The House met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)
[Fourth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [August 20, 2007]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: This morning the hon. Member for La Brea was on his legs. He has 30 minutes extra time.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we took the adjournment this morning, I was commenting on the contribution of the hon. Member for St. Joseph, quite uncharacteristic. The hon. Member is here and I would like him to hear it. It was quite uncharacteristic. He is usually balanced and modulating in his tone. I sense a feeling of desperation in his voice after the masterful and performance-laden contribution of the Minister of Health. He obviously felt that he had to bring the hon. Minister down a peg or two. Unfortunately, in reading the letter of Nalinee Seelal he only read the top portion and did not read her conclusion.

I will read a line or two from that letter. It seems as though it is misplaced among—I have it. In the penultimate paragraph the writer states:

“Richard may have survived a little longer, if the people at the Port of Spain General Hospital did what they were supposed to do. The time lapse in getting my brother dialysed cost him his life.”

Further up, the writer also said:
“I discovered that a doctor can authorize that he receive emergency transfusion, meaning he could have been transfused at any time but the staff opted to do nothing.”

Then there is another.

“His family begged for further dialysis but doctors opted not to dialyse. In the circumstances, by Sunday my brother Richard Ramsaroop, 43 was dead.”

I am not trying to say that at the end of day the buck does not stop at the Minister. That is the nature of the chain of command. However, what it points to is that there was a certain breakdown in terms of that particular situation, and the patient died. We must now consider this in terms of what we have been hearing from the medical practitioners in opposition to the Medical Board. These are the same people who decided that they want to regulate themselves. I know the ideal situation would be for them to be able to regulate themselves. Unfortunately, they have been left to regulate themselves and that is the result.

In any event, it is the people of Trinidad and Tobago who pay. He who pays the piper should call the tune. [Interruption] He who pays the piper should call the tune. I made that comment to point out that the Medical Board Act—the doctors who want to be in total control of themselves, need to reconsider their position. The Government, and the Minister of Health is quite correct to put the composition of the board in the way that he has done it.

One death in a hospital by mischance is one death too many. But the way the hon. Members opposite behave it is as though we in Trinidad and Tobago are singular in the world and that even in the best of hospitals, this does not happen.

I collected some information from the Internet—the Medical News Today. In-hospital deaths from medical errors are at 195,000 per year in the United States. There are other sayings such as that there is a dangerous shortage of hospital beds.

When hon. Members talk about the shortage of hospital beds in San Fernando and other places, but in San Fernando in particular, what really happens is that the Ministry of Health is disadvantaged by its own success. I know of people who have come from abroad with dual citizenship and living in England, Canada and the United States, but because the medical cost is high there, they come to Trinidad and Tobago to get MRIs and other expensive procedures done free. Moreover, there are others. We have the classic example.

There are persons who misuse the hotel. I called it a hotel because they treat it like a hotel. They misuse the hospital facilities. I read in the newspaper sometime ago that the relative of a certain doctor was living in the hospital in San Fernando. He was living there. It was not said by a malicious PNM. It was said by another doctor who
told the newspapers about it. When we have all these kinds of misuse of the facilities, you can imagine it puts pressure on the facilities and there is some difficulty. Our colleagues on the other side jumped on it to show a lack of performance.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we are making an effort to provide good service. I want to congratulate the hon. Minister on his performance in the Ministry of Health. You hear the Members on the other side keep talking about reduction of poverty and trying to give the impression that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is not performing. I want to give them an example.

Last weekend I was looking at the television; they were celebrating India's 60th Independence. India is a country that is performing tremendously in respect of technology. I was shocked to find out—and I realized the difficult situation it is to carry the country forward in technology and still deal with things like health and poverty. I was shocked to find out that India, notwithstanding its great strides, has a 77 per cent rate of poverty. I know they would deal with it, because they have been able to do all these wonders in technology, but I am using it to show the challenge that it is, even for a country so big and so great, to take care of the reduction in poverty as it should.

10.15 a.m.

So, I said that to preface, when I was dealing with the various pillars and nurturing a caring society, I neglected to point out that in the constituency of La Brea, there was a certain development. I recall a few months ago, a friend of mine told me that he heard a pastor in Port of Spain indicating that he had gone to La Brea and taken a look at the senior citizens’ home, and he was calling loudly on the radio, late at night, to tell Bereaux to do something. The persons who knew told me that I should call him and tell him what I was doing about the senior citizens’ home, and I said I will not do that. Let him continue to speak on the radio and, therefore, he would pray for me, and I might be able to get what I desire for the people of my constituency and his prayers worked and my entreaties.

