something that is good. [Desk thumping] It is an embarrassing display of a party in decline [Interruption] and waiting, as the NAR has done, to expire.

Hon. Member: She does not know what the PNM is doing. [Crosstalk]

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, what we have seen from the last speaker, the Member for St Augustine, is what can be called a random collection of thoughts strung together, bereft of any intellectual capacity.
Hon. Members: Oh!

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:—any intellectual content, any relevance, using quotes from the IDB, the IMF and the World Bank that have no context to the reality. [Interruption] What we are seeing is somebody bereft of intellectual capacity, an intellectual fraud; somebody whom our children are glad to know that he did not stay at the University of the West Indies, because we would have had a set of puppets who do not understand the economic fundamentals, [Desk thumping] who do not and cannot string together [Interruption] a cogent thought without coming to this Parliament and on every occasion quoting from either documents that are no longer relevant, [Interruption] or quoting from situations that no longer exist.

Hon. Member: From geriatrics.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Quoting from retired economists, in circumstances where, Mr. Speaker, the economy in Trinidad and Tobago is clearly not something that he understands.

Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is someone who is obsessed with bubbles. [Laughter] But, we on this side would like to let him know that the bubble that he is in now, where he thinks that he is the leader of that party, will soon be burst by the puppet master—

Hon. Members: [Whistles]

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:—who will continue to dangle him. I need to interfere in their business, Mr. Speaker, [Interruption] because they are a group of people, who, if you look at them—[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Member: Why are you calling people intellectual fraud? [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Couva South!

Hon. Member: But you allowed this to go on in here!

Mr. Speaker: I am on my feet, please!

Hon. Member: Get out!

Hon. Member: Take your seat![Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon. Member: You are a loser.
Mr. Speaker: Order please! The Hansard reporter is having great difficulty hearing the contribution. I am appealing to all Members. All Members, please, let the Member make her contribution; you would have your opportunity to reply. Please continue. [Desk thumping]

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker; and if the one who has lost to Sadiq Baksh—

Hon. Member: You do not worry with that.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:—and to Griffith [Crosstalk] would remain silent, perhaps he would learn something.

Hon. Member: All right! [Desk thumping]

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, the reason I say that he is bereft of intellectual capacity—[Crosstalk]

Hon. Member: You lost to Hazel.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:—and is an intellectual fraud is because—let us do some simple mathematical calculations. There are two things that I want to point to, Mr. Speaker. One, we have reached the point of an unemployment rate of 8 per cent. Mr. Speaker, let us do simple mathematics, based on that unemployment rate and a population of approximately 1.2 million people, 600,000 people are employed. Approximately, 375,000 are in school—including university—and 200,000 people are over the age of 60 years.

Mr. Speaker, that gives you approximately 1.2 million people. There are approximately 50,000 persons who may not be employed and consequently it could never be, by the simplest logic that over 30 per cent of this population is living on an income of $13 per day.

Hon. Member: It is impossible.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Totally impossible! Mr. Speaker, in addition to that—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: US $13 or more.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:—the GDP of this country at this time.

Hon. Member: Per capita.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:—per capital sorry—is over US $9,000 per—

Hon. Member: It is in some people pocket.
Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, it could never be that over 30 per cent of this population [ Interruption ] is living under the poverty line. [ Interruption ] Five hundred thousand people are under the poverty line.

Hon. Member: Where are these people, where are they?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, and if 500,000 people were under the poverty line it is because £10 million is in a bank account in England; [ Desk thumping ] it is because over TT $50 million passed through a bank account and did not get to the people of Trinidad and Tobago; it is because a desalination plant was built under suspect circumstances; it is because an airport was built under suspect circumstances, and, Mr. Speaker, it is because Incogen took place under suspect circumstances.

So, Mr. Speaker, do not let the Member for St. Augustine come to us on this side and talk about macroeconomic fundamentals. [ Interruption ] If they feel I am just saying so without more, give me the opportunity to refer the Member for St. Augustine, in circumstances where he said that, “and I wish to quote”: That he would be able to point out that—the Member for St. Joseph and the Member for St. Augustine said that they would be able to point out that with less money, they were able to do so much more for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I am not quoting from the Government's document, I am quoting from the PricewaterhouseCoopers budget memorandum, and interestingly enough this year they failed to quote from this document. Normally, they like to quote from this document. Let me refer you to page 61 of this document, just to give you an idea of how they managed the economy. Mr. Speaker, 1986 total revenue $6,361.2 billion—

Hon. Member: Million dollars.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Million dollars, sorry.

Hon. Member: You cannot read.

Hon. Member: The PNM was in power.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: In 1986, $5,234.9 million of revenue. Expenditure was $6,614.6 million; that was 1986. In 1987 the revenue was $5,232.7 million; expenditure $6,480.7 million. In 1988 total revenue was $4,946.7 million; expenditure was $6,060.1 million.

Hon. Member: They were spending more than they earned.
Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: In 1989 revenue was $5,012.2 million; expenditure was $5,776.0 million. In 1990 revenue was $5,621.0 million; expenditure was $5,893.9 million. And in 1991 revenue was $6,752.1 million; expenditure was $6,805.3 million.

3.30 p.m.

On each occasion, Mr. Speaker, they earned a certain amount and spent more than they earned continuously, during his tenure when he claimed to be so understanding of the macroeconomic fundamentals. [Crosstalk] Each year they ran a deficit. [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: I think the hon. Member has raised a point of order.

Dr. Nanan: Standing Order 36(7).

Mr. Speaker: This is the Member's favourite Standing Order. [Laughter] What he is appealing to you to do is not to refer to another Member by "he" or "she". It is trivial.

Hon. Members: Ooh!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: What is the Standing Order?

Mr. Speaker: It is in the context.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: They continuously claim that they ran this economy so well, so I deliberately did not quote from the Government documents. With your permission, I will continue. That was under their administration.

Mr. Speaker, 1992, prudence; the PNM was in government; 1993, $6,743 million, expenditure $6,783 million; prudence, small deficit.

Mr. Manning: Within half per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, 1994, $7,564 million; expenditure, $7,571 million; 1995, $8,511 million; expenditure, $8,458 million. Return to madness: 1998, who was in government?

Hon. Members: "Dem!"

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Revenue, $9,658 million; expenditure, $10,399 million.

Mr. Imbert: Deficit again. [Crosstalk]

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, 2000, $13,036 million; expenditure, $12,217 million; 2001, $13,415 million; expenditure, $13,456 million. So when they come to us and talk about macroeconomic fundamentals and prudent management
of the economy, they do not know what they are talking about. They are strangers
to that situation. I repeat: I did not use the documents of the Government of
Trinidad and Tobago.

I take this opportunity to also talk about another issue. The Member for St.
Augustine talked about billions available to change the nation; that we have had
billions of dollars and have not worked in the interest of the people of Trinidad
and Tobago and that we have not done any implementation. Let me remind them.
I am looking at the Public Sector Investment Programme, 1999 to 2000, programmes
under social, cultural and community services: Continuation of the National Archives
headquarters; we are now in the process of building the National Archives
headquarters. They never did it. Establishment of a carnival institute; they never
did it. Establishment of a performing arts centre; they never did it. Commencement of
the training activities for museum workers, archivists and computer technology;
they never did it. Completion of designs for the enclosure of Queen's Hall; we are
now doing that. Completion of construction and equipping of 10 primary schools
in Trinidad—an area which certain people keep telling the public that they did a
host of primary schools—Beetham, Gran Couva—[Interuption]

**Mr. Ramnath:** You did nothing; absolutely nothing!

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:**—Malabar South, Maloney East, Santa Rosa, Aripo, San
Juan, Longdenville, Edinburgh, Fifth Company and one secondary school at Cunupia.
None were done by that administration.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You did not build anything, lady.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Speaker, commencement of construction of an
additional 10 primary schools: Caratal, Chaguas North, Princes Town, San Fernando,
Port of Spain, Couva South, Ste. Madeleine, Mile End, Iere Village, Sobo Village,
Guaico; none. Four primary schools in Tobago: Buccoo, Castara, Scarborough,
Ebenezer; none.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You are talking nonsense!

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Construction and outfitting of eight new early
childhood centres and renovation of seven centres across the country. None were
done, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You are an intellectual fraud.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Speaker, completion of construction works at
Vessigny; not done by them. [Crosstalk] Skills training facilities at Arima, Mayaro,
Roxborough; not done. I could go on, but it is imperative that we on this side set
the record straight. They continuously stand in this House, and even outside of the Parliament, and give incorrect and improper information. Just as the Member for St. Augustine stood today and said that he did a survey of four persons. In a population of almost 1.3 million people, he did a survey of four persons and that is what the people of Trinidad and Tobago feel. [Crosstalk] If they feel worse, it is because they are represented by those on the other side who do nothing for their own people, far less for the general population of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Ramnath: Mr. Kelvin Ramnath you have nothing to say.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Each one of them is an intellectual fraud; bankrupt and bereft of any sense. [Interruption] I have to repeat that: they are intellectually bankrupt, but not financially bankrupt. When they stand here and say that we have not examined the macroeconomic fundamentals needed to put this country on the road to developed country status, all of us on this side take issue with that. In circumstances where we have shown, not only by the way we have handled this economy, but, certainly, by the way we have ensured that the windfall we have received through increased oil prices has moved down to every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, we have shown a complete understanding of the macroeconomic fundamentals and an understanding of caring for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

I would like to take this opportunity, in my capacity as the Minister of Planning and Development, to talk a little about three issues, essentially, that keep surfacing: the issue of planning, in accordance with the Vision 2020 model; the issue of what has been called the inflationary pressures and the over-heating of the economy and the issue of performance.

In relation to the issue of Vision 2020, when the People's National Movement in 2000 articulated the Vision 2020 concept, we stated quite clearly that the objective was to achieve sustainable economic and social growth for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Despite all the cynicism expressed, we on this side will forge ahead with ensuring that Vision 2020 becomes a reality. [Desk thumping]

It is unfortunate that the Member for St. Joseph indicated that he had concerns about its implementation, in circumstances where he participated in some of the discussions on the Vision 2020 issue, as did the Member for St. Augustine. I do not know if he did it behind the back of the then political leader—well, he is still the political leader—and as a consequence, he was afraid to say that he participated, but he participated in the Vision 2020 discussions. I am very surprised he would say that today.
Unlike those on the other side, when we receive a document of that nature, we do not have to sanitize it in any way, as the Member for Couva North had to do when he received the Finbar Gangar report on energy. [Crosstalk]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** What about the commission of enquiry report?

**Mr. Ramnath:** Where is the Piarco Airport report? Where is the Biche report? [Crosstalk]

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Speaker, the issue is that we have received the report and in the meantime before presenting it to the Parliament—[Interruption]

**Mr. Ramnath:** The Prime Minister said it was being sanitized.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** The Vision 2020? In circumstances where we have to put the ministries in a position where they can implement the report, we have been working on that. We have been working on developing liaison offices within each ministry to ensure that the Ministry of Planning and Development has a group of persons to work with, to ensure implementation of each of the issues in the Vision 2020 report. Immediately after this debate, the Draft National Strategic Plan will be presented to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] [Crosstalk]

The undertaking was given very early in this administration's term that once that document was prepared, it would be presented to the Parliament in circumstances where we did not want any political interference while the preparation was taking place, because we wanted a document that came from the people of Trinidad and Tobago, led by a multi-sectoral group.

As articulated in the draft plan, Trinidad and Tobago's developed country status will be built around five development priorities:

1. Developing innovative people;
2. Nurturing a caring society; [Interruption]

**Mr. Ramnath:** CEPEP.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** I continue:

3. Governing effectively; [Interruption]

**Mr. Ramnath:** Crime.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** I continue:

4. Enabling competitive business; and
5. Investing in sound infrastructure and the environment.
Mr. Ramnath: State enterprises.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: With regard to developing innovative people, we see this as the major pillar of achieving the Vision 2020 success. The draft report in itself stresses the importance of developing a highly skilled, well-educated population that aspires to a culture of excellence; hence our decision to provide free tertiary education from January 01, 2006, and expand the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and take up every place in the University of the West Indies and the UTT at all campuses of UWI to ensure that our people benefit from a sound tertiary education. [Desk thumping] [Inaudible]

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it has been shown in several countries that have been able to accept the development paradigm that an educated labour force is an essential to developing any country. Therefore, human resource training and development are paramount and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the development of the country’s human resource as evidenced by the fact that public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure increased from 11.6 per cent in 1990 to 13.4 per cent in 2002 and that percentage has gone up to over 14.7 per cent in 2005.

Mr. Speaker, as we move in that direction, our objective is to ensure a continuous alignment between educational achievement and the skills that are required to move this country forward. Consequently, the types of programmes that are being put in place are not only for university education, but to ensure that at all levels of the society people are well trained for the jobs that will come on stream and for those that currently exist.

As a consequence of that, the main thrust of the entire education system encompasses modernizing the curricula at all levels, the achievement of universal early childhood care and education by 2010. In circumstances where the objective of the millennium development goals is the achievement of universal primary education, we have moved that benchmark one step further and gone to the achievement of universal early childhood education, pre-school education.

Mr. Speaker, we have recognized that the objective is the creation of wealth and promoting sustainable human development, and as I talk about the objective of creating wealth, I recall what the Member for St. Augustine said about the economy as we are setting it in place that it is only creating rich people but not happy people.
Well, I do not know how many unhappy rich people you know. Most rich people are happy people, so if we create rich people, Mr. Speaker, kudos to the People’s National Movement administration—[Desk thumping] because as we create rich people, we are also creating happy people because we are letting the wealth go down to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, we are in that overall situation of creating a well-educated population, establishing the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation, creating a national innovation system supported by a permanent national science centre, conducting foresighting and innovation mapping exercises.

In order to ensure that this Vision 2020 permeates the entire society, the public service must be in a position where it can do foresighting. It is a new area of development in circumstances where you develop people who are visionaries, who do not only go to the internet and find outdated principles on which to build their thinking, but persons who can look at a situation, look at a challenge and move to the next level, move to a situation where they can do critical thinking, where they can see challenges, not as obstacles, but as mechanisms for moving to the next level and that is what we are creating in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, as the Vision 2020 document has said, our objective is to create a nurturing and caring society. Consequently, where there are pockets of poverty, our emphasis would be placed on eradicating poverty and social marginalization, ensuring efficient social service delivery so that those 17 social service projects that we do have reach the masses of the people they need to reach.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard in his contribution, the Minister with responsibility for social development talk about the development of the social service grid, which would ensure that every area of Trinidad and Tobago is effectively covered by the type of social services that are needed to ensure proper and wholesome development.

Another development priority is effective Government, and this is seen as the strongest link to developing that high standard of living about which we talked. Government, consequently, will be required—and is in fact doing so—to focus on the strengthening of the capacity of public institutions, the enhancement of democratic systems, developing and implementing fair trading and competition laws, and improving—as we are doing in all circumstances—national security.

Mr. Speaker, another development priority is developing competitive business and this is built on a vision of an economy that is diversified through investments in agriculture, energy, financial services, tourism, finance, knowledge industries and entrepreneurship.
I am very interested in the fact that last year the Member for St. Augustine told us in this Parliament that we should not be dependent on the oil and gas industry, but this year he is saying that we must use the oil and gas industry to develop other competitive industries. That is exactly what we said last year.

Mr. Ramnath: That is donkey logic.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: You are calling his logic donkey logic? He is the one who said that, so if you want to call it donkey logic it is up to you. He is in complete agreement with what was said by the Minister of Finance last year, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance said last year that we will use the energy, the gas and oil wealth in order to move the country forward on four developmental pillars, and he has at last come around to understanding that that is what macroeconomic fundamentals are about. [Desk thumping] It is all about using the resources that one has, where there are strong resources in one area to propel growth in other areas and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, our objective also is to build a sound infrastructure and environment. In these circumstances, we are saying that the emphasis has been placed on a well-designed, continuously upgraded, and environmentally strong infrastructure and that is why you see the kind of inputs in the Ministry of Works and Transport, in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, and the kind of inputs we have placed in all those areas where the infrastructure needs to be strengthened.

Mr. Speaker, it is not just the infrastructure on the ground, but also the infrastructure that will improve the technology and the communication systems. So we are in the process of liberalizing the communication and technology systems.

In circumstances where, if truth be told, this should have taken place sometime ago, however, as is well known, the Member for Couva North in his usual way, interfered with the process of liberalization of the communication sector and a court had to tell the then Prime Minister to never get involved in trying to influence how the Telecommunications Authority would operate and how it would move contracts forward. I am sure you will remember that. In circumstances where the Member for Couva North was the first Prime Minister to be hauled before a court and accused of bias and interference in a public sector process and was found guilty of bias and interference. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Ramnath: What is the court’s ruling on Mr. Manning and the Maha Sabha?
Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, as we move this country forward, we are clear in where we have to go, and in accordance with the draft plan, we are targeting a gross national product per capita of US $37,000 by the year 2020. Currently, we are at the figure of US $10,680 and we are moving steadily in the direction of US $37,000 which is the norm for developed countries.

Our objective therefore, is to ensure that the GNP per capita grows by at least 9 per cent per annum by 2020. The historical data indicates that we are well on the way to achieving this, and we will have to sustain this kind of performance.

Mr. Speaker, I alluded a while ago to the achievement of the millennium development goals. In many instances, Trinidad and Tobago, as a society, has already achieved a number of the millennium development goals and as a consequence of this, we have set the bar even higher for Trinidad and Tobago. We were not asked to change the bar, but understanding where we want to take this country have determined with our United Nations Development partners that our objectives will set the bar at a higher level and consequently, we have already moved in the direction of reducing child mortality, we have already seen notable improvements in maternal health and in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, and in providing universal primary education.

Mr. Speaker, as a consequence of this movement, our objective, therefore, is not only to achieve the development goals earlier than anticipated—that is 2015—but also to institute a consistent system of measurement to ensure that the development goals are kept in the sight of the public and we can be held to account for their achievement.

In that regard, the Central Statistical Office of the Ministry of Planning and Development has developed a series of relevant social statistics to facilitate that monitoring process and those will become public in short order so that the public can work with the Government in monitoring the achievements.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I indicated that as we move to developed country status, we have understood the macroeconomic fundamentals and we recognize that there will be developmental challenges. We have seen a very myopic perspective in which there are persons who have talked about the Government moving in misguided policies; the Government not understanding the constraints of development. Let me say from the outset that we understand that there will be developmental challenges and our objective is to overcome these challenges and to ensure that we achieve developed country status. We will not be sidetracked.
One of the developmental objectives must be the objective of implementation. Ours has been a situation where we have been accused of lacking in implementation. I would like to indicate that despite that statement, the Public Sector Investment Programme and the statistics that have come out from ministries and other agencies, have indicated that the percentage of development has been, for this year, in the order of 94 per cent, in circumstances where, when we came to the Parliament to appropriate the development fund, we put before the Parliament as the Public Sector Investment Programme figure, a figure of $2.1 billion. When we came to the Parliament again during the mid-year, we increased that figure to just over $3 billion. There was a concern that we would not be able to utilize that funding. I repeat, and I am happy to indicate that the utilization of that development programme funding was in the order of 94 per cent, one of the highest on record of any government of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

May I indicate that during the tenure of the Member for St. Augustine who, by his own admission said for his five years as Minister of Planning he achieved nothing, the development programme hovered between 50 and 60 per cent. Even under the last administration there was no time that their development percentage crossed 80 per cent. Let me indicate that we have said in order to ensure, perhaps, what could be called, over-development; in order to ensure that we have the requisite capacity; in order to ensure that development takes place at a rapid rate; we have put in place 14 special purpose companies—14 state enterprises—to ensure that implementation is not a problem.

Those on the other side have said that those special purpose companies are an opportunity to get away from transparency; to move away from accountability and to foster corruption. I would like to ask them in circumstances where we have publicly set up 14 special purpose companies to do specific tasks, what was it when they used Tidco, the Tourism and Industrial Development Company, to pave roads—a billion dollar road-paving programme; a company that was not set up for that purpose? It is an issue that is now engaging the courts of Trinidad and Tobago. What was it when they used Nipdec to do the airport under very spurious circumstances? What was it when they used MTS to build schools?

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

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

Question put and agreed to.
Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: [Desk thumping] Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues and hon. Members for giving me this extended time.

What was it when they used Concacaf to build the stadia—not even anything related to the state—Concacaf and the now deputy political leader to build the stadia throughout Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Manning: That is the subject of investigation.

Mr. Partap: Everything is under investigation.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Everything is under investigation, including you in Biche.

What was it when they never came to a tender to purchase the rice mill? What was it where they built Desalcott without utilizing the proper procedures? So when they talk to us about process and procedure, we have said openly that we want to ensure that there is fast implementation. As a consequence of that, we are putting in place special purpose vehicles to ensure fast implementation. It is nothing clandestine. We have said that they are state enterprises. It is not the first time that a state enterprise is being set up. We have Petrotrin, NEC, NGC, all in existence already. So what are they talking to us about transparency and accountability?

As I talk about transparency and accountability, you know, it pains me to hear those on the other side talk about misuse of political power, of policies and misuse of the position of governance in circumstances where it is obvious that that has been the order of the day for those on the other side. I just want to bring one issue to the attention of the House. It is really just a reminder, in circumstances where the Member for Couva North spoke very liberally yesterday about the current Director of Public Prosecutions misusing his power, in circumstances, as the Attorney General said, where somebody has been murdered and there are and there continues to be concerns. It seems as though they want to put political pressure on the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in circumstances where they are accustomed to ignoring the Constitution and constitutional roles. In that vein, I just want to remind the Parliament of a circumstance where a similar situation was brought to bear on a fairly similar situation.

You would recall after the Dole Chadee gang went through the entire judicial process: Magistrates’ Court; High Court; the Appeal Court; the Privy Council; the International Committee on Human Rights, and even after they were convicted and condemned, a situation came to light involving one of those who was eventually hanged—Sankerali. A situation came to light where the Chief of Defence Staff went to the President of Trinidad and Tobago and indicated that
there may be some concerns with regard to that particular person; that that person may have been innocent and consequently the issue of a pardon should be brought to light. Those on the other side who now talk about transparency, accountability and a Director of Public Prosecutions who they say is not utilizing his office correctly, the President indicated that the then Chief of Defence Staff should go to the Attorney General, which was done. At that point, where the Mercy Committee could probably have been brought into the situation, this is what happened in accordance with their philosophy of transparency and accountability.

The Attorney General, the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Security, met in a cabal, as you will recall, and they decided the fate of Sankerali. They did not put it before the Mercy Committee; they did not do anything with that information, but the three of them, the Prime Minister, as he then was, the Minister of National Security, as he then was and the Attorney General, sat in a cabal and decided the fate of Sankerali.

So when they talk to us about transparency, accountability, about going to use the proper process, about not understanding the issues of governance, we have to stand here and remind them of the things that they did when the people of Trinidad and Tobago put their fate in their hands. That would never happen under a People’s National Movement administration, because in every instance ours is a situation where we ensure transparency in all that we do; accountability in all that we undertake.

Let me remind them that each of the 14 special purpose vehicles will be subject to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee of the Parliament which is chaired by a Member of the Opposition. In addition to that, they will also be audited and the audited accounts will be presented to the Parliament of Trinidad.

**Mr. Ramnath:** That committee is a waste of time.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Well, you all chair it, so that is probably why it is a waste of time. [Interuption] We understand the issues and there is no way that we would put the patrimony of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in jeopardy.

This is another issue that I would like to try to deal with as it relates to the economic fundamentals for Trinidad and Tobago, and that is the issue of the overheating of the economy. We continuously hear people say that the economy is being overheated. Let me indicate that this is one of the development challenges that we anticipate and we have the mechanism for dealing with this. As a matter of record, these are some of the challenges that were faced by other countries that are moving in the direction and have already achieved that status; countries like
Malaysia and Singapore where the objective was to rapidly move their country to developed country status; where their objectives were to maintain macroeconomic stability, sustaining high levels of economic growth, thereby increasing output; transforming the productive and economic base; rapid human resource development and building international competitiveness.

Because we recognize that the economy must be stable, as a Government our approach gives priority, therefore, to strong macroeconomic management and adherence to prudent fiscal policies.

4.15 p.m.

Let me take the opportunity to indicate what has been the fact. The Review of the Economy shows that in relation to one of the issues that was raised by the Member for St. Augustine relating to total public debt and debt service—the issue of public debt and debt service is one that will occupy any right thinking Minister of Finance. It is an issue that occupies the attention of our Minister of Finance. We have ensured that since we have come into Government debt servicing has increased and the public debt has been on a consistent decline, quite unlike what was taking place during their term in office.

The information that we have indicates that during their term in office debt to gross domestic product averaged around 50 per cent. Since we have taken office the movement has been a steady decline. When we took office the gross public sector debt was 58.3 per cent. This has since moved in each successive year to 52.7 per cent; 48 per cent and 40.7 per cent; a steady and consistent decline.

With regard to central debt the figures are 36.7 per cent; 31.9 per cent; 28.7 per cent and 23.8 per cent.

Contingent liability: the figures are 21.6 per cent; 20.8 per cent; 19.3 per cent and 16.9 per cent; a steady and consistent decline.

Mr. Ramnath: What about the murder rate?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: You do not talk about murder.

We have also been subjected to a situation where those on the other side and some economic commentators have said that because of the fact that people will have more disposable income, we are fuelling consumer spending, a situation of wild consumerism and one that does not lead to savings. We on this side certainly have more faith in the people of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that the money that does come into their hands, they will invest wisely. We understand that they will spend some; that is only natural. We have faith in the ordinary man to ensure that they will invest wisely and that they will save.
Let me indicate that contrary to what was being said on the other side about savings and deposits not improving under the current administration, I will quote from the *Review of the Economy*, Appendix 14, page 61:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period Ending</th>
<th>Savings Deposits ($ Billion)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>6.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A steady indication that is very clear that there has been a consistent increase in the level of savings in Trinidad and Tobago. This information comes from the commercial banks and the Unit Trust Company. Those who claim to understand the macroeconomic fundamentals make sweeping generalizations but the facts show something that is completely opposite.

We are sure that our objectives are understood by the people of Trinidad and Tobago; the people of Trinidad and Tobago have discounted what was said by those on the other side and that on the issue of moving this country to developed country status, we are moving in the right direction in circumstances where the information that has come from the Vision 2020 Committee indicates that we are moving in the right direction.

One area that has been of concern to us as a government is that of the development of Tobago in circumstances where Tobago has to a large extent lagged behind Trinidad in development. As a consequence of this, the Tobago House of Assembly in conjunction with several public servants moved to develop a comprehensive economic plan for Tobago. This plan used the issue of natural gas as a resource for economic growth and pointed out very clearly that there were capacity problems in Tobago. As a consequence of the acceptance of this report, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is moving steadily with the Tobago House of Assembly in ensuring that implementation is not a problem for Tobago. Our objective is to move not only Trinidad forward but also to ensure that Tobago catches up with Trinidad and Trinidad and Tobago move forward together so that development is holistic for both islands.
As a consequence of this, one of the issues that will be dealt with by the special purpose companies is specific to Tobago’s development. Consequently, there would be special projects developed in Tobago utilizing the special purpose companies and the issue of the re-development of the windward part of Tobago which had some destruction. Because of the hurricane the windward part of Tobago would be dealt with specifically.

Additionally, windward Tobago has always been seen as lagging behind Tobago West. There is a move to ensure that the Central Government and the Tobago House of Assembly work together to ensure the comprehensive development of Tobago. I thought that it was important to make that point in circumstances where there has been concern as to the capacity in Tobago and the ability to implement what is necessary for Tobago’s development.

As I close my contribution, there is one other area that I thought was necessary to pay some attention to; that is the issue of the development of a national physical development plan for Trinidad and Tobago. For several years there has been no comprehensive physical development plan for Trinidad and Tobago, in circumstances where there has been significant growth in urban and rural areas. It has become very obvious that we need a comprehensive national physical development plan. The Ministry of Planning and Development has moved assiduously to advertise for requests for proposals to have a national physical development plan for Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that we take account of the kind of development that will take us not only socially and economically to that Vision 2020, but also to a development standard that is world class and representative of development standards in more developed countries.

It is anticipated that this policy will take account of hillside development; areas that are considered environmentally sensitive and will ensure that development takes place in an orderly manner that can be accounted for in circumstances where we have limited land space. We do need to see a change in development standards for Trinidad and Tobago. We are moving to develop a national building code; a hillside policy and a general code of development that covers the country of Trinidad and Tobago.

I take this opportunity to indicate that Trinidad and Tobago is moving on a consistent path of development. Despite the naysayers, this budget has moved us to another level. We have said as a government that we are moving Trinidad and Tobago to developed country status. As we move, nobody must feel that their basic needs have not been attended to. This budget has in its entirety dealt with
essentially not only the basic needs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but also
corporate Trinidad and Tobago. We are moving rapidly to developed country
status and we are sure that we are on the path to achieving same.

Thank you. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker: It is one minute before tea. We can suspend the sitting. We
will resume at 5 o’clock.

4.29 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

5.00 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

Mr. Harry Partap (Nariva): Mr. Speaker, allow me to begin my contribution
this afternoon to this debate on a Bill entitled “An Act to provide for the Service
of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September,
2006” by first complimenting and congratulating the hon. Leader of the Opposition
and Member for Couva North for his reply to the budget statement delivered last
Wednesday.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition made an incisive analysis of the budget
statement and exposed the deceit and weakness of the fiscal measures outlined in
the 2005/2006 Budget. The Leader of the Opposition also appropriately pointed to
the lack of credibility of the Government to take the proposed measures to the
stage of implementation. The hon. Leader of the Opposition made out the case,
and successfully proved the point that you on that side lacked the credibility to
convert ideas into action.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition, indeed, provided the evidence which
confirmed that the Government had been unable to deal effectively—the Government
could not handle the crime situation in the country; the education in the country,
agriculture, public utilities, local government, social development, community
development and a wide range of governmental activities for which you are
responsible. The hon. Leader of the Opposition was able to go through and point
out the defects.

Indeed, the failure rate of the PNM government over the past year has been
astounding to the point of being preposterous. Mr. Speaker, we are not the only
ones saying so. The Trinidad Guardian of last Monday said, and I will just quote
three paragraphs from the Editorial at page 32. It says:

“…the Minister of Finance seems all too eager to repeat the mistakes of the
seventies by nurturing the growth of a population that comes to expect and finally
demand large handouts as their ‘share’ of the country's oil-rich patrimony.
…the 2006 budget is a vast and welcoming gift to the man in the street that offers little in the way of future driven thinking for that man’s sons or daughters.

In its enthusiasm to make lush, golden hay in a time of bright sunshine, far too little thought has been given to growing the entrepreneurial spirit of our people and that’s the resource that will drive the development in the future.”

The *Guardian* also carried out an online poll, the question was: Can government implement all the projects announced in the budget statement? That was on the same day, as I said, of the question on the online poll, and there was a resounding “No”. The people of this country are saying that the Government cannot and will not be able to implement the projects announced in the budget. They have drawn their conclusion on the experiences that they have encountered with this Government during the past year.

The Member for Arouca South, in her contribution this afternoon—she is not here now—spoke as a frustrated woman. It was as if she was taking out her frustration on the microphone before her. I thought some of the comments she made would have been better on an election platform or on Umbala’s show or something like that, not in a budget debate where you are dealing with serious issues.

In her entire contribution—she spoke for a little less than an hour and 15 minutes—she really said nothing that would give any hope to the people of this country. The Member for Arouca South offered no hope but she tried to throw the problem and the blame that she is facing in her Ministry and in the Government on the Opposition.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I thought it was unfortunate that she should descend to that level—

**Mr. Speaker:** The Member.

**Mr. H. Partap:** I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I thought it was unfortunate that the Member should have descended into the abyss when she referred to the political leader designate of the United National Congress as an intellectual fraud. She should have been a little more circumspect.

If there is any intellectual fraud, it is coming from that side. *[Desk thumping]* I say so because—[**Interruption**] No, I am speaking and I try to be as nice as possible when I am speaking. I do not hate the microphone in front of me, you know.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, address your comments to me, please.
Mr. H. Partap: Yes, I will speak to you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member read from a list of a number of schools that she said they had built. If we examine that list we will see all the schools that she spoke about were done by this side, when we were in government for the six years we were there. They have not built a single school in the three or four years they have been in office. They were supposed to build 43 pre-schools last year; the money was allocated and not a single one was built. If you are talking about intellectual fraud, that is intellectual fraud.

The intellectual fraud that the Member for Arouca South spoke about is in those advertisements you see on the newspapers day after day full-page coloured ads talking about things they are doing in the Ministry. Half or three quarters of these or maybe all of them is done for propaganda; that is another word for telling lies. They are trying to deceive the people of this country. They are running their ministries through the advertisements. I think they spent about $5 million already in advertisements. [Interruption] Yes, propaganda! You quite right! The ads are talking about things that they have not done.

The Member for San Fernando East, in one of his contributions during the course of this year, I think it was, outlined a number of things that they were doing and not even a post hole was put in the ground: doing this and that and nothing was done, but giving the impression that they are doing something. Four years and $100 billion and they have not even built a tombstone. It is sad; it is pathetic. If there is any intellectual fraud, Mr. Speaker, it is coming from those on that side. [Desk thumping] If there is any intellectual fraud it is those who are saying that the Biche High School cannot be opened because it will blow up and collapse. That is intellectual fraud.

There is a girl from Biche; her name is Cintra Ragoobar, she came fourth in the world in business studies. The PNM had nothing to do with that, so do not smile!

Mr. Hinds: It had anything to do with you.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Speaker, this girl had to go through the trauma of getting up at 2 o'clock in the morning to catch a maxi-taxi and travel to Sangre Grande. The road is bad and the Minister of Works has refused to fix it. There is a big high school in Biche that cannot be opened because of political spite.

Mr. Hinds: No.
Mr. H. Partap: She came fourth in the world in business studies. They are putting pressure on poor children; that is intellectual fraud! [Desk thumping] As I said, Mr. Speaker, they had nothing to do with that.

Mr. Hinds: What about you?

Mr. H. Partap: The Member for Arouca South—and she was warmly applauded by those on that side—commented on internal elections in the UNC. [Interruption] Yes, stay out of that “nah”! That is not your business! Do not interfere in that! We are a family! You must have a little quarrel off and on. Yes!

But we solve our problems. You see, we are united as a party. I make it quite clear.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I warn them, through you, that they must stay out of our party’s business because when it comes to fighting the PNM, we are one party. [Desk thumping] Every one of us will fight the PNM, we will close ranks and we will come after them and they know that and this is why they are attacking Members on this side, they are trying to demoralize Members on this side, but we have better sense than that. Do you know something? If you really believe that we are a divided family on this side, call the date, call election and we will see, according to the old Walter Anamuithodo, we will see what we will see.

Mr. Manning: I thank the Member for Nariva for giving way. I want to let him know any time a man puts a gun to my head he has to pull trigger. Just be so advised.

Mr. H. Partap: All right, Member for San Fernando East. You can take the date out of your back pockets if you want. The Member for Arouca South also spoke about the gang that was executed during the UNC’s term in office. The Member talked about Dole Chadee and his gang. All of them, including Sankarali, went through the courts, they went through the judicial process including the international court on human rights; all their appeals had been exhausted and then they were finally executed. But what about Glen Ashby? He was illegally, and unconstitutionally executed by the PNM Government. And he was executed while his appeal was being heard by the Privy Council so I do not know what the Member for Arouca South was talking about, but what I could tell her is that Glen Ashby’s blood is on the hands of the PNM.
Mr. Speaker, the Member for Arouca South said they wanted no political interference while the reports were being prepared. Yes, they did not want political interference while the report was being prepared, but they intend to do it after the report is submitted. Where is the Biche High School report? Where is the Piarco Airport report? Where is the Landate report? Where is the Vision 2020 report? It may be in their back pockets and we know what they are doing. They have those reports so that they can sanitize them and anything against any of the Members on their side they would remove it. So there is no political interference before, but it comes after. Bring the reports! Bring the Landate report and they would see if the Member for Diego Martin West has to be chastised by the courts, let it be done. Do not protect him. They said they are not protecting him. How come they are protecting him now?