Mr. Speaker, I was also pleased when I looked at the budget contributions to see that the senior citizens’ home in La Brea, the Helena Charles Home for Senior Citizens which, as I speak, is being constructed on a site which I was able to get for the committee when I was an employee at TRINTOPEC. When the conveyance was to be done, I did it free of charge, but as I could say today—[ Interruption]—I have paid already to do that. Today, as I speak, the home is being constructed. I see that the caring Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also contributed $1 million for the completion of the Helena Charles Home for Senior Citizens. [ Desk thumping] So, I neglected to point out that.
The third pillar, which I also did not mention yesterday, is NEDCO. We have always said that the problem with persons who want to go into business is usually, if they are of humble means, the ability to raise capital. In most cases they get in there undercapitalized. Firstly, they get problems to raise capital and, as a result of that, they are undercapitalized, and then somewhere in the first three years of doing business they fold up, and then you have all sorts of comments that certain persons cannot do business. Well, this Government has taken care of that.

We have NEDCO which provides assistance and capital to persons of humble means and, today, that money has reached up to $250,000. What it does? It enables such persons, not only to hire themselves, but also to hire others, thereby making a further and significant dent in unemployment. It is said that if you really want to deal with unemployment, increase the number of employers.

We also have the Fair Share Programme whereby a number of small contractors are able to access the Government’s construction—the Government has kept 10 per cent its entire contract and has reserved that for participation by small contractors. The accelerated housing programme also contributes so that they get their foot in the door, as it were.

I now want to refer to a comment which the hon. Member for Tabaquite made earlier when he talked about macaws and monkeys on the site of the Union Estate. Well, I know that the hon. Member for Tabaquite is well versed in the Tabaquite and Piparo area. I was the divisional manager legal of Petrotrin and, before that, TRINTOPEC, and I know those areas intimately. I have been through that field. That was an oilfield. I am not saying that there was no forest there; but there were some secondary forest there. [Interruption] As far as I know, and I have checked very carefully and there are no macaws and no special type of monkeys there.

Mr. Panday: There were monkeys there.

Mr. H. Bereaux: There may have been, but I do not know for sure. [Interruption] There were no monkeys there. They might be somewhere else. So, I just want to tell the hon. Member for Tabaquite, do not try to ascribe things that are not there. I know you try to be very accurate but, on this occasion, you have been inaccurate. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: You have until 10.34 a.m.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I come now to one of the points that I would like to make. There has been much hue and cry about the Ryder Scott Report. Well, the Ryder Scott Report is a tool; Ryder Scott is not the only reserves evaluator. Every year, an oil company gets a report from an oil evaluator.
Some might get it from Clarence Netherland and so forth, and they utilize it—as the Managing Director of bpTT and as the Chief Operator of British Gas told you—as a tool so that they can know where we are at a certain time.

Moreover, when a company is required to make an investment decision, that investment decision is made and it is not bankable. The bank itself that deals with the investment decision—if it involves gas or oil—will commission a reserves report. So, if the State is going to have to deal with a company, and it involves the sale of gas for a period of time, the bank that is providing the funds will get its own reserves report.

So, to follow what the hon. Prime Minister was saying, the Ryder Scott Report tells you what you need to do in order to take care of any shortfalls that you are seeing on the horizon.

Mr. Speaker, finally, in this debate, which is my last opportunity that I would have to address this august assembly. I would like, in my capacity as the Member of Parliament for La Brea, to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and thank him on behalf of the constituents of La Brea and the village of La Brea, in particular.

On any occasion which I have raised a matter in terms of work to be done in the La Brea constituency, he has one mantra which he says all the time: “La Brea is a depressed area and we have to do something about it.” The upshot of that is the new town of La Brea. [Desk thumping] So, I thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

I also want to thank the Members of the Opposition. I have always held the view that I will disagree with you, but I will not be disagreeable. If it is that I am rough sometimes, that is the nature of the profession that I hold. I say it as I see it and I give as much as I receive and sometimes a little more, but no harm or rancour ranker is involved in it.

To members of staff of the Parliament, I thank you very much. You have always been very cooperative, and Hon. Speaker, you have been very cooperative and I thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I was thinking back and I recall that in 1991 just before the election, when we had that day of prayer on the Sunday and everybody was praying for us to win the election, I was praying quietly to be a good MP. I said that if I was not going to be a good MP I should lose; well, I am here; I did not lose. It is proof of the fact that I have been or, at least, I have tried very hard to be a good MP.

Mr. Speaker, to my constituents, I thank them. They have always supported me on more than one occasion. Even at one time they made me do some things
that I felt was not my first choice, but I did it because I felt very elated to be so considered. I say to them, the things that I did not do, is because I could not have done them. I know that I will leave them with several things. I have left a successor who is a man—he is a religious man, but he is also a fighter. He is a man from the people.