As I went through this budget since it was presented last Wednesday and as I looked through documents that had been supporting the budget statement, I noticed that the budget statement completely ignored the workers of this country. There was nothing in it for them. Those same workers—they completely ignored the workers of this country. I thought that the Minister of Finance was going to tell us that he would be providing the substantial funding that is necessary to set up the infrastructure for implementing the Occupational Safety and Health document. I thought he was coming with that. I examined the Draft Estimates of Expenditure 2006 and it did not give a clear indication of what the Government would do in relation to OSHA. In fact, it told a story that you do not care to implement the OSHA legislation.

I noticed that in 2004, you had allocated $465,075 for OSHA infrastructure. In 2005 you allocated $1 million—nothing was done in 2004. In 2005, you increased the allocation; it went up to $1 million but a couple months later you revised that downwards and then the Ministry was left with $588,760. So you cut it by half. Where is the commitment to the OSHA structure? How are we to be sure that you are now not going to reduce the 2006 allocation which is $2 million? And that sounds reasonable but you are still almost $3 million short. Two million dollars they are offering. How could we be sure that they would not revise that downwards? That means they do not have any commitment to the workers of this country. They have none. And that is the point I am making.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no commitment to delivery by any of the ministries, including the Ministry of Labour. They are not concerned about performance. They have no credibility; none! Since 2002, the Occupational Safety and Health Division of the Ministry of Labour had 15 officers. They have to monitor now over 4,000 workplaces in Trinidad and Tobago; it might be more.
You want 15 officers to do that job and we passed the legislation in 2003? What are you waiting on? There is no change in the Occupational Safety and Health personnel since I left the Ministry four years ago. No change. There are two Industrial Safety Officers I, six Industrial Safety Officers II, four Factory Aides and two Network Operators. They cannot monitor OSHA with those 15 officers. We the UNC had left a structure at the Ministry of Labour which gives a breakdown of the people required to monitor OSHA. What are you doing? Why do you not implement the law so that workers could be protected?

If you have to establish another state enterprise to do it, by all means go ahead. We will support it yes, but only that one. But what we are hearing from the Minister of Labour—not the former Minister—he tried to do something there as well, but he could not reach very far because I believe every time he moved, the business community was upon him through very influential Members of the Cabinet and the present Minister is making all kinds of excuses why the legislation cannot be proclaimed. The most laughable one is that he had sent the legislation to a committee to review and to develop a structure. There is a structure at the Ministry—he does not have to re-invent the wheel. He does not have to do that, the structure is there. But as I told you, the most laughable one is that he has gone back in consultation again.

This OSHA legislation had been in consultation since 1975, over 30 years. And they dragged their feet—until we came into office—the National Alliance for Reconstruction tried. They had developed and pushed it forward but it remained in Parliament then it lapsed. When we came into office we re-started the process. We did all the consultation already. There are two big books in the Ministry that give the details about the consultation. We had joint select committees and so forth. Why are they putting it before another committee? That is a stalling process. They want to stall the legislation. They do not want to put it through, but when the UNC gets back into office that is the first piece of legislation it would put back on the list. That would be very shortly as soon as you call the election. [Interruption] That is in your back pocket so you would know.

Mr. Speaker, the OSHA legislation was assented to by the President since January 2004. It is now 21 months and they have not proclaimed it and they do not want to implement the law.

I want to tell you that the United States has their OSHA for many years, and this is a report coming from the newspaper dated September 23, 2005. It talks about OSHA, and I will read:
“BP PRODUCTS, North America, the owner of a Texas refinery where an explosion killed 15 people in March, received a record US $21 million fine yesterday, from the Occupational Safety and Health administration.

‘The Federal agency that oversees the workplace safety is also considering whether to refer some violations to the Justice Department for possible criminal prosecution,’ said John Miles, Jr, regional administrator for OSHA.”

Do you see what they are doing? Why can we not put the legislation in place? A couple weeks ago, four persons died in an explosion on the Trade Wind Sunrise.

Mr. Speaker, definitely there was negligence. It had to be negligence because the OSHA laws calls for people welding in an enclosed area to ensure that the area is free from all gases. They have to do the checks. It is in the law that was passed. I do not know the technical terms. I can tell you it must not have any residual gas. My distinguished colleague from Couva South—so that the law is there. If the law had been in operation where I am sure they would have thought differently, they would have done the checks—and four people died. Do you know what they all did? They allowed the tanker to go and now they are going to hold an investigation; after the tanker left our waters “and gone” they want to cite some kind of submarine law to indicate that. They are now going to have an investigation so they are bolting the stable when the horse has run away. They are trying to fool people, to make those bereaved relatives feel that they are doing something. You are not doing anything. The thing is for them to proclaim legislation and put it on the books and let the companies, the business places comply.

5.30 p.m.

The Minister, in the law, has the authority to do some waivers so that you can get your place ready. It is now 21 months. I want to remind you that 12 workers lost their lives already this year, that is 12 families, in addition to the 289 people who were murdered. They do not care about people.

I do not know why the PNM continues to punish workers. I am making an appeal this evening. I am asking the Prime Minister to take this in his hands and find out from the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development why he is holding back on sending the Act for proclamation. I am sure that he will give me some reason that is out of this world. He always has reasons.

I am very worried that we are not doing things correctly in this country and maybe that is the reason they are seeing so much trouble. I remember when the Member for Arouca South went into her office at the Ministry of Legal Affairs, she did all kinds of “simidemi” with candles and flowers to try to get away from
the spirits, but the spirits will come at you. The “Vengeance of Moco” will take you. Do what is right! Please do what is right. I wish, Mr. Speaker, I really wish, that the Government would take charge of office.

Mr. Speaker, some of my colleagues have already dealt with the question of the PNM's incompetence in dealing with crime in this country, and I think that they have done a very good job. They cannot control crime. It is rampant. It is even reaching into back doors, but I am not going to deal with that this evening.

I want to mention one bright spot in the police service. This has its genesis under the Basdeo Panday administration, so do not smile yet. I want to mention that during that period 1995 to 2001, we had developed the concept of the community police and it was there as part of the whole structure of the police service. This team, the community police, handled community problems, some of them sensitive, family-related disputes, particularly the abuse of children. This evening I want to say that, whatever is left of the community police, they are doing a good job when they are called upon to do so.

Some of these policemen who work in the Community Police Division, and even some of those who work at our police stations, have displayed the milk of human kindness when it comes to abused children. I thank them very much for that help. They have displayed warmth and concern and positive action in dealing with abused children.

I mention specifically the police at the Biche, Tableland and Barrackpore Police Stations. I do not have the names of those at Biche; I did not get them on time, but at Tableland, there is PC Kallogen, PC Ramlochan, PC Mohammed and WPC Boodoo. These police officers went out of their way, beyond the call of duty, to assist a 13-year-old child who was being abused at home. I think they did a good job.

Instead of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant going up and down trying to defend the indefensible in terms of the crimes in this country, I want him to call these police stations and commend the people, because they are doing a worthy job. They worked with the acting principal of one of our schools—I would not name the school or the area—and they were able to get that child into a home for abused children. The child is pretty comfortable now and they are pursuing the matter of the abuse through the courts, I believe.

I know they would not sweep things under the carpet. This is why I was reluctant to say it here because the Member for Laventille East/Morvant may have already called them and told them not to prosecute anybody, like they have been
doing in Tobago with the fishermen. There are still good policemen. I mention that this evening because I feel they did a very good job and may they continue to do that.

There is one thing I would like to advise the Minister in the Ministry of National Security. There is not one woman police constable in Tableland and Princes Town. There is one at Barrackpore, so that when an incident takes place in Tableland or its environs, that requires the attention of a police officer you have to go to Barrackpore to get a woman police. That is unacceptable. You do not have to get legislation to do that. You do not fix that with legislation. You fix it because the Commissioner must be able to get one.

Mrs. Job-Davis: How long ago was that?

Mr. H. Partap: About one week ago. What you do now is try to put a woman constable in every station. You have the money. Make the preparation for it, so that there will be a woman police constable to take care of matters concerning women, so that the male police constables would not be subjected to accusations of harassment of women.

Mr. Hinds: I would like the Member to take note that where it happens that there is not a woman police officer assigned to a particular station and when an aspect of police work requires a woman police officer to handle same, one is usually brought to that location from the nearest location. It will never be that a female will do the work a male should be doing in a particular case.

Mr. H. Partap: I accept your explanation, but it is a feeble attempt to defend what I said. Are you telling me that an incident takes place and you travel to Barrackpore, which is almost 24 miles from Tableland, through bad roads, to get a policewoman because the Minister of Works and Transport did not fix the road? No, you have to fix your problem. I do not want to hear your problem. I want you to solve the problems for the people. Do not tell me that they will travel from Tableland to Barrackpore, 24 miles return, through bad roads.

Do you know what happened that evening, Mr. Speaker? That evening, the principal of the school did not reach home until 10 o'clock because they had to go to Princes Town; then they had to look for a woman police somewhere; then they went as far as Moruga and back to Barrackpore. Some of the phones were not even working—no phone contact. Craziness in Trinidad and Tobago, an oil rich country! The cost of oil is $72 a barrel. They cannot manage the economy! They cannot manage the country! $34 billion! My great God! This is what is happening in this nation of ours.
As I speak about police stations, the Minister of National Security had told us that 14 police stations would be constructed. I have here the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme, 2006. This is what is happening. They have listed 14 police stations on page 65 of the estimates. I looked in the column to see how much money they have assigned: Arouca Police Station—not one cent; Toco—not a cent; Mayaro—not one cent; and they go down the line.

Let me call them. Belmont, no money; Tunapuna, no money assigned; Roxborough, Gasparillo, San Fernando, Carenage, St. Joseph, Manzanilla, Maracas; and if you tell me it is on the Infrastructure Development Fund, there should be a note here, but there is none. If you look at the infrastructure, you will see no mention of the police stations. Check it through and you will see; not even in the Infrastructure Fund. Who are they fooling? Why are they fooling the people?

Mr. Speaker, I see the Cumuto Police Station here. They put, for the Cumuto Police Station, under the estimate for 2006, $500,000. Can they build a police station for $500,000? Not even Emile Elias can do that. Why are they fooling the people of Cumuto?

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs in one of the reports, I think that it was the Review of the Economy, said that 100 community centres would be built. Today, I am making an appeal and I hope that the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs would take note that the people of Cumuto need their community centre. That community has been performing under Best Village since 1956 and winning the competitions all along. Those wicked people on that side—I hope that is acceptable—have not given them a community centre. These people have to use under peoples’ houses. Right now, they have been able to get an old building to use. They have been winning this competition year after year and have no community centre. [Interruption]

Minister in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs do not talk unless you have your paper in front of you. The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs when we were there, Mr. Manohar Ramsaran, had put it to be done with the assistance of the Self-Help Commission. You all wiped it away. Now you have gone there and the Minister of Local Government is shadowing Cumuto/Manzanilla. He wants to win it. So you all intend to steal the election there again, but let me tell you something: this time you are not getting a chance.
5.45 p.m.

Not this time! I will tell you why not this time. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources said he wants to reduce the food prices and he wants to make Nariva Swamp the breadbasket. They are doing some agricultural access roads now. They have put five in the constituency because I have made representation as the Member of Parliament for Nariva. Do you know how they did it? They have fixed Roop Trace in Guaico. It is looking nice but it is going up on lands belonging to the Minister's brother. They have fixed the road straight up there. I see the Member for St. Ann's West has bent his head because he knows what I am going to say next, but not yet, hold on for a while. They are doing one in Sin Verguenza. Do you know where that is going to? It is going to lands belonging to a man called Andre Monteil.

Mr. Ramnath: Andre Monteil.

Mr. H. Partap: Something is wrong with the Member for Diego Martin West, it seems like he is not talking to the Minister of Local Government and the Minister of Works and Transport. I feel they are not “pulling”. Do you know why? He has lands in Marper Farm Road but the road is bad. They have not fixed it.

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.

Mr. H. Partap: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is what they are doing. They have put the roads there on the list and fixing them and giving them to their families. The Member for St. Ann's East knows. He built a road leading to his girlfriend's house in Tamana. I have a list of people. I would give him a number of girlfriends in the other roads that need fixing. Is this what it has come to? Is that how the Government intends to distribute the wealth of the country? Everything I say here this evening could be substantiated. This is why I am telling; when you come in Cumuto/Manzanilla with your nonsense for the upcoming election, you will have a second thought. Nobody will take any money like what you did. You handed out money. You know what you did Roger. I do not have to tell people what you did.

Mr. Boynes: You have too many streetlights.
Mr. H. Partap: No, that is good representation, sonny boy. I am looking at the other roads. I did not have time to finish them, but we are looking to see who have lands there. Whose lands will benefit from these access roads? It is not the poor farmers.

Mr. Bereaux: I would start to talk about things.

Mr. H. Partap: You can do what you want. You will have time just now. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is spending some money in Nariva Swamp. I am sorry he is not here now. I have asked him to speak with the farmers. He has been speaking to the technocrats. They do not farm. The technocrats do not farm. They do not go outside there and they do not have to weed and plough. They do not farm. Talk to the people who are involved. [Interruption] Not yet, you will have your time.

Mr. Narine: My brother has no lands in Roop Trace. Why are you giving false information?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: He never said it was your brother.

Mr. H. Partap: I will go on. With respect to the Mainline and the Jagruma River, if you do not dredge that river there will be flooding again. The floods will come. The farmers down there do not want compensation. They took it because you are giving everybody. They lose out when you give them compensation. What would they do with $100 or $200 when they have lost acres of watermelon? They want to plant in peace. The Jagruma River, the Mainline River, if you do not dredge those rivers every time the rain falls it will back up and destroy the crops and when the sun comes out, it will dry the crops. Your irrigation is bad. Talk to the farmers. If you talk to the farmers and you do what they want, I will come here and say that you are doing a good job.

Mr. Ramnath: That is a man of the cloth you know.

Mr. H. Partap: I will say so, but right now you have done the roads well. You did a good job with the roads. Let the rains and the floods come and you will see what happens. You would see the big drains in those roads. Do the thing properly. You have to put a surface.

Mr. Narine: That is a three-year programme.

Mr. H. Partap: In three years’ time you would have to do it over again. That is the donkey logic with the PNM; they will put gravel on a road and the rains would fall and the floods will wash away the roads. It is a three-year programme. They would not seal it. Seal the thing “nah man”. Seal it now before the rains
come. Do not wait until the rains come. Speak to the farmers and they will tell you. They are very happy for it. Much work will be done. You cannot solve it, but at least you will make a dent with agriculture.

When you depend only on the technocrats—all the technocrats could do is to write reports. They will give you a report for every single thing. They could push the pen. We need that too, but what we need is consultation with the farmers. That is my point.

Mr. Speaker, this is for the Minister of Works and Transport. I was hoping that he would be here but I am not seeing him. The Ministry of Works and Transport gave out a small contract to one of their supporters up there; a PNM supporter, to repair a landslip at the 28 kilometre mark on the Cunapo Southern Main Road. They took approximately three or four months to do it and when they were completed the rains came and the entire thing slid down again. They took baskets and put them one on the other. They did not hook or secure the baskets and everything went down. Last week it was redone. I want to know if the contractor got new money to do that or whether there was a clause in the contract where he had to do it? If he had to do it, I am sure he is a pauper now. You are not monitoring the things.

The former Minister of Works and Transport monitored the things. I should not say so, but I have to say so. You have been monitoring the projects. There were several times he stopped them and made them do it over. We are not getting that again. The Minister is too busy. Of course, he could not build a wall, so maybe that is the reason. The Jarasingh landslip is a good project.

Under the Ministry of Local Government they built a bridge and it collapsed in the river. It was not completed and it collapsed. They built the bridge four feet above the roadway so they may have to build a step to go onto the bridge and another step to go to the next side. That is the kind of thing happening. The former Minister was in charge at the time and he gave me a cock and bull story about the road being four feet high. Well they have corrected it. [Interruption] This is in Biche. You want to know if I know the place. It is not Lasalle Road. [Laughter]

If you want to give the contracts out, there is nothing wrong with that but there should be a monitoring system so that people will do the job well. Right now in Brigand Hill a bridge collapsed there. The bridge is on the borderline between Mayaro and Sangre Grande. It is more on Sangre Grande than Rio Claro side of the river. I asked the Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation to fix the bridge and he said no, because half is on that side and half on this side so they cannot fix it.
I want him to fix his half and leave the next half. We made representation. The Minister of Local Government is not here but they have resolved the problem and I hope that by the end of this year, we will get the bridge.

There are several problems in the constituency. I do not want to say anything about the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment. I think she has done a good job. It is not her fault that the lines are now in Coalmine for more than six months, but there is no water. She has done a wonderful job. She listened to the people. We want it now in Caratal. Minister, do not wait until election time.

Mr. Boynes: You know it is coming in Caratal, stop it.

Mr. H. Partap: The Member for Toco/Manzanilla, every time I send a letter to any of the Ministers, because he is my neighbour, I usually send a copy to him so that is why he knows that. He is aware that I do what I have to do. The areas are Caratal, Sin Verguenza, Plum Road, Plum Mitan and do not forget Ecclesville. We have a lot of money. Instead of sending $2 million to the United States, that is TT $12 million, give us some down here so that we can use it.

I want to tell the Minister of Education that the SWAHA College on the Coalmine Road is not completed. It should have been completed and opened in September 2003. The date was extended to March 2004. It was further extended to September 2004 and it has been extended to September 2005. That was 2003 and this is 2005. It is now the beginning of October and the school is not ready. The parents are worried and the children are in inhospitable and inhumane conditions. They are accommodated at the SWAHA Temple. The principal and teachers are trying their best and they are doing whatever they can and everything that they could. I am asking the Prime Minister to inform the Minister of Education to please complete the SWAHA College.

6.00 p.m.

The former Minister of Works and Transport started the pavement leading to that school and in two years they did 100 feet. I think that is about 4.1 feet per month that they have been constructing. They are still on the project. I wish that they would hurry up with that project. The children have to dodge in and out of vehicles; they have to match up with vehicles. Please have that completed.

I understand that the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) is doing it. URP must get busy and do not wait another two years. Two years to do 100 feet! No man! That is craziness! A lot of craziness is happening.
Mr. Speaker, the final point I want to raise is that when the Prime Minister talked about the URP he said that in addition they would restructure the programme and re-introduce a comprehensive training element targeted at the development of construction skills and basic education.

I think while he ad-libbed he said that they would start to work at 6 o’clock and they would finish at 12 o’clock and then from 3 o’clock or 4 o’clock they would go for training, I want to tell him that cannot work. What he would have to do is let the people work for two or three complete days and then the next two or three days go for training. The logistics would not allow persons after they have finished work in the morning to go for training. What they have done is reverted to our ETP.

Mr. Imbert: We are also building houses there.

Mr. H. Partap: You could do what you want. People need houses. I am glad, but put persons from Cumuto/Manzanilla in them and do not put people from Laventille in these houses. When you all took over the former Minister scrapped the ETP programme and he brought back the same old URP. Now, you would not get persons in the URP to go out and take training unless you put something in place for them. They must be forced to do it. When I say “forced to do it” I do not mean to force them with a whip. They must be told how important it is for them to do the training.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to get rid of the ghost gangs—I understand there are 66 ghost gangs with 500 persons who are getting paid to do nothing. Ghost gangs cannot train. You cannot train ghost gangs. What you have to do is set up the system to stop the hemorrhaging of taxpayers’ money through the URP ghost gangs. We did it in 2001. [Desk thumping]

Let me tell you how we did it. Perhaps, I should not tell you but I should ask you to go and have a chat with the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government because he was the one who worked with us and set up the programme. First of all, you have to stop the cashing of URP cheques in groceries and stores. Stop that! Let them cash their cheques at the revenue offices or at banks.

The revenue office—you could ask the Central Bank and the former governor of the Central Bank is here. He assisted us in increasing the impost every two weeks in the various revenue offices so that they can go to the offices to cash their cheques. Eliminate that! That is how ghost gangs operate. They can go and cash your cheques.
Mr. Singh: At a discounted price.

Mr. H. Partap: Yes, at a discounted price. So the owner makes an extra and the ghost gang man—the community leader—gets it there. We had the experience and we changed it. It is only when you do that then you can account for all the workers who are working and who can take part in the programme.

Mr. Speaker, you also have to be firm that they must take the training. If they are going for half-day work—well, we said half-day work but it is really part work and part training. They cannot get the full pay unless they do the training and they cannot do one alone.

Mr. Speaker, I was at the ministry at the time and my good friend, the Member for Oropouche, was there as well, and I am going to tell you what happened. The community leaders came to me and said that our plan cannot work and these persons do not want training. I told them no. My mandate from the Prime Minister at the time was you must do training and you must do work.

After five or six months when it was implemented—they were doing all kinds of things in training like craft and so forth—a delegation of women from Laventille—behind the bridge—came to me. When they came into the office, I felt a little scared because I thought they were going to criticize the programme, but they did not. They said: “Minister, we are so grateful to you and to the Prime Minister, Mr. Panday, for putting this programme in. Today we can sew a shirt and we can sew a pants and a little dress for our children.”

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people there are crying out for skills, but they do not want to give them the skills. You see, if you give them the skills then they would make the decision of whether they would vote for you or they would not vote for you. I tell you, as night follows day, if you give them those skills they would never support you, because they would realize what you have been doing to them for all these years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am saying is that if you want to implement this training and work programme and to convert the URP into training and education then you have to get rid of the ghost gangs, and to get rid of the ghost gangs you have to be firm. You have to make sure that the cheques cannot be cashed anywhere. They must carry a picture-identification before they can get it cashed. If you do that then you are going to solve the problem.
I should not be giving you that advice at all. I should not be giving you that. There is no use in giving you that advice because you would not follow it. You cannot do it! You do not know how to do it! You cannot implement that because all you know about is to throw money after problems. Throwing money after problems does not solve problems. You have to set up the structure to solve these problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want you to call on me to stop, so with these few remarks, I want to thank you so much for allowing me to speak. [Laughter] [Desk thumping]

Mr. Franklin Khan (Ortoire/Mayaro): Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much. It is a distinguished honour for me to join this national budget debate for fiscal year 2005/2006. Before I begin my contribution, however, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and his team of three Ministers in the Ministry of Finance and the Minister of Planning and Development—sometimes people tend to forget the significant role that the Ministry of Planning and Development plays—and all the technocrats at the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Development for what in my opinion—today I speak in particular on behalf of the people of Ortoire/Mayaro—for what we think was an excellent budget that caters for the well-being of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that because the budget is founded on some key pillars that I think are solid and durable. First of all, it is founded on our long-term strategic vision and our mission as a country and as a political organization, to make Trinidad and Tobago a developed society on or before the year 2020. It is founded on prudent fiscal management which I will attempt to deal with very shortly; it is founded on the optimum use of our natural resources which are oil and gas, forming the basis for economic growth. I would take this opportunity in this debate to speak a little on oil and gas, because I never had that opportunity over the last two years. It is founded on our development of a modern social services sector. It is founded on our investment in human capital, through education and training and, finally, on a focused attempt to diversify our economy from oil and gas, both in terms of downstream to oil and gas per se, and in what some of the commentators called the most sustainable areas of economic activity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I compliment this budget for another reason and the reason is that there is a paradox about fiscal issues. The most difficult times we have in terms of our management are when we have major deficits and, conversely, when we have major surpluses. The most difficult time to make a budget is if our revenue cannot match our expenditure. We have to cut and fit; we have to borrow
and we have to cut public servants’ salaries and so forth. But equally difficult is when the economic pie, as it were, is getting larger and larger, and as a government you have to be prudent as to how you manage surpluses—cutting a very thin line between waste within the equitable distribution of wealth as it relates to a modern society. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I follow my notes, seeing that I am congratulating persons at this time, I have here that to be magnanimous, I would also take this opportunity to congratulate the Member of Parliament for St. Augustine on his elevation to Political Leader of the United National Congress. [Desk thumping]

As a chairman to a chairman, I would also take this opportunity, in absentia, to congratulate the Member for Couva North on his elevation or demotion—I do not know—to Chairman of the UNC.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just for the record, I want to say that my colleague, chairman to chairman—Couva North and Ortoire/Mayaro—there is one major difference between the PNM chairman and the UNC chairman.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: You had to resign.

Mr. F. Khan: I did not have to resign. I am not facing any court. Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I was enjoying the contribution of the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. I do not have any time to deal with any disciplinary matters. So would you please—go ahead. [Laughter]

Mr. F. Khan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to put on the record that in the PNM the political leader is the boss of the chairman but, conversely, in the UNC it seems as through the chairman is the boss of the political party. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this evening, I really want to take this opportunity to deal very briefly with four issues. Firstly, I really want to spend a couple of minutes on this whole aspect of the oil and gas economy—the bubble economy that the Member for St. Augustine talked about—and the whole issue of a windfall scenario in a situation where many persons in the Opposition and other commentators are interpreting what God has given us as a blessing and interpreting it as a curse. I am going to show how this administration is attempting to manage this God-given blessing that we have for the long term future of our children and our grandchildren.

Secondly, I want to spend some time on what I call “the politics of equity” in the context of the national budget. The mantra of the UNC has been discrimination.
There had not been an equitable distribution of the resources of this country and the opportunities of this country. It does not matter how we classify this society, I would show that this budget has something in it for everybody and that the PNM stands for social equity and social justice. [Desk thumping]

6.15 p.m.

If time permits, I want to say a few words on the special purposes state enterprises for delivery. I think it calls for more discussion in this budgetary debate. I think it is a well thought out policy as a temporary measure as we evolve our public sector more and more to focus on delivery.

Finally, I just want to share with the Members of this honourable House how much is happening in the constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro, as it relates to PNM delivery. Let me start with our oil and gas economy, and I want to start with 1978.

In 1978 I was a student at Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies—as they say in England, reading geology and here we say "doing a degree". It was around that time, 1978/1979 that Michael Manley, the then Prime Minister of Jamaica, said that the petroleum dollars flowed through Trinidad like a dose of salt. There was anger, and my friend from Barataria/San Juan was on campus with us at the time, or I should say I was with him at the time because he was there a year before me. Every Trinidadian student became angry at the statement, because we felt we were patriots; we loved our country. [Interruption] I mean in a different context, Ma'am.

We felt that the statement hurt and was unfair to us as Trinidadians. Personally, my anger was part of that, but deep down I felt there was some semblance of truth in what was being said. I felt that probably, as a country we did not have the institutional structure to handle surpluses, and that with time, if that chance ever came again, those of us who were at the University at the time should pull our ranks together and say: "If God smile on us twice we should never let it slip through our fingers"; and sustainability is really the fundamental principle and driver of this administration economic policy. [Desk thumping]

Today I am happy that my good campus friend, the Member for Barataria/San Juan, is part of the team to bring this sustainability. No wonder why he starts to drift away from the organization that he was aligned with from the beginning and, with time, who knows my brother, you would find your rightful seat on whichever side you choose.

Let me spend a few minutes on oil and gas, and why as it were, we have been second time lucky. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago has had a long
history of petroleum exploration and production. Commercial production in this country started around 1903 with the production of the first Rust well in Guayaguayare which happens to be in the constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro. The technology of the time allowed the exploration for hydro-carbon reserves, by what we call surface geological mapping.

Geologists’ pioneered by Dr. Kugler who is considered the father of Trinidadian geology, went out in the field with hammers and augers and with a battalion of crew men cutting through the jungles of South Trinidad and mapping the rock formation by age and by fauna, and putting that on maps, and mapping out geological structure. Where geological structures were found, meaning anti-clines and fault traps, wells were drilled. Over the first half of the 20th Century, 1903 to the 1950s, significant quantities of oil were found firstly in Guayaguayare and, more significantly, thereafter, in Palo Seco, Fyzabad, Forest Reserve, Point Fortin, Parry Lands, Guapo, Vessigny and areas of the deep South.

Over that period we were still a British Colony and those of you who studied the history of World War II will appreciate that the British fleet was converted from coal to oil, largely because there was oil in the Colony of Trinidad to fuel the Royal Navy during the time of World War II. We continued to discover oil in Soldado with the discovery of, what we call, two-dimensional seismic. We started to run seismic offshore in the Gulf of Paria, just off Point Fortin and in the late 1960s we discovered significant oil off Point Fortin, what is called the Soldado oil.

Production peaked in the late 1950s, early 1960s, and then these oil fields started to die. Then came what is called the major oil boom of Trinidad. As a young boy growing up on the beach in Mayaro in the early 1960s, we always saw these little tar balls. When you bathe in the sea and you come out, you see a lot of tar on your feet. We always wondered where this tar was coming from, not knowing that there were oil seeps offshore, and that was indicative of major hydro-carbon deposits in the sub surface off the East Coast of Trinidad. Pan American Oil at the time was exploring for oil, and just to understand how this is a business where you have to persevere, Pan American became Amoco, and Amoco drilled 14 dry holes. Every other company in the world would have walked away. They drilled 14 dry holes before they drilled a Well called Offshore Point Radix 4 (OPR) and where the Teak field was discovered.

By 1974, when coming out of the black power revolution, where the country was devoid of resources and the people in the urban centres of Port of Spain were agitating for the then Williams administration, saying “we want more”.

Mr. Singh: And Williams decided to go.

Mr. F. Khan: God blessed this country through the oil fields of the East coast of Trinidad and Tobago. [Interruption] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just need your protection, please. Thank you, Sir. By 1974 Amoco bought its oil fields and production, and by 1977, Trinidad oil production peaked off the East coast at 147,000 per day and overall in Trinidad of 240,000 barrels per day, the last month—December 1977 going into 1978.

Concurrent with that, we saw the energy crisis where oil moved from $7 a barrel and within a couple of years to as high as $34 a barrel in 1978/1979. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what was the oil boom? The oil boom was three things. One, an astronomical increase in the price of crude based on Arab crisis in the Middle East. Trinidad and Tobago, concurrent to ride on that wave of high petroleum costs, our own production figures peaked simultaneously with the peak of petroleum prices—high production, high price, the consequence of that is high revenue.

The third component of the equation, and what most people forget, is the taxation regime that the then Williams administration implemented at the time, where the windfall profits were creamed out, and Amoco was paying at the time as much as 80 cents on the dollar in taxes, still making a profit mind you. That is what certain people fail to understand about a windfall profit scenario. In a scenario of windfall profits; windfall by definition means that you did not do anything as a conscious business decision to make the additional profit, and by definition, if that is a wasting asset or a mineral reserve, the State has a right to benefit from most of that and not the company. That is the fundamental principle of petroleum and resource based taxation.

What happened is, we benefited; schools were built, all of us of that generation were educated during that era, but it did not last forever. Successive administration from Chambers, Robinson, into the first Manning administration had to deal with lower energy prices. At that point in time, certain things were happening and Amoco continued to look for more oil—as their production was declining they kept exploring, searching for oil. They found no oil, but they continued to find natural gas.

At the point in time, natural gas was considered a waste by-product in the production of crude petroleum. Those were the days when you fly over the Galeota area you would see major flares and stacks just burning associated gas from the oil production, so much so, that all the major gas fields that have been
discovered off the East coast were never explored as gas prospects. In the search for oil, gas was found. Even the major Cassia field and the Immortelle field, they were all found as a consequence of the oil exploration.

I think it is only in the late 1980s that Amoco, at the time, actually started to explore for gas. The reason for that was the whole concept of the time of the monetization of your gas reserves. The problem with gas is that you cannot transport it. It is not a liquid that you can put into tankers and send to refine. That was the basis of the whole conceptualization of going downstream; of the building of Point Lisas; of moving into methanol, urea, ammonia and, subsequently, LNG. You can see the evolution of the energy policy of the administration, and how today when we say, we are going further downstream, that we are no longer accepting projects that would stay at primary products of urea, methanol and ammonia, and you had to go to UAN and melamine and further value add downstream. Today, when we build LNG plants and we say that henceforth we would go down the value chain and invest, not only into equity upstream, and in the plant itself, but into shipping, into regasification and on into the market.

Ultimately, as the Prime Minister said, as we generate surpluses, we have to reinvest, not only in the energy sector but in other instruments of investments. He did in fact make the point that today, Kuwait and also Saudi Arabia, I think it was about three years ago, for the first time were receiving more revenue from their investments abroad and other instruments of investments, than they were actually receiving from revenue generated from oil and gas as a primary product within the industry. [Desk thumping] That is the trend that this administration will take.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I make this point to say that it hurts me as a person who came from the petroleum sector and a person who has been both at the technical and financial components of the business, and in the equity components of the business, that certain commentators try to paint this energy sector and the energy economy as something bad. It is not anything bad. We have to just manage it, we must know what its longevity is and we must work to transform the economy, as the Opposition and other people rightfully say, into sustainable businesses.

How do you define a sustainable business? The world is changing so quickly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we have gas reserves for 20 years, we could be sustainable for 20 years. If you had gone into a business to make VCRs you may have felt that was sustainable, and today nobody wants VCRs. So, even in the business of technology you have to be careful of what is sustainable and what is not. Everybody would agree, the only thing sustainable is human; human intellect; human innovation and the whole process of education. [Desk thumping] Again, we tie that into the context of our tertiary education plan.
I have spent the last few minutes or so to indicate that this administration has a very focused view on how we are managing the economy and how we are managing the energy sector and the energy investment. A lot of people say bad things and critical things about Prof. Julian, but I want to go on record, having been a member of the standing committee on energy and being party to a lot of the energy issues in the country, that the gentleman who is now a Trinity Cross holder has done yeoman service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] So Members of Parliament for St. Augustine and St. Joseph, in particular, there is nothing wrong in an oil and gas economy.

6.30 p.m.

Let me take this opportunity to rebut some of the statements, in particular, the Member for St. Augustine. The Member for St. Augustine made this point in his last year budget statement indicating that if we take out the energy sector the Government would run a major deficit in terms of the non-oil sector. So what? We have a strong point and we are trying, with time, to diversify the economy, but there is no way the non-oil sector would reflect the power of the energy sector. If our expenditure regime has to match revenue and the revenue is large from energy, you must get a deficit. When you pull back—it is like going to the Barbadian economy and say they are running a big deficit if you take out tourism, or you go to Jamaica and say they are running a big deficit if you take out bauxite. It is a non-argument.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Miss Seukeran: They only do it when they are in a crisis.

Mr. F. Khan: The point is, and this is a valid point—do not get carried away by the strength of oil and gas; you must continue to work on diversification and manufacturing. If you look at what is happening, eTecK, that is a point for a different debate, I cannot talk on everything today. The point is that we think we are doing it right.

Mr. Speaker, I like the Member for St. Augustine, so I do not want to be too harsh on him this evening. But, I must comment as a scientist and as a person who has been involved in the petroleum exploration business, my forte is with management and probability theory, stochastic modelling and that type of thing. How a university professor could get up in parliamentary debate and say he sampled four people—

Miss Seukeran: He is now a politician.
Mr. F. Khan:—read it out. He did in fact preface his statement by saying: “I know this is not a scientific sample.” If you sample 1,000 people, it could still not be scientific. Scientific has its probabilistic sampling theory. If you sample unscientifically and you take 1,000, I could still accept that a little, but you are not taking a scientific sample. You sampled four persons and here are the areas: California and Couva, a few areas which are really the opposition areas. Then he read out the four questions that were asked and said that 75 per cent of the people said "X" and "Y" and said: “I am quite certain that this reflects the national consensus of opinion in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Member for St. Augustine, if one of your students did that, they would have to fail, okay. I know that was mentioned by the Member for Arouca South, but I just had to say it because I felt it was so important.

The third issue which confused me and I seek direction from him, is that the Member for St. Augustine indicated that there are positive economic indicators in the economy today, but then went on to say: Do not let those positive economic indicators fool you, that there is good economic management. But how, by definition, does the positive indicators come about? To me that is inconsistent. If the economic indicators are positive, something good is happening about fiscal management and economic management. It follows, otherwise you attribute every positive aspect of the economic well-being of Trinidad to serendipity and somebody has to be grossly foolish or ignorant to see a sophisticated economy as this and attribute all of its successes to serendipity.

It has to have a significant component of good fiscal and economic management and this is what we attest to here as the People's National Movement. [Desk thumping]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: It is a good thing you like the Member for St. Augustine.

Mr. F. Khan: “I would have mash him up”. Finally, Mr. Speaker, and Member for St. Augustine I would leave you after this point. You indicated that the $60,000 personal allowance makes no difference in the context of there were other allowances which we took away. You were right to the point that if a particular worker could have had claims for all those allowances, that he had a mortgage, he had children, he had credit union shares, he could have had cumulative allowances equivalent to $60,000. But what about the thousands of people, who for whatever reasons have no mortgage? Are they not entitled to disposable income also? This is a level playing field, each citizen has the right to his or her disposable income to spend as he or she sees fit. That leads us to the whole issue, and I would not get
into that this evening, as to whether it would cause inflation, whether it would be the consumer spending or whether they would put it into investment and what have you.

Minister Enill on a Sunday’s talk show indicated that it is a citizen's right to spend his or her money as he or she sees fit. We could try to educate them. I made a statement sometime last year that if you have $300 of your disposable income, do not go and buy—I made a mistake and called the restaurant name—and spend it on consumerables. The president of the chamber wrote me a letter and the Manufacturers Association wrote me a letter; all of them chastising me at the time for telling the little poor black man in Trinidad that if disposable income comes to him to be careful how he spends it.

This is what we are saying today without any semblance of apology, I say that in parenthesis, I mean not black, black, I meant in an umbrella situation. [Crosstalk] We as an administration have put disposable income into the hands of the ordinary citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, [Desk thumping] and we urge you to be prudent and invest it wisely. We want to see Unit Trust selling more units and Chaconia Fund and Growth and Income Fund. We want to see greater levels of savings, we want to see greater instruments of investment as we try to lift our people into some level of sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, at this point let me say that a lot has been said about the distribution and the redistribution of wealth. I am no economist, I might have a layman’s view of some of these issues, but the fact of the matter is that the economic system that wanted to create the ultimate equity in the world was communism. The communist manifesto says that we will have collective ownership and everybody must have an equal share of the national pie. We all know what happened to that. Capitalism has proven itself as the best method of wealth creation. [Interruption]

Let me finish, but one of the flaws of capitalism—if I should say so myself—is capitalism creates wealth for its own sake. Capitalist theory teaches you how to create wealth but does not tell you how to use wealth. You reach a stage where you create wealth for its own end. What does Bill Gates do with his $34 billion? It is said that if there were a US. $1,000 bill and Bill Gates is walking past the $1,000, he is worth so much that it would be unproductive for him to bend down and take it up. [Laughter] That is the value of the man. He builds a 26-bedroom house somewhere in the Midwest and he puts so much money to cancer research.
Mr. Speaker, the point is that there has to be state intervention in the redistribution of the resources of any state. We do not have to go totally left, but the whole concept of capitalism creating wealth and the Government making strategic intervention in the distribution of wealth, is what is the fundamental principle of this administration. So when we make new entrepreneurs in CEPEP; when we say we make small contractors; when we say that contracts of less than $1 million have to go to a certain cadre of businessmen; when we took people who could not compete and said we would build the embryo of a business for you, guarantee you some work for a specified period of time, give equity to your workers, we started to sow the seed of a wealth redistribution policy that is unique to this PNM administration. We make no apologies for it.

Dr. F. Khan: I think it is a very good idea, but what was lacking is equal opportunity for everybody above the law. That is all.

Mr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, we have gone through that point in many debates. We have claimed that when the programme came out you all told your supporters do not apply. But, the Prime Minister has given the assurance that the next round of CEPEP and that type of model will be more equitable and it will have a greater geographic spread.

Hon. Member: That is what you all say.

Mr. F. Khan: It will happen this year.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, as I am on the rebuttal mode and I am speaking about communism and capitalism, I would not leave the Member for St. Joseph unscathed. The Member for St. Joseph, in trying to justify what happens with the surplus revenue—and I know we have legislation to come to deal with the Revenue Stabilization Fund and the Heritage Fund. But in trying to justify that revenue generated on the balance sheet of state enterprises as companies and the investment flowing out of that should come for parliamentary approval—

If NGC has to do an investment into some equity in an LNG tanker that is being funded from NGC’s balance sheet; or Petrotrin wants to make a joint venture investment with a company in Venezuela, those are investment decisions. It is not Consolidated Fund per se but it is coming out of the balance sheet of private companies; companies registered under the Companies Act.

Hon. Member: Dividend mileage.
Mr. F. Khan: There is a dividend policy in the Ministry of Finance, but the fact of the matter is that you are preaching communism by saying that an investment decision of the State of that nature, even though it is run through a state entity, must come for parliamentary approval. We will reach nowhere with that. [Interuption]

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on. [Crosstalk] Let me just move on to another area I want to touch on briefly, which I call the politics of equity. Since I entered this political arena, the mantra of the UNC has been there is discrimination in the society. Sometimes, depending on who the speaker is—my friend from Fyzabad will tell you rank and is ethnic discrimination; some of them couch it a little more palatable and say it is political discrimination; then there is the issue of geographic discrimination vis-à-vis rural, urban and what have you.

Mr. Speaker, over the years I did in fact hold a view that—probably being a country boy myself and growing up in Mayaro, I have always felt that enough has not been done by all the administrations of the past in terms of rural development.

Mrs. Seukeran: And San Fernando.

Mr. F. Khan: Even San Fernando gets much more than Mayaro. But, Mr. Speaker, the issue is that when we start to shred the budget into its components, over the last three years, you can never fault this administration by saying that we have been biased to any section, sector or class in this country. [Desk thumping] Mr. Speaker, in particular, when I look at the highlights of this budget, I ask the question, free tertiary education, does it say that the people in POS and the East-West Corridor will get it better than the people of Caroni, Mayaro, Point Fortin, Cedros, or Icacos?

All those who are willing to burn the midnight oil to study hard in school and all those who matriculate for entry into tertiary institutions that are supported by the State will be paid their full tuition. There is absolutely no discrimination. [Desk thumping]

6.45 p.m.

Mr. G. Singh: I thank the Minister for giving way. Conceptually, you are right, with respect to higher education. What about the infrastructure for the people living in South Trinidad who have to come all the way to the university, that kind of support; lack of plant and equipment to support the accommodation and so on? There is a certain approach. [Interuption] Let me complete my point. Conceptually it might appear to be pure, in that sense, but it is not so in practical reality.
Mrs. Robinson-Regis: How are they coming now?

Mr. F. Khan: You must travel. The density of tertiary institutions is always less than secondary. It is like a pyramid coming up. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to get distracted. Free tertiary education, the politics of equity. Lower taxes for all. [Desk thumping] People earning $5,000 per month and less will be paying zero tax. People with incomes above that will have $60,000 personal allowance and then the marginal taxation rate has been decreased. The businessmen as well have benefited; corporation tax has been reduced by 5 per cent.

Even in our taxation policy, we have been equitable. Tax policies of the past tended to be a little more draconian to the higher income earner. I remember joining the petroleum industry after leaving university. My salary for a young man then was pretty good, but I used to pay 65 per cent tax. I could not even afford to buy a car; that was in 1980/1981, because of a draconian tax regime that went after people who had a higher level of income and a myriad of other deductions and allowances that you did not qualify for. Today, we have an even hand with our tax policy; as I said, the politics of equity.

Removal of government tax on food items—one of the good things about life is that we all have to eat three meals a day. In other words, even if you are rich, you cannot eat five meals a day. In fact, if you eat five meals per day you might get sick. Food is ubiquitous to all and today, even in our food policy, there is equity. [Desk thumping] [Crosstalk]

The Laventille Development Programme: The Member of Parliament for Laventille West has indicated that for the people of Laventille there is the feeling that they have supported the PNM for 40 years and, probably, they have not seen the type of development they wanted in their community. A lot of areas in Trinidad and Tobago could say that also. The fact of the matter is that there will now be a focused attempt to deal with the issues of urban renewal in East Port of Spain and in the Laventille area.

As I am dealing with the politics of equity, Mr. Speaker, can you imagine if we had set up the East Port of Spain Development Company and had not dealt with the issue of Caroni lands and the distribution of lands to the ex-Caroni employees, the furore that we would have experienced? So in dealing with the politics of equity, this administration is even-handed. As far as we are concerned, everybody has to live, as it were, and we will deal with each and every one of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago fairly and justly, as is the hallmark of this party.
Miss Seukeran: We will come to the politics of inclusion.

Mr. F. Khan: I am reading from a newspaper advertisement:

"Renegotiation of oil and gas taxation regime"

I need not say much more on that, because I did, in fact, explain earlier in my presentation the basis of having more draconian taxation in a windfall scenario, when you are dealing with taxation of a depleting asset. By definition, windfall revenue from a depleting asset means that the companies did nothing to earn it. Taxation theory indicates that most of that money should go to the State. That really is the basis on which the supplemental petroleum tax was initiated, in the first instance, and today that is the basis on which we are saying that we have to review the tax regime and put a tax regime for natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, I hope I have dealt with the fallacy that the economy is weak, because oil and gas are strong. There is absolutely no logic in that. The economy is strong, because oil and gas are strong. The economy will continue to be strong when oil and gas are strong and it will become even stronger as we continue to diversify the economy in the coming years. [Desk thumping]

Let me move on to my third point, which is the creation of special purposes companies for delivery. A lot has been said; that we are forming more state enterprises. Let me just read from the Vision 2020, Ensuring Our Future Prosperity, Public Sector Investment Programme document, page 91, point No. 367:

“While the Government is mindful of its role as facilitator for economic activity, the policy for the State Enterprise Sector is that the State will retain or acquire equity only where such ownership is integral to the achievement of policy objectives for the sector in which the enterprise is located.”

That policy has not changed. We have moved away, through some good work done by the Member for Diego Martin Central in the last PNM administration, in that we are not investing in the State sector for the sake of investing. So we do not want National Canners or National Flour Mills; that is investment for the private sector. We retained state equity in strategic areas where we want to assist in terms of brisk distribution and building new industries. The creation of these state enterprises is really a step in the direction of public sector reform; until that time comes.

Every single speaker on the Opposition Benches says that this administration should be delivering at a faster pace. If we only hint, in some of our speeches, that the public sector is not geared to delivery, but is an administration, as the Prime
Minister would normally say, the first thing you would say is that we are blaming the public servants. But really and truly, the individual public servant is competent, but a competent individual is almost as ineffective, if he is operating an incompetent system. Systems and flows are what create efficiencies.

Mr. Singh: You call that reverse bowling. [Interrupt]

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro 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. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues. The public service, as it was structured by the colonial authority at the time, with the Warden's Office and the warden's this and the warden's that—out in Moruga there was a quarters for the teachers, the principal and so on—which was an antiquated system. It was not designed to deliver goods and services in a modern economy. It does not cater for modern project management practices and principles. It does not cater for on time delivery of inventories. It does not cater for modern procurement practices, with the flexibility to put new structures in place, in terms of project management, to deliver complex projects, as defined, especially in terms of some of the projects UDeCott is doing.

As an administration, if we cannot reform the public service until after 2007 when we will get our two-thirds and three-quarters majority, in the interim, we cannot sit back and say that we are helpless, because we have been elected into Government to deliver and so we have to deliver at all costs. We have to be creative and proactive, in terms of building the types of structures and institutions we currently need to deliver the goods and services that the population demands of us, as a Government.

For those of you who question transparency and say that the friends of the PNM will get this and that, the Member for Arouca South did spend some time indicating how the whole procurement process would operate in the state enterprises, in terms of procuring the goods and services with the level of transparency and integrity that this population justifiably needs.

I want to close by speaking in the context of the politics of equity and, in my opinion, what I think is one of the major innovations of the new state enterprise, which we call the Rural Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago.
That organization has the potential to transform the physical and social landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] Central Government does not have the tentacles for outreach. The tentacles for outreach reside with local government and even local government has its constraints. Local government reform will be coming to this Parliament in due course. In the interim, the whole conceptualization of the Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago will go a long way into building the much needed social, physical and economic infrastructure for rural Trinidad and Tobago.

I close now, speaking as the Member of Parliament (MP) for what is, probably, the most rural of rural constituencies in Trinidad and Tobago, Ortoire/Mayaro. I am sure I speak on behalf of my colleague for Toco/Manzanilla. I will attempt to speak for the constituency of Nariva, not for its MP, which we will now take, because half of that constituency has now come into Mayaro, while the other half has gone to Toco/Sangre Grande. Point Fortin, Arima and some of these constituencies do have major rural components. The people of Ortoire/Mayaro and rural Trinidad have sighed for the breath of fresh air coming into the potential of what is going to happen. I close by outlining a few projects happening in Ortoire/Mayaro, for which, as MP, I am eternally grateful to the Government and this administration.

For those of you who have recently gone to Mayaro, we have repaired the Mayaro/Guayaguayare Road at a cost of $34 million, from the junction at the bank in Mayaro straight to Point Galeota. That project has been completed and we plan to continue it from Point Galeota straight on into Rushville in Guayaguayare. [Desk thumping]

For those of you who have recently gone to Moruga, my friend from Naparima would know, from the Indian Walk junction on the Naparima/Mayaro Road intersection, which is part of the Princes Town constituency, we have repaired all the drains and landslips. There is a brand new, first-class road from the Naparima/Mayaro Road intersection, straight on to St. Mary's Village at a cost of some $28 million. [Desk thumping] A contract was awarded about two months ago for the continuation of that work from St. Mary's Village straight on to Gran Chemin Beach in Moruga, at a cost of $76 million. By the end of next year we would have spent in excess of $100 million on the Moruga Road, taking the worst road in Trinidad and Tobago, in the year 2005, into one of the best arterial, first class roads. [Desk thumping]

Just as an aside, and it is almost like a joke now when I speak to Mrs. Nafeesa Mohammed; I remember distinctly in the 2000 election, Nafeesa had her baby just two months before and she came to Moruga to address a national meeting at
Basse Terre. When she took the platform she said, "Thank God that I have already made my child, because if I did not as yet, I would have lost it"—to tell you how bad the Moruga Road was. Today, $100 million has been invested.

7.00 p.m.

For those of you who drive along the Naparima/Mayaro Road, we have awarded a contract and work is in progress. It is about $40 million to repair that road which is littered with landslips from New Grant to Rio Claro. So all the major rural arteries are being upgraded through the National Highways Programme, and I am sure the Minister of Works and Transport will indicate what is happening in Toco, the Guaracara/Tabaque Road, Gran Couva Main Road and all the other roads.

Mr. Speaker, the Moruga Fishing Facility has now been officially handed over to the Rural Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago. I have gotten a project brief from the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and we will be building boating facilities for 100 pirogues.

Moruga is the port for the largest fishing fleet in Trinidad and Tobago and it exploits some of the richest fishing grounds in Trinidad. Sometimes they squeeze over on the Venezuelan side, but fishermen will always do that. There are boating facilities for 100 pirogues, a modern fishing facility to store boats and nets, cold storage facility, a training centre and marketing arrangements for the fish produce of the people of Moruga. [Desk thumping]

As I speak, the Mayaro Indoor Sporting Complex is almost completed, thanks to the hard work of the Member for Toco/Manzanilla and Minister. For the people of Mayaro, come Christmas time, they will now be bouncing their basketball on wooden floors and not on the Barber Greene outside. That facility should be opened within two months; concurrent with that would be the beginning of the construction of the youth facility.

The Prime Minister in his budget presentation indicated that an MIC type facility for training will be constructed in the Mayaro area largely because Mayaro is the port for offshore work of the east coast upstream energy sector.

The Member for Nariva spoke about police stations this and that, and what have you. All I would indicate to this honourable House is that the Mayaro Police Station has started and as I speak, construction is continuing apace. [Desk thumping]
Last year under the programme for rehabilitating Government buildings by the Ministry of Works and Transport, we did in fact renovate the Moruga Police Station and while it is a wooden structure of a 1950s vintage, it is now in a very good state and as we find our place, and the schedule of reconstruction of police stations, the Moruga Police Station would be rebuilt in about two years’ time.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Ortoire/Mayaro are happy with PNM representation, and it goes without saying, they are happy with their Member of Parliament. We the people of Ortoire/Mayaro, more than anything else, feel very proud to be associated with this administration, this budget, this leadership, and with all my colleagues here as Members of Parliament. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Nizam Baksh (Naparima): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the opportunity to make a contribution to this Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2006.

Mr. Speaker, I have been told that in politics people give you what they think you deserve and deny you what you want, and this was said by Cecil Parkinson, a British conservative politician. So I would like to start off with that: In politics people give you what they think you deserve and deny you what you want. I will speak and elaborate on that a little more.

I just want to address some remarks made by my good friend, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro; and when he started off, I thought that he was giving us an insight to his new profession as a lecturer. He mentioned that the budget has something in it for everybody, and I agree that what we are doing is really giving money to everybody.

Mr. Manning: What is wrong with that?

Mr. N. Baksh: I will point out the manner in which it is being done. I will speak about that. He spoke about the distribution of wealth, but we are concerned with regard to the manner of that distribution. What it shows on our end is that there is political discrimination and there is no fairness and equity and he spoke about fairness and equity and he mentioned one or two programmes.

I would like to say that on this end we are not seeing it as fairness and equity. If one looks at the distribution of funding for the regional corporations, one would see that some do a lot more work for the communities, others do not and complain that it is because of a lack of funding from Central Government.
I would also like to point out in another area the social sector programmes. There are a number of programmes in the social sector and if one looks at where they are allocated, the districts, the regions, I cannot say that in Naparima we are benefiting as in other areas.

Mr. Boynes: Everybody can access it.

Mr. N. Baksh: If one looks at the housing, I do not expect that I get 10 and you get 10, but of course, we can get something. We are not completely satisfied with the housing distribution and there is no equity in it. Depending on which side one sits, one will see equity and others will not see it, so I am just taking this opportunity to raise some of the areas with which we are not comfortable.

The Member mentioned the formation of the state companies. I feel what we are actually doing is subverting the public service and trying to fast-track, and by doing this there could be problems. I remember when the UNC was in office and it was using certain state companies—the PNM at that time was in Opposition and was pointing out a long list why we should not go that way and today, they are doing it with impunity.

Mr. Manning: Sir, if you would be kind enough. PNM never said that you should not be going the route of special purpose state enterprises. What in fact UNC had been doing was using state enterprises set up for a different purpose and which were not geared at all for some other purpose. They were called upon to do jobs for which they had absolutely no expertise and that caused a problem. For example, the Tourism and Industrial Development Company (TIDCO) running a road programme for $1 billion. That was what we were talking about, not the state enterprise per se.

Mr. N. Baksh: Opinions could vary. Where are you going to get the expertise to give to these 15 companies you are forming? Are you going to bring it from outside?

We are talking about the rural development company and my good friend mentioned that a fresh breeze is blowing through the country. I would really like to feel this breeze blow into Naparima as well.

Mr. Manning: It will in due course.

Mr. Bereaux: After La Brea.

Mr. N. Baksh: After La Brea. Oh, we will be competing with La Brea. I can say this as well for other UNC constituencies with regard to roads and water.
Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that this Government’s lavish funding, especially in the Social Sector Investment Programme (SSIP) like previous years, is geared towards the creation of continued dependence on state handouts.

We in this country need an effective education system because it is the foundation a society must build on. Education obviously provides the skilled population necessary for any developed nation. But even more importantly, education is the key which can transform the society so that we can manage crime, poverty, and other social ills.

Mr. Speaker, despite all the money we are spending on education, alleviation of poverty and reduction in crime, the morass will continue as we fail to address the root causes of our problem which has been allowed to go unnoticed, unchecked and unattended.

Some of the root causes are breakdowns of the family unit and an ineffective education system, one that has failed and continues to fail our young people. Our educational institutions are now the breeding grounds for criminals; schools, are places where gang culture, both boys and girls, is nurtured and developed.

Mr. Speaker, I am not satisfied that the largest budget that this country has ever seen is really targeted towards sustained social sector development with particular reference to the building of social capital as a core element in the empowerment pillar of the poverty reduction strategy.

Moreover, I believe that very little will be achieved within the next financial year that will have any positive impact on the reduction of crime, kidnappings and murders. I feel very strongly that the family unit will continue to decline with Government’s inability to manage the economy and ensure that wealth trickles down to the impoverished echelons.

In this regard, I have decided to focus my contribution to this debate on a theme which embodies the family. My theme is: “The family, an endangered unit continues to suffer from the perils of Government intervention”. Literally, this theme conveys the fact that Government programmes have been eroding the family unit rather than strengthening it so that it could take charge of its responsibility in society to care, support and protect its members.

Time honours values like cooperation, respect, honesty and patience, sound education have been casually cast aside in exchange for materialism. [Desk thumping] Families need to take time to retrieve these values.

Mr. Speaker, I propose in my contribution to stress the central role of the family unit. I intend to emphasize the responsibility of the family to ensure that its
members are equipped with attitudes and values that conform to the moral and cohesive fabric of our society.

I intend to link the failure of the family in this regard and its influence on teenage pregnancies, poverty, crime, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS. I propose to review the social sector programme outlined in the budget and to evaluate its impact on the family unit to determine to what extent meaningful change could be realized because it has eroded the family unit as an institution.

Members of the family are now dependent on Government for handouts. The indiscriminate formation and duplication of social programmes and its distribution of money as a plaster for every need has destroyed the family as a unit of love, support and influence. Yesterday the Minister spoke about love.

Through the social programmes, citizens have now turned to Government instead of the family. What the PNM has done in the social programme is directly opposite to the doctrine of the famous Chinese proverb which is; teach a man to fish rather than give him a fish. What the programme is doing is giving them a fish.

7.15 p.m.

Apart from the destructive elements of the social programme on the family unit, it has also destroyed the principles and practice of community development. There is now no need for citizens to continue their efforts in the village councils and community organizations. Today, any individual has replaced these organizations because he or she could go to the various agencies and get what the village councils used to deliver years ago. This is how we are destroying that aspect of community life.

I also intend to review the provisions that are designed to assist those members of our society who are disabled or aged and unable to provide the means of a comfortable life. I will look at the social sector programmes. They are many but I will touch on a few. In the last budget the Prime Minister stated that there were 132 social programmes under 15 ministries. I have taken the opportunity to write the Ministers of the 15 ministries since last November listing the 132 programmes he mentioned and only about five of those Ministers responded. Those who responded had only one, two or three at most, and the ministries that had the majority never responded. In fact, about eight months now the Ministry of Social Development said they were doing a booklet listing all the programmes and for eight months they have been saying it is with the printery and it is not out
as yet. I was hoping that I would use this information to disseminate to my
constituents and other constituencies as well, so that people can take advantage of
the programmes and benefit from them as well.

Some of the programmes that I am referring to are under three categories:
Developmental, Remedial and Preventative. They list here the budget allocations
and the percentage of the budget allocation. Under the developmental programmes you
have an allocation for 2005 of $1,171,177,009; that was 41 per cent of the total
budgeted allocations for 2005. On the remedial programmes there was an allocation of
$1,373,943,592, comprising 48 per cent of the allocations, and the preventative, a
small allocation of $315,471,360, comprising 11 per cent.

My point here is that after four years in government you are now embarking
on these social sector programmes for this period, I feel that you should have been
measuring some success in these programmes and you have been moving from
the development and remedial mode to the preventative mode, and this would
have been a sign of success of those programmes. But since you are enlarging and
expanding these first two areas, I feel that you are not getting success, but there is
another objective to the programmes.

You have indicated that you have listed 17 critical training programmes here.
I have a breakdown of these programmes that I would read. The 17 programmes
listed are: Helping You Prepare for Employment (HYPE), in which for 2005 you
had a number of 2,328 beneficiaries at a cost of $19,800,000; On-the-Job Training
(OJT), 5,638 beneficiaries with $60 million expenditure; Youth Training and
Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), $6,577 beneficiaries and $40
million spent on that programme; the Civilian Conservation Corps, beneficiaries
1,843, expenditure, $28 million; Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture
(YAPA), 474 beneficiaries, $23.68 million expenditure; Women in Harmony, a
domestic programme, 522 beneficiaries and expenditure of $1.056 million; Non
Traditional Skills Training for Women, 500 beneficiaries and I do not have the
expenditure for that; Community Education (Skills Training) programme, 14,128
beneficiaries, expenditure of $1.398 million; Export Centres Programmes, 250
beneficiaries, with an $2.614 million allocation; Geriatric Adolescent Partnership
Programme (GAPP), 960 beneficiaries, expenditure of $6.665 million; Transformation
and Development Centres, you spent $1.195 million. I understand that this division has
a full complement of staff with no activity at all but you spent $1.195 million; The
Military Led Academic Training (MILAT), 274 beneficiaries, $10 million expended;
Military Led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship & Reorientation Training (MYPART), 206 beneficiaries, $10.9 million expended; Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme (MuST), 2,583 beneficiaries, $47.658 million expended; the Retraining Programme, 1,617 beneficiaries with an expenditure of $8.9 million.

These are only 17 programmes and if you tally these beneficiaries, a total of 36,990 were trained with an expenditure of $1.171 million and if you divide that you would probably find out the exorbitant cost for training one individual. When we add the programmes other than the 17 here, which are quite enormous, I think we could see the kind of expenditure that we are investing there and we are not getting the returns for it. If we are training so many people, and all these programmes have to do with skills development, and yet we are finding ourselves saying that we have to import tradesmen from Jamaica and other Caricom countries, I am asking whether all these people that we have trained are fully employed. I am saying, no, because I feel that what they are getting is not on par with the requirements in the employment sector. We still need to take them a little further, and I would elaborate on that a little more.

I feel that we are not training citizens in areas related to our development programmes. Our levels of training are rather elementary to what is required in obtaining jobs in the projects which are earmarked in the developmental thrust. Citizens are moving from one programme to another in order to benefit from the stipend without attaining standards that would enable them to cope with the competition and standards required as artisans. They simply engage themselves in so-called skill development programmes to live off the financial benefits rather than to graduate from the training initiative. That is one of the problems you are having in the programmes; people are moving around and it is really to get the stipend that you are facilitating in these programmes. We are not really training them.

It is necessary for this Government to evaluate the development programmes. Perhaps if we start doing this, we will find out that these programmes are not really succeeding. What this means is that tracer studies must form a critical component of any development programme. As soon as a batch is trained we should have a tracer study done to find out whether they have the required training, and if they are employed, get a report from the employer as well, so we can prepare for further development in that particular skill development programme.

I have no doubt that this Government is spending money helter-skelter. It has a lot of revenue from oil at the present time and it is spending money on a wide range of substandard, inferior and unrelated training programmes which are not
equipping our young people and our citizens with marketable or competitive skills. I agree with the conclusion, therefore, that when the oil money is exhausted, this country will be worse off than the recession we had in the 1980s.

I would like to note, as well, the failure of the comprehensive school system to equip our youths with employable skills continues to present the need for developmental training, and if something is not done to correct the training problems at that level we would continue to be wasting money on the same citizens year after year. After school, we should focus on advanced training and job-creation rather than remedial training. Because what we are doing at this point in time when we have a number of people who are dropouts in the education system and those who do not come out of the system with full certificates, we have to continue with remedial classes. I think we could address this before we reach that stage.

I want to take the opportunity to just list a model here. I have observed that there are a number of duplications and overlapping of skills training by various ministries and I would just like to list a few of them here. If you look at the certification that they give in some of these—not all—they vary, but the objectives of these programmes are one and the same. Some of these programmes that I have observed where you have overlapping and duplication here are HYPE, MuST, OJT, the Retraining Programme, YTEPP, Community Education Skills Programme, Non-tradition Skills Training Programme for Women, YAPA, CCC, MYPART, MILAT, Youth Development Programme, Youth Development Apprenticeship Programme which was formerly the youth camps.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Naparima for giving way. It is not that we have overlapping of the programmes, but the programmes are designed to deal with different categories of people. In some instances they do roughly the same thing but with different categories of people; a big difference for example, between the HYPE programme and the MuST programme, which essentially train you for skills in the construction sector, but different categories of people, and we would explain it at the appropriate time.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. N. Baksh: I am looking at it as a holistic training programme. You may have different aspects of it.

Mr. Manning: It means that we are segmenting the market.

Mr. N. Baksh: When you look at the details of the programme—I do not have time to go through the minute details but I can carve out the different areas
where there is overlapping and the training is not geared to improving the lives of the people. We have seen so many acronyms in these social programmes that I think we can go down in the Guinness book of records. For 2006, I see a new one, BLING. I do not know if it has anything to do with “bling bling”. That is the Block Leadership Initiative for the New Generation. I want to know if we are dealing with the gangs on the blocks now.

We have been talking about Vision 2020 and this Government started this route four years ago; we started to travel this route four years ago and after four years we have nothing to show except what we plan to do in 2020. I do not know if for 2020, we expect to achieve everything in the last few years. We have nothing to show as achievements or benchmarks.

When I speak about the skills development programmes I made reference to the education system which has been failing our young people. We need to establish career development centres. Midstream in the secondary schools we can identify those people who have ability for trade, vocation and those who want to pursue academic studies. We could re-route these people just like in other countries as they do with sports and identify people with special aptitudes and give them that push in the right area.

In the career development centres we should have an apprenticeship system of training.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members for Laventille East/Morvant and Nariva, perhaps you can take your conversation to the tea room. I am trying to listen to the Member.

Mr. N. Baksh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was making the point that we need to establish an apprenticeship system of training which will take the people in trade. You say you have an On-the-Job Training Programme (OJT) but this is not really helping those people. You assign them to an office, very often a government ministry and they wait for their monthly salaries and at the end of six months they move out with very little training. There is no one in the ministry to advise them.

Mr. Manning: Where did you get that information?

Mr. Singh: They might tell you what they think you want to hear.

Mr. N. Baksh: I have first-hand information. This is a fact. If you do a survey on the impact of these programmes you would understand what is happening out there. It is not achieving it. I try to give some of them employment in the constituency office but when they came there they had not learnt much. All
of us want to see these programmes succeed so that you need to put something in place to walk them through the system and at the end of the tunnel they can see the sunshine.

When you are doing the OJT like other training programmes especially in skills development there is that component. They should be assigned either to a private or public sector place of employment where they are attached to a journeyman and this experience would be transferred to them. This is how they will get the knowledge. Do not put them in an OJT Programme in a ministry and leave them there where they hope that at the end of six months they could get a job elsewhere.

We need to establish post secondary institutions along with the training establishments so you could have a follow through education system. Those people who have difficulty in moving through the education system, we can divert them to other institutions for skills development. This Apprenticeship Training Programme should be compulsory when learning a trade. They should be assigned for a minimum period of one year. I cannot see somebody going to one of these programmes for three months and graduating as a professional mason. Probably at that time the person will be learning to mix the mortar. You need a longer period of training and something specific.

About 80 per cent of this apprenticeship training should be on the job training attached to a journeyman and 20 per cent of this training should be done in a formal institution. You will have both on the job training as well as the formal instruction at the post secondary institutions or training centres. This training period should vary from one year upward depending on the trade.

We already have a RAP programme. I want to recommend a Registered Apprenticeship Programme (RAP). I have identified in 17 programmes a couple thousand people who have been trained. You must have a database of all those who have been trained, so when you are looking for skills in construction you will have a database to refer to. These people could be in any part of the country such as Toco, Barrackpore or Moruga. [Interuption] Your programme does not say that. This registered apprenticeship programme can also permit high school students to be enrolled where they can obtain credits. If they have the aptitude for skills development the credits will enhance their acceptance.

I know that we have the youth camps but that is not giving the extent or level of training.

**Mr. Manning:** Do you want to design the programme?
Mr. N. Baksh: Do you want me to do the home lesson for you? If it is to do something to help the country, I am for it. That is why I am here. If I am to listen to my new political leader, probably we will get there to do it. [Laughter]

There are many programmes which will take some time to go through. I just made some general comments on them. I want to look at the Social Help And Rehabilitation Efforts Programme (SHARE) since you brought a new idea to it. This was helping the people who need the assistance. It was one of the ways that they were getting foodstuff as against money in other programmes.

Mr. Manning: You agree with it?

Mr. N. Baksh: Yes. I want to read the aims of this programme.

To drastically reduce the level of poverty and hunger in the society; to empower the disadvantaged and socially vulnerable; facilitate development measures for the underprivileged and partner with governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide assistance to families.

In this Social Sector Investment Programme there is a summary of key findings and recommendations or evaluations on the SHARE Programme. The underlying rationale for the programme is still valid as poverty and unemployment remain national concerns.

It is saying that Government is not succeeding in reducing poverty. This is the only programme that I could say reached out to 36 constituencies.

The SHARE secretariat should regularly assess the beneficiaries and constituency needs by periodically reviewing poverty, unemployment, population and geographic information systems data and adjust coverage and target population where required.

A mechanism should be established to relate the value of the hamper to the cost of living and the best value monthly food basket for a typical SHARE household as determined by the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute.

In this context consideration should be given to increasing the overall value of the hamper.

I heard you mentioned this with regard to the SMART Card. I did not get the values.

Mr. Manning: $300, $400 and $500.

Mr. N. Baksh: The system for the selection of beneficiaries should be strengthened by reviewing and streamlining the beneficiary’s application to capture
further information such as the beneficiary’s training and skills; employment history and household income and ensuring that NGOs administer the standard form to all beneficiaries. In addition, the household circumstances and addresses of all beneficiaries should be verified by NGOs before the distribution of the hampers.

During the fiscal year 2005, they started a data entry and this was completed in only one constituency; that is San Fernando West. If it took one year to do the database of one constituency, will it take us 36 years to do 36 constituencies?

I thought that the recommendations would have been accepted. I get the feeling that when the Minister got up that morning of the budget he came up with this SMART Card thing. Nowhere is this recommended. I want to ask some questions about it. Under the SHARE Programme we used community-based organizations to get the information of those beneficiaries. You also used those organizations to deliver the hampers. In the delivery centres I saw boards outlining the value of the food and the list of groceries that you put there to give a balanced diet. Would the distribution be removed from these groups? By whom will it be done? What is the agency that will do it?

7.45 p.m.

If the beneficiary has to take this to a grocery—I think somebody outlined previously that this system could be manipulated—when he gets there with this card, which is to the value of $300, $400 or $500, a lot of things could happen. I have heard that there are even pipers selling in the groceries, but that might be in a few instances. It could happen just as what happens with the pension cheques when they are changed at those venues. It means that you could go there and tell the grocer: “Look, this is $500; I want some rum and cigarettes”. If it is to the value $500 then the grocer would say: Well, look here you have to pay for that so he loses a $50 value or more. This is one of the disadvantages of that system.

With respect to the distribution system, is it that they would have to go to a PNM office to collect this card? Is this going to be used like a party card? It could be a voter obligation to you. [Desk thumping] When you give out this card—depending on who is giving it out—you could give a handshake and watch him in his face and smile, so that it has an obligation to get votes for you. [Interuption] No, you do not want to do it that way; you want transparency. Leave that for me to do when I get there, “nah”. This is why I want to know whether it is a smart man card. [Desk thumping] Is there something underneath? [Interuption]
Mr. Speaker, I have gone through a number of these programmes and there is a lot of information in this book but I believe you have some inaccuracies, too. I will point out one of those inaccuracies. There is a new programme called the Regional Social and Human Development Councils (RSHDCs), does the regional corporation handle this? I called two regional corporations and they said they knew nothing about this programme.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for giving way. The RSHDCs will be, among other things, a coordinated mechanism in the social sector. They will be reporting to the local government bodies; that is where it is heading. Right now there is a pilot project being done in one or two councils; I cannot remember exactly which ones.

While we are at it, the proposals to establish the smart card is a proposal that came from a team of Ministers, supplemented by our Ambassador Plenipotentiary, Mr. Jerry Narace, who was in the supermarket business before coming into public life. The details of the system are now being worked out.

Mr. N. Baksh: I think you just confirmed that coming from those sources it has to be a smart man card. [Laughter]

I now make reference to some of the inaccuracies of some of the information under the Regional Social and Human Development Councils. In one section it says:

“This programme seeks to establish 15 regional, social and human development councils in all the municipal regions of Trinidad and Tobago.”

In another section it says:

“In fiscal 2005 the full complement of RSHDCs were established.”

They said earlier 15, and all were established in 2005.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. N. Baksh: I thank the hon. Prime Minister and Members for granting me the extended time. I was making the point on the Regional Social and Human Development Councils and I said that the regional corporations are not aware of the programme. It says here as well that they have already established, in 2005,
the full complement. On one hand, it says 15 regional social councils and in another place it says 12. [ Interruption] Okay, but I am talking about some inaccuracies in the information. I would like to know what would be the composition of these councils. Maybe you could give us some more details on the composition. If they have been established already, what are the successes of these programmes? Has any audit been done on this aspect of it? It says in another section:

“In 2006, the remaining nine will be established.”

There is a bit of confusion there with the arithmetic.

Mr. Speaker, I will now go to poverty alleviation. A further review of the SSIP document on poverty alleviation on page 94, speaks about new sector plans for 2006. These are rather noble, purposeful and worthwhile objectives. For a moment I am flabbergasted and, indeed, carried away with these initiatives. There is one thing that I have grown accustomed to and that is the annual tirade of the PNM’s annual policies contained in their budget statements. They have always had a way with convincing words and grandiose plans which have never materialized.

I know that they have a problem with implementation and if you look at the document, as well, they are always speaking about things to come in the next year or in three years’ time, but we do not see anything that has been completed and this is something we have to look at closely.

During the last four years, this Government has only ensured that crime, drugs and kidnappings flourished in our country with impunity. Throughout the four years citizens have grown accustomed to unfulfilled promises and trivialization of the crimes which ravish our country every day.

For the past four years this Government has obtained high oil revenues, the benefits of which have not trickled down to ordinary citizens of this country. Even areas controlled by the PNM for decades have seen no benefits and have continued to wallow in poverty, crime and drugs. With regard to poverty, I will read from page 11 of a Newsday article dated Monday, September 26, 2005 by Marion O’Callaghan. It says:

“The poverty statistics are by now well known. By the last counting 12 per cent of our population live on less than US $1 a day (roughly TT $6) and 39 per cent live on less than US $2 a day (roughly TT $12)”

[ Interruption] You are talking about Trinidad?

“In other words, the first problem with poverty is employment and employment in a stable job. What then is our situation with employment
and unemployment? According to CSO our workforce—calculated according to the Canadian and US criteria—is calculated as those over 15 having a job during the past week of a specific month added to which those who have sought work over the past three months.

It is not surprising that we then have a figure of only 2,005 Trinis—or 9 per cent—unemployed over the last quarter.”

They have put this to the way we calculate the unemployment rate.

“We are doing well! We have less unemployment—according to that calculation—than Germany, France, and Italy, name it. We must also have one of the highest percentages of what is now called in the USA the working poor given our poverty percentages.”

This is a new category we have to look at; the working poor—[Interruption]—those who are getting $50 or $60 per day.

“After all our employment figures include 10 days, someone who gets two hours cleaning yard or one hour babysitting. I would run up an easy hour standing at the corner to wipe car windows. With our poverty figures underestimated, our one hour for $9 employment figures any wonder that we can't tackle poverty?

That there has been no public debate either on how we calculate our workforce or on how we calculate employed is the first and major indication of our lack of interest in poverty.”

I conclude that quotation there.

Mr. Speaker, I have noted that most of the areas of concentration of poverty eradication have been vested under the portfolio of the Ministry of Social Development and NGOs serviced by that ministry. Very little reference is made, if any, of the responsibility of the Ministry of Education towards poverty eradication.

My own view is that poverty eradication should somehow form a salient part of the school curriculum. At a very early age in attitude formation, the youth of our country should be aware of the social forces which give rise to poverty and the strategies which may be employed to cope with the situation. So that if we address it a little lower down with the younger people then we could bring the family units a little closer to understanding family life. This is where we need to develop that love that the Minister spoke about yesterday. They must be aware of poverty problems which the wider society experiences and what they must do to avoid social impoverishments. At the very early age they must understand the responsibility of the family towards the importance of building social capital.
An aspect of poverty to which hardly any reference is made and which is plaguing our society today is the case of street children, which falls into two categories: children off the streets and children on the streets. The children on the streets; I refer to the gangs and a good example is that gang we had walking one morning in front of KFC. And we have the other group where children roam, beg and sleep on the streets at night; we need to address that as well. We have not heard anyone speak about it but it is a critical area and I could always relate this to the education system. If we address our education system a little more to capture those children then we would reduce that aspect of it because it ties in with all the social ills that we are experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, I have been told that this problem is attaining critical proportion, as those children are already becoming fodder for criminal gangs. This is something that is happening, I understand, with some of the homes for the boys, where the gangs recruit some of those guys and put them out to work and they get back there safely. It is a kind of safe haven and it is something we have to investigate and look at.

8.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to a new type of crime that we are experiencing. We are good copycats in this country and anything that is happening globally reaches here in a very short space of time. I want to read from the Metro of Friday, February 11, 2005: “30,000 children join Net gangs”. Something we have to look at, and this would fall under the category of high-tech crime and we are experiencing this. Only recently we discovered a guy who was printing CXC certificates, ID cards, printing everything—I would have liked to meet that guy to find out a little more. What was the objective, whether there was some motive that did not come out in the newspapers; it could be. I do not want to go into details—

“...are renting their computers to cyber gangs to spread viruses or carry out online scams and blackmail threats.

The growing band of ‘child labourers’ are paid about £50 an hour for the use of their PCs to launch Internet attacks, a new report claims. They are savvy enough to seize control of their friends’ and others’ computers as well to drag them into the plots.

‘Small groups of young people are creating a resource of 10,000 to 30,000 computers networked together and are renting them out to anybody who has the money,’ said one Scotland Yard source.”

When you bring them there you would have knowledge of this crime.
“The phenomenon is highlighted by a Europe-wide study into organized crime on the Net.

Most of the youngsters are ‘script kiddies’ who already spread viruses for fun but are exploited by the gangs for profit. The parties never meet and information is traded through chatrooms.

Together, they forge remotely controlled networks of computers, called bot-nets, to steal credit card details or identities or to extort money by threatening to paralyze companies’ website by bombarding them with bogus e-mails.

The use of script kiddies can be seen as a new form of child labour, the same way as a drug dealer uses a 13-year-old child as a runner,’ says McAfee Virtual Criminology Report. ‘The kids don’t necessarily understand how their actions are being put to bigger criminal ends.’”

Mr. Speaker, this is something—let us not wait until we have to take remedial action. Let us get into preventative mode to understand what is happening at this level and to correct it as soon as possible.


Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier on, the figures I gave are from January to June 30, 2005 and most of those figures have already surpassed the 2004 figures. And, it is an indication that serious crimes are uncontrollable and we need to put a lot more effort than just what we have heard in the Prime Minister’s opening remarks in his budget statement.

Mr. Speaker, this is the greatest scourge that is eating menacingly into the fabric of our society, that is, crime. Crime is now the major concern of every citizen in the country. It transcends barriers of class, colour and wealth. Up-to-
date figures will show that murders and kidnappings as at the end of September are the highest ever recorded in this country. Apart from this, the trivialization of the crime situation by persons of high ranking within government have not ameliorated the situation. People are living in fear. There is no safety at home, the workplace, shopping malls, cinemas, taxis, you name it; the fear of crime is there while the Government appears to be like the proverbial ostrich.

Before I raise certain issues about the crime situation in our country I would like to convey my heartfelt condolences to the Minister of Health, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, on the murder of his nephew, Dr. Koury. I know how difficult it is to cope in times of bereavement because I myself have suffered similarly. This heinous murder has resuscitated vivid memories of my family and my own loss of my son Ashmead.

What I am somewhat amazed about is the alacrity and swift response of police in this particular case, and the imminent arrest and charges laid against those suspected for the crime; no time was wasted. In a matter of hours five persons were apprehended. Why was it not possible for a similar approach to have been determined in the murder of my son and the hundreds of other murders in this country? Mr. Speaker, my family and I grieve every day for my son while those responsible for his murder are allowed to enjoy life freely.

It is public knowledge that those persons who were detained for the murder of my son are the ones who committed the crime, and they are allowed to roam the country freely. The police informed me that one of the telephone calls made to my son’s mobile phone inviting him to view a worksite where he was kidnapped was made from a phone owned by the girlfriend of one of the persons detained. The police now tell me that the trail is cold. For the time being, I say no more on this subject but await further actions by the police which the Commissioner of Police claims they are still investigating. I know that this is only a hope, but I do not see anything further happening. But it is frightful when you know that those persons are still looking at you and, perhaps, laughing and you do not know who they are. It is scary outside there. When I leave here at this hour of the night I am scared when I am reaching near to my home—one has no protection. And you are seeing this happening. There is no limit to where it could reach—it is already happening.

Within the last few years the Ministry of National Security has obtained significant chunks of the budgetary provisions for tools, equipment and facilities to combat crime. There have been numerous complaints about the lack of vehicles to enable the police to respond quickly to criminal incidents and behaviour. As a matter of fact, within recent times millions of dollars have been spent on photographic
equipment. “Eye in the sky”, the blimp—some people are now calling it the pimp—radar equipment, and there is no corresponding equipment on crime reduction. Millions of dollars are also being allocated to Crime Stoppers but murders continue to increase. It means that money is spent, wasted and thrown away and the desired results are not obtained. There is a saying that if you cannot solve the problem then you are part of the problem.

I have said in this House before that the police service is not equipped with the required investigative skills and expertise to detect crime. I have also said that the police service is infested with corrupt elements and unless these are eradicated, crime detection would not be effective. I have explained, because of the corrupt elements within the police service the citizens of the country have lost faith and confidence in them. They are simply not trusted and because of this perception, they would receive very little support from the community. The support of the community is critical for the detection of crime.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the solutions is that there is need for more police officers on the ground. I have noted that the FBI and Scotland Yard will now have an established presence in this country. Government has taken a decision to seek external help from these agencies to combat crime in this country. I do not know how Scotland Yard would be given the authority to remove the criminal elements in the police service. I agree with those who advocate that if after 40 years of independence we cannot regulate law and order in our country, something is wrong with our development. I agree that outside help to address crime in our country is a show of Government’s inability to manage. This resort to external help is a continuation of this Government’s approach towards a dependency syndrome.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little on pension. I now look to provision in the budget statement for senior citizens. The hon. Minister of Finance seemed to have avoided any direct reference to pension schemes in the country that are administered by Government. The schemes are as follows: Old-age Pension, National Insurance Pension and Government Pension for former employees of the public service.

I recall that the 2004 budget statement, as well as previous budget statements, indicated quite extensively that the pension scheme administered by Government embodied a range of anomalies and that a broad review was necessary to update and harmonize those schemes, and to make them more responsive to the needs of beneficiaries. Some of these anomalies are noted as follows: the present sum of $1,150 pension is grossly inadequate for our senior citizens to enjoy a
comfortable standard of living. There are numerous complaints to the effect that CDAP drugs are generic, and that senior citizens need to purchase other drugs to supplement the deficiency.

**8.15 p.m.**

Apart from this commitment, senior citizens are required to meet daily increased costs in basic foodstuff, utility bills and transport expenses. The inflation that this bubble budget will arouse is bound to place additional strain on the meagre pension which our senior citizens receive at present. I do not know how the hon. Minister of Finance could leave out such an important area in his budget statement.

Apart from this major area of concern for old age pensioners, our NIS pensioners are also experiencing financial hardship due to deficiencies in their pension scheme. NIS pensioners are now receiving a monthly sum lower than old age pension recipients. We have to remember that old age pensioners may never have enjoyed any significant period of employment in their lives, yet receive more pension than another citizen who worked in excess of 40 years and contribute to a pension scheme which is less than old age pension. So there is a disparity.

If you look at the total package, NIS pension is paid at age 60. This recipient must wait five years, that is to age 65, before his pension can be equated with that of the old age pensioner. Senior public servants, for example Permanent Secretaries, Chief Technical Officers, Heads of Departments, Chief Executive Officers, who have retired five years ago or more hardly ever receive more than $3,000 government pension and $1,000 NIS. All those public service officers served their country well beyond the call of duty. Their counterparts who retire now receive monthly government pension in excess of $8,000.

On the day this budget was presented, I saw Mr. Frank Barsotti, a distinguished former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. I feel certain that his government pension is not more than $3,000 per month. With this sum, this distinguished former career public servant, like a number of others, can hardly cope with this inflationary trend.

**Mr. Manning:** He was chairman of Republic Bank.

**Mr. N. Baksh:** I used his name because I saw him on television.

Under national insurance, self-employed persons are being discriminated against. After a period of 30 years, they still have not been brought under the system, in accordance with Regulation 13 of the National Insurance Regulations.
Self-employed persons are listed for inclusion in the system, but yet have not been brought under the system. I am appealing to have an appointed date proclaimed for inclusion and commencement of the payment of contributions by the self employed.

The National Insurance Board promised to issue contribution statements to all persons since 2004. To date, they have not fulfilled this promise. Contributors are in the dark regarding statements of contribution. To get a statement, a contributor has to fill out a form and wait three to six months to get one. Statements should be issued now and updated on an annual basis.

NIS pension should be on par with old age pensions since it is a contribution scheme. NIS pension should be guaranteed for a period of time after, for example, 10 years, so that in the event a pensioner dies one month after retirement, his spouse or estate would be paid the monthly sum for a guaranteed period. I re-emphasize this so that you understand fully the point I am making here. You are a contributor to the NIS programme and, on retirement, if you die one month after, that is ended. I am recommending that there be a payment period of about 10 years—whatever number of years you choose to select—but there should be a period, after someone dies; if he or she dies within the stipulated time frame, his or her spouse or estate would receive the continued contribution. That is important because very often people have contributed for 40 years and they die before receiving their first month’s pension and everything is lost. I am saying that there should be some consideration there.

The National Insurance Appeals Tribunal should be authorized to summon witnesses to assist in matters referred to it for determination. A claims review committee should be established as part of the tribunal to review all claims that are rejected by the NIB. Over the years, NIB has been rather tardy in its obligation to pay claims to beneficiaries. A time limit of six months should be allowed for settlement of all claims, after which the NIB should be required to pay interest to claimants.

Finally, contributors should receive automatic payments on attaining the pensionable age, rather than have to complete various forms requiring employment information records before pensions become payable. All the information required would have been part of the NIB database. It is very simple to do that aspect of it. I have some problems, but I do not have the time.
I thank you for the opportunity to highlight some of these programmes and I hope that the Government will take note of them and perhaps we could see the daylight of some of these suggestions.

I thank you.

**BIRTHDAY GREETINGS**

**The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning):** Mr. Speaker, before you suspend the sitting for the dinner break, I crave your indulgence to extend very sincere birthday greetings to you on your 57th birthday and we wish that you live to see very many more and that you have a very happy birthday today, even though it is late in the evening.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, I join with the hon. Prime Minister in wishing you a happy birthday and seeing that you are performing your duties; a Libran like myself, I can understand your predisposition to having a good time.

**Dr. Rafeeq:** Mr. Speaker, before you rise, I just join with them and to say happy birthday to our Chief Whip whose birthday is tomorrow.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, thanks very much for your kind sentiments. Perhaps, since it is the birthday of the hon. Chief Whip tomorrow, if we break a little early tonight, you can join me for some refreshments.

The sitting is suspended and will be resumed at 8.50 p.m.

8.22 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

8.50 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

**APPROPRIATION BILL (BUDGET)**

**Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (La Brea):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to join the debate on a bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ended September 30, 2006, otherwise called the budget speech.

This annual budget statement, delivered by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, struck several harmonious notes in my thinking. Indeed, since I returned to Trinidad in 1977, I have been complaining about some things which I see addressed in this national budget. Accordingly, I express my great appreciation for the hon. Minister of Finance and his team—his Ministers of State. I take the opportunity to call them by their proper designation because it always irks me when I hear them called junior ministers. I congratulate them and the public servants, maligned as they are sometimes, or alleged to be maligned, who have helped to prepare this budget.
When I returned to Trinidad in 1977, at that time the oil revenues were high and it dawned on me that the people did not seem to be receiving as much of the revenues in direct payments to themselves as one would expect. I am particularly pleased to see that there is an attempt now, in this budget statement, to give more money in the hands of the population. [Desk thumping] I always say, I would not have any difficulty in getting agreement, that the petroleum revenues, by petroleum I mean oil and gas, in Trinidad and Tobago; the heritage and resources of Trinidad and Tobago is the common heritage of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I will come further; not only is it the common heritage of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but there are certain areas in this country from which the petroleum resources have come and where, traditionally, we find that they do not always receive the kind of development that one would expect. When the petroleum reserves are depleted from certain areas, we see the areas slump. One of the things I am glad about is to see, at least now, that we are receiving some direct sums to the population, in respect of lower taxes and a higher allowance—$60,000 and a 25 per cent tax on sums above $5,000.

Even more than that, this sum of money is coming to the population and the first thing you hear people say is that we will have inflation. I am not dealing with inflation in terms of Government spending, but more so inflation in terms of those members of the population who are likely to receive these sums of money, I would not say pittance, but not large sums of money, and how they would use it.

Let us look at those persons whom the $60,000 would assist. By and large, they would be public servants and persons—not those at the lower end because they already do not pay any taxes—who earn less than $2,000 per month. They do not pay any taxes. Now we have moved it upwards to those who are earning $5,000 plus. But those persons, by and large, are the workhorses of the country; they are the beasts of burden. They carry a lot of the load. When you take that into consideration, they still save and send their children to secondary and tertiary education and they have their own homes, many of them. This money that is going back to the population is going back to a number of persons who really have always been squeezed. It is always said that those at the lowest end do and say anything and they get away with it. Those at the higher end do the same thing. It is those persons in the middle-income bracket who take the big squeeze from the rest of the population. They are squeezed up and they are squeezed down. Now we have an attempt to give them some money.
I do not want to call the name of the young professional whom I saw speaking on the television, who said that they are likely to fritter away their money. I do not want to call her arrogant, but she came over as very arrogant. I would not call her name. I went through tertiary education and I cannot remember my mother and stepfather ever getting together more than $3,000 per month. We all were able to move forward. Those persons know how to save.

On the question of free tertiary education, the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro indicated, when he was speaking on the oil industry, that there were first, in terms of our oil bonanza, production, price and then there were windfall taxes. I agree with him on that.

There is an occasion which occurred in this country that many people do not know about. Prior to the 1960s, we did not have on oil audit department and the then Government of Trinidad and Tobago sent 70 students from the Inland Revenue Department and other government departments to England to study accounting. They returned to Trinidad and Tobago and formed the Oil Audit Department. It is Trinidad and Tobago, small as we are, and Indonesia, that got together and introduced posted prices. I sometimes say that the oil bonanza did not come from the ground; the ground was always around. It did not come from the Arabs, they could have done what they did, but it came as a result of the human capital that we had invested in the 1960s, to provide that ability to put a system in place, in order to be able to capture the revenues which we got in the country. [Desk thumping] I am very pleased that we are looking at the oil in a different way to some extent now.

Moreover, we come to the Revenue Stabilization Fund. I have been thinking and sometimes advocating a heritage fund, but my request for a heritage fund has been based, to some extent, partially on a different premise. The premise has always been when I drive through Fyzabad and I go to Palo Seco, La Brea, Point Fortín, down into Guayaguayare, or through Guapo, not now, but on previous occasions, I have the belief that I am passing through a dead area. It is being resuscitated now because we have LNG and we are doing some other developments. My point was that at one time I thought that those areas would go the way of all flesh but they are not doing that. The Government, in its wisdom and with no little thanks from me, has gone into those areas in Vessigny and La Brea and we have a large industrial estate constructed there. I am immediately seeing dividends to the population. The key is that we always have to put money aside and have money around to deal with the development of those areas, when the oil is not as prolific as it is today, or the price is not as favourable. I am also pleased with the
Appropriation Bill (Budget) Tuesday, October 04, 2005

[MR. H. BEREAX]

fund and with the concept—not so much on revenue stabilization alone but also the heritage element because when we extract out the oil, we have to deal with the heritage. That is another area in the budget that has that favourite sounding note to me.

There is also reference to the community partnership initiative and the need to get a number of young persons involved in it. The oil industry is an industry that requires people to be well educated. Although we are on the floor, sometimes we need people who are strong but well educated. I want particularly to comment on the statement in the budget which states that it is estimated that we need 620 professionals, 1,300 engineering technicians and 1,030 craftsmen. There is a need to stimulate interest in the petroleum sector and to have the various companies operating in the petroleum sector. I get into the Adopt a School Programme.

I am always concerned when I look at these companies on the estates. They are next to communities that are not as prosperous as one would like to see them. I remember a statement which my grandfather made. He said: “Never let your own money cut your skin.” I have changed it because I had tertiary education and he did not. I say prosperity and abject poverty cannot coexist comfortably. Therefore, these companies, some of them are state enterprises, need to understand that over and above paying taxes, they must have a commitment to the societies close to them. It is for their own good. [Desk thumping] Sometimes you see things happening and just because you are a politician, you do not want to enter and appear to be leaning on a company. How could a company explain, you have somebody who was working offshore and is now about to retire and you have a young person from the area right where you are setting up business, you had the young person working but you sent the young person home and bring from offshore someone who is about to retire. You are showing no concern for the area. [Interuption]

Mr. Speaker, I feel I am being disturbed by somebody with some strange statement. When I am speaking about a problem or a concern in my constituency, particularly, as you live in Nariva, you do not know, but you are not too far from the oil industry. There is some likelihood that your constituency may be in the oil industry, if you do not know it. Look at BHP Billiton acreage and South Oropouche and you will see where the trend is. I am not a geologist but I have been around the industry a little while to tell you that, so listen. My experience is not with any bitter feeling but it is likely to come your way some time in the future, if you live that long.
9.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we need to have that feeling in these companies. Sometimes it is not because they are vicious or anything. I have worked with some of these companies and they are so focused on making money that they do not see that if they do not help persons in the community they are likely to have problems from them later on because they see no hope. To that extent, I want to make one point.

I heard persons here tonight—businessmen and a number of other persons—talking about crime. Firstly, they talked about crime as though only violent crime is crime. The crime that we are most worried about is violent crime. I make no apologies to state that I am extremely concerned about violent crime. They talked about violent crime and they do not realize that part of the reason when young persons commit violent crimes and behave in the most unsocial manner has to be in some cases where they are hitting out at everybody because they see no hope.

Take for instance, a number of young men—not so much young women—who are not very literate. They would see you and want to find out how you get certain things because they do not have any hope of ever obtaining such things.

I grew up opposite a barracks. In those days barracks were the epitome of violence in the country. I am going to tell you what happened. I did not get into any trouble because I knew that the day I left college—pass or fail—of course, fail was not an option—I would get a job. I had hope that I would get a very good job. I even became a politician. [Laughter] That was it. So you never got into this antisocial behaviour simply because of the fact that you had hope.

I heard the hon. Member for Naparima talking about the On the Job Training Programme (OJT). That OJT programme is a very good way to introduce young persons to the working environment. What you find and what young persons tell me is that every time they apply for a job they are asked for experience. How could they get experience when they have only just left school? You find therefore that only those young persons whose parents know someone in industry or who have some relative in business, get work and others are frustrated.

The State pays 50 per cent of the salary and the employer can even expense the other portion of the salary. Do you know—I took a check on it—I found out the number of companies and the names of the companies that were involved in taking young persons for OJT programme. One day certain members of the business community were talking about crime and I got their membership. I am going to tell you that on no list of all those business organizations had 10 per cent of their members taking OJT trainees. I am not going to call their names. I am not out to blame persons. I am just showing
how people do not understand the frustrations that come about and the end result of such frustrations. With all the talk that they are talking about what we did not do for Laventille, ask any one of them if they have anyone with a Laventille or Morvant address working for them, and you are going to hear that it is not so.

The hon. Member for Laventille West pointed out that one of her constituents came fourth in the world in sociology, but that is an achievement, not for Laventille only but for anywhere. I would be glad if any of my children manage to be that bright, but they are not that bright. I could handle that. [Crosstalk] The point is you need to give these persons an opportunity. Those persons do not want handouts. They are going to take it if you give it to them, but they would like to get an opportunity to prove that they are equal to other persons. [Desk thumping] That is what they want. [Desk thumping]

Dr. Moonilal: You have to give them an incentive.

Mr. H. Bereaux: An incentive? Well, there is the incentive. I was talking about the incentive with respect to OJT. The OJT programme is real money. I am going to show you how they did not count. When persons cannot count it is a bad thing, or when they refuse to count. Firstly, the Government was paying 50 per cent and, secondly, as the employer, you could take your 50 per cent that you paid and use it as a tax deduction and you would get 100 per cent uplift on it. So they were almost getting an employee for 25 per cent of the minimum wage. That is a good incentive to hire persons. That is why the Government—and I am so pleased with it—has decided to develop East Port of Spain through that special East Port of Spain Development Company.

I do not know yet about the entire ambit of the development that would go on, but I have some idea about it because I lived in Freeport—Gran Bahama. I know what a development company can do, and I know that being that close to the city, the kind of industry and whatever else that can be done.

In the Laventille area and East Port of Spain area there are a number of persons both here and abroad who will come to participate in the development. I know of one very wealthy gentleman who lives in England and who is from Clifton Hill. He always laments that he could not do something for that area. So there are a number of persons. That is what you expect a government to do to lift the people there.

Now, I come to the special purpose companies. Other Members on this side pointed out the virtues of this company. I heard the hon. Member for Couva North carrying on about this and almost everyone who talked on that side. Let me just remind some persons about it.
Mr. Speaker, implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) has been a problem for every government as long as I can remember. I could remember attacking and complaining about the failure of the government, when we were in Opposition, to implement the PSIP. I would like to remind them that Mr. Lindsey Gillette was brought in as a minister in the UNC government to remove the logjams. I do not know what logjam he removed, but shortly after that or around that time—

**Hon. Member:** What really happened?

**Mr. H. Bereaux:** He tried to remove the logjam by the former Member for Oropouche and he was dealt with quickly. There is the other matter, which talks about the special purpose companies. When the former UNC administration decided to spend $100 million with Donald Trump, they formed the Pageant Company of Trinidad and Tobago and gave—

**Mr. Hart:** Mr. Assam.

**Mr. H. Bereaux:** That is Mervyn?

**Mr. Hart:** Yes, Mr. Assam.

**Mr. H. Bereaux:** Well, whoever. I heard Mr. Assam talking this morning—that company to run the Miss Universe Pageant.

**Mr. Hart:** They took everything and went with it.

**Mr. H. Bereaux:** They are so concerned about transparency and how it would be checked and so forth. Our companies are going to remain and they would be here. We would not only bring them to Parliament in the normal manner like how we deal with other state enterprises, but there would also be the special committees to deal with state enterprises that could check on them. But this particular company spent the $100 million and it was dissolved one day later. They even locked up someone for committing an offence but there was no company to provide the evidence so the criminal escaped.

Now, my grandmother always say—it is not that I am calling anyone a thief—that a thief does not like to see anybody with a bag. [Laughter]

**Hon. Member:** Do not let Dr. Rowley hear you.

**Mr. H. Bereaux:** I do not like to point out failings of other persons, but Members would recall that when the Palo Seco Secondary School was burnt, we were trying to get the children back into the school and we hurried and put up a tent because they asked for it. Suddenly, the wind blew and the blackboard fell and the newspapers had that all over the place. You know, the people of Palo
Seco—like the Parent-Teachers’ Association (PTA), the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in the person of the Minister of Education, the Education Department and the teachers—all of whom are normally maligned—do not like to work, they do not like to go to school and people say all those things about them—they came together and they built 16 classrooms in two months. [Interruption] Yes, two months.

The wonder of it all is that not one picture was printed in any news media. I am just saying that we performed. That is all right. We in Palo Seco did not need the news to put that on. We did that already because that is the class we have. If they put it, they put it. I could have brought the information and asked someone to publish it for me, but I am not going to do that. I am just pointing out that there are instances of performance where the Government is performing and because it is something good, it appears not to sell the newspapers, so nobody bothers with it. That is par for the course. Now, I want to get to another area. I am moving quickly.

9.25 p.m.

I am going to go to the much discussed and maligned URP. You know I always say that town is not Trinidad and Tobago. Port of Spain and its environs is not Trinidad and Tobago. So some of the problems which exist in URP—and I am the first to tell you that problems exist—in Port of Spain and its environs; in the East-West Corridor; do not exist in Chaguanas or San Fernando or Palo Seco or Point. I understand we must cut down URP because URP has to go down, simply because we are in that mode at this time; URP was intended to be temporary.

After the Minister spoke I went and told my people; I said: Anybody who comes into URP claiming what a big tradesman he is, tell him to go, we have work on the LNG for him. Send him to me, I would give him a note and let him go down and get work down there. The point is, I left home—and when the hon. Member said San Fernando, I agreed with her—a few days and I am driving to go to my constituency about 6 o'clock, and I saw a URP sign and people working. I said what kind of craziness is this, but I did not realize that [Interruption] That is what I said. I could not believe it, but it is not that, that is not what it is. [Interruption] They were working on a special project. There are these areas whereby small contractors apply for jobs in the URP programme, I think they even do it in the corporations now, and they come with some men, they never have a big side because I checked them out. [Interruption] Well, maybe. Let me tell you this. You told me about PNM contractors; I will answer that, but before I answer it, let me finish my trend of thought. They hire out and they do these jobs and they do them very quickly and they do them very well.
Let me answer the question that a lot of them are PNM contractors. Anytime you want to increase employment, the way to do it is to increase employers. A number of small contractors, be it PNM or otherwise, the rate at which this Government has to perform, if it has to perform at all; it cannot start looking at who is PNM and who is not PNM, you know; we would never perform. [Interrupt] Let me finish. Who have the heavy contractors? All the heavy equipment people, almost all of them do not outwardly support the PNM; some of them may or may not, I do not know. With the PNM you are not too sure because we have people from all class, creed, race and kind.

The real point is, and I say it all the time, if we intend to move ahead, we cannot discriminate against people. A certain area in my constituency does not vote for me at all.

Mr. Singh: Tell that to the Maha Sabha.

Mr. H. Bereaux: I would deal with you subsequently. What?

Hon. Member: If the situation was reversed you would agree with me—UNC come in—as contractors at UNC, small contractors.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Possibly they are and what happened to that? What happened to that? We are in a different mode now in the sense that there is a lot of work to be done; there is money to be spent and it makes no sense keeping out anybody, because if you keep out and you say only—You see a lot of politicians operate under the false belief that the people outside care about them and the discrimination talk, they do not take that on. Because if Roy Gobin come and apply for a contract as he did in the Chaguanas Corporation and you give him, you give "meh" first cousin.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: "Yuh know he ain't getting another contract." [Interrupt]

Mr. H. Bereaux: You know I read about him. I could say that because he is that heavy.

Hon. Member: “Nobody ain’t go know no more about him.”

Mr. H. Bereaux: I would not believe that. The point I am making is that a lot of the people do not take you on. You believe that when the UNC was in power and you all were practising your nonsense that PNM people were not getting work? They were just moving on the side and getting otherwise, because they outsmarted the politicians. They were getting work.

Hon. Member: We were giving everybody.
Mr. H. Bereaux: You were not giving everybody. I believe that whereas we must deal with the URP in a specific way and above all, stop any corruption in it, we need to look carefully when we are ending any particular method by which we do work.

I am going on to the other maligned topic. You know I listen and I hear people call in on these radio programmes; you see I am semi-retired so I could afford sometimes to listen to these programmes. I hear them call on these radio programmes and then I hear these so-called analysts who speak over the television from time to time; they talk about "make work" programmes. Every time you talk to them they say: "URP make work programme."

This is a tropical country, the rain would fall and the grass would grow—when they talk about CEPEP, they say: "make work programme" and then the grass will grow. And if the grass grows and we finish with CEPEP, who would cut it? Do not tell me the corporations, because CEPEP only came into being because the corporations were not doing their jobs. Just to correct the hon. Member for Couva North, so that you would understand the system. CEPEP deals with contractors, they do not hire anybody; any workers. The contractors hire workers.

Mr. Manning: Precisely.

[Interuption]

Mr. H. Bereaux: You would not want that. That is the point, they are doing a good job and I would tell you something now. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell them that I recall when the CEPEP programme came in, a good friend of mine who was a councillor of the UNC said that the hon. Member for Couva North was livid, and he used some choice words to ask the Members on that side, be all gathered, not only the members of the legislature, but others who were councillors and asked them whether they could not think of a programme like that.

As I am on him, the hon. Member for Couva North, when he down cried or played down the building of two platforms in the La Brea Industrial Estate on the fabrication yard, I want to remind him that that is the very industrial estate that he came to turn the sod for the chemical plant; Farmlands; then took it to Point Lisas and—

Mr. Singh: Tell them to bring the consultant report on that.

Mr. H. Bereaux: The point about it was they sunk 85 bore holes; 84 were okay and in the last one they said nothing could be done. All that they did in order to get the better gas price in Point Lisas, but it is all right. Farmlands, you have
one; and the estate is going. All they would have done was lose a better site on the La Brea Industrial Estate. We have now Union Estate and it is going to be—I do not want to talk out of turn, I want to let the hon. Prime Minister make that announcement.

Hon. Member: Go ahead, tell them.

Mr. H. Bereaux: No, because what we are going to have, Union Industrial Estate is an aluminium complex and that is why, not only smelter, no, no, no; it is an entire complex six plants. That is why I repeat by saying all the time, that you see this community initiative is an important thing, because I do not want anybody to come in my constituency, change the environment and then tell me the people are not qualified. I refuse to hear that, since I agree that you need to also say to them that you have to pass the drug test. But if you meet plenty people there who are addicts, you have to team up with the people in the NGOs to try to get them from being addicts and bring them back into society; because you do not start that, you do not come, change an environment and then tell me people are not trained. You train them; assist in training them.

That is why if I appear to be very enthusiastic about this budget, I am enthusiastic because it deals with a number of things with which I am extremely happy. When I heard some Members talk about free tertiary education saying you cannot do this I was upset. Believe me, the only route—and I am repeating the Member for Couva North—to get you out of poverty is education, and we are giving free tertiary education. [Desk thumping] I am quoting him. Free education from the beginning; from pre-school to post secondary school.

You know, they have the audacity to come and ask: "What has been done?" Twenty-eight thousand jobs and 8.3 per cent unemployment. I did not put that there. On page 10 of the Budget statement I read that we are going to have a national building code, and I want to make some comments on that. You see, whether you know it or not, I am a builder too. [Interruption] Yes, I am. I am saying that it is important that we look at some things in the building code.

Take electricity, there is a reason why—you would notice anytime there is a hurricane the first thing that goes is the electricity, then the water. Water, water everywhere and none to drink. The reason is, the electricity goes and they cannot pump the water. Have we ever asked ourselves why do we continue to put our electric lines above the ground on poles? An accident waiting to happen anytime a small breeze blows. It is time that when we are looking at these new developments and so on, we need to run all those lines underground. [Interruption] It does not matter; you build a corridor for it. Then there is the other thing, galvanize.
Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [Hon. C. Robinson-Regis]

Question put and agreed to.

9.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank hon. Members for extending my time, and as a true show of gratitude I will not take the length of time. I just wanted to say this—to finish my point—and that is, we use galvanized sheeting, why not concrete roof, or asphalt tiles. If you are worried about it leaking, Lake Asphalt has some very good solutions that could solve that problem.

We actually need to build houses agriculturally in a way that we could prepare for a hurricane effectively. When you have a hurricane coming, you batten up your doors. You could put those wooden windows on the side. You have your normal glass windows and you put the wooden windows on the side and you close them with the advent of a hurricane. I will tell you. [Interruption] The Dutch in 1952 had a big flood and many persons died and they turned around, the hon. Member for Oropouche will know about that—the Dutch—they turned around and dealt with their environment, so shored-up their country that they have not had that flood since then. We have not had any yet, but since we are looking at the building code, I think we would want to do that.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other things I would want to touch, but in deference to the good treatment given to me by Members on both sides of this honourable House, I want to say it was a pleasure contributing to this debate and I thank you. [Desk thumping]

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, just before I move the adjournment, as discussed earlier, in accordance with Standing Order No. 90, I move that Standing Order No. 63(5) and (6) to the extent relevant, be suspended and that with respect to Standing Order No. 63(5) that rather than three further days mentioned in the second to last line, that be read five further days. Mr. Speaker, it will take you to Monday.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that we would need to be here on Monday, but I would like to make assurance doubly sure.
I beg to move, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

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 Wednesday, October 05, 2005 at 10.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you would recall my invitation to join me for a night-cap, if you so desire; in my chambers.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.45 p.m.