As I end, I say to them and to you farewell. I say in particular to them, in the language that I like, Latin. [Member uses Latin] I could not have done more than I have done. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I, too, would like to convey my felicitations and warm greetings to the hon. Member for La Brea. I wish him in his next venture, all the best and God speed. I think he captured it well when he said he gave as good as he got in the Parliament, and I wish him well, Member of Parliament for La Brea, hon. Hedwige Bereaux.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this debate to speak on the budget statement for 2008 which has as its theme “Determined to Reach Our Goal”. Perhaps, it should be rewritten: “Determined to reach our goals regardless of the consequences to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.” [Desk thumping] In this budget statement, the hon. Prime Minister transmitted very clearly his love for power. Perhaps, it is that love of power for its own sake, that is the original sin of the Patrick Manning administration.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at today’s newspaper, just a cursory glance: the Daily Express; “PNM Treasurer cleared in share purchase, but cops called in Monteill mystery”. When this matter was first raised in the Parliament the Prime Minster announced that the issue had been referred to the Commissioner of Police, the Integrity Commission and the DPP.

In the Newsday, “PM mislead Parliament Subhas exposes Manning on Monteill”.

The Guardian, “Police probe Monteill—DPP, Integrity Commission too”. The newspaper went on to demonstrate, very clearly, that in all the public utterances in this House or elsewhere, Prime Minister Manning made no mention in the public domain of his reference of this matter to the DPP, the Commissioner of Police and the Integrity Commission; nothing whatsoever.

The Prime Minister has been referring so many matters to the Police Commissioner, the Integrity Commission and the DPP he, obviously, mixed up this matter. Prime Minister, I do not think that your misleading of this House was deliberate, so it would not incur the Motion before the Privileges Committee.
Nevertheless, it demonstrates how you cannot trust this administration, because you see if they could mislead you in small things, can you imagine what they would do in matters of grave importance. I want to correct for the record very quickly, the fact that the Prime Minister said that they had a certain number of buses in the 1990s and when the last administration was in power, they depleted that fleet of buses. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact of the matter is, in 1985 the staffing level at PTSC was 2,500 and there were 200 buses on the books consisting of Thomas, National 1 and 2, ISUZU Ashok and MAC. These buses and buses on the whole, have a four-year life span. These buses were cannibalized; four years, then they depreciate and you have to make sure you have proper spare parts. But in the period as the oil boom burst no spare parts, they were cannibalized; I know that for a fact.

All of these buses were over 10 years old. The NAR came into power in 1986, bought 80 new air-conditioned Thomas buses in 1990.

**Hon. Member:** 1989.

**Mr. G. Singh:** 1989/1990. You know that and you did not say it. In 1993 to 1995, in the first Patrick Manning administration they did not buy any buses for PTSC, none whatsoever. They cut the staff in PTSC from 2,500 to 700. This 700 comprised approximately 350 drivers and 250 administration and technical staff.

The PNM immediately after the VSEP exercise at PTSC realized that there were insufficient drivers for the fleet and contracted out to Eastman and Associates the function of scheduling the VSEP drivers and assigning them to PTSC buses, This exercise was usually conducted on the street corner at Cipriani Boulevard. Needless to say the drivers were stripped of all their dignity and the Eastman contract was subsequently terminated.

During this period—I want to reiterate—1991 to 1995, you bought no buses; the NAR bought 80 buses in 1989. In 2000, the UNC bought 48 new buses which included the articulated units; the first of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago. And now you have with the oil and gas windfall significant sums of money to invest in the infrastructure of public transportation, which we support, because it is the poor classes that engage in that.

The run out of buses on a daily basis is 100, because of a lack of proper maintenance programmes at PTSC. I am telling you, check it out. So that aside, I correct that wrong; that which was articulated by the hon. Prime Minister and
echoed by the Member for Diego Martin East. You cannot trust what falls from their lips; truth does not fall from their lips.

This budget is premised on an oil price of US $50 per barrel. Like all budgets before, it is our hydrocarbon resources, which fashion the present and the future of our nation. It determines every allocation in the budget. What is the state of our hydrocarbon resources, in particular what is the status of our hydrocarbon reserves.

We on this side on numerous occasions have requested that the most recent Ryder Scott Report be tabled in Parliament for the knowledge and information of the elected representatives of the people. This Government, however shrouded in its cloak of secrecy, is hiding the Ryder Scott Report from the people and this is a gas-based economy.

When the PNM administration took office in 2001, it inherited from the UNC administration 22 trillion cubic feet of proved natural gas reserves and 800 million barrels of proved oil reserves. That was the inheritance, Mr. Speaker. I will show later in the contribution, the method of how that inheritance of 22 tcf and 800 million barrels of oil was achieved.

The current total gas consumption by users of natural gas from 2001 to date is approximately one trillion cubic feet per annum. So that over the past six years approximately six trillion cubic feet have been consumed by users of natural gas. This leaves currently 16 tcf of proved reserves. It is projected that with new projects such as the Essar Steel Complex, Alutrint Smelter Complex, Methanol Holdings AUM Complex and the World GTL (Gas to Liquid) Plant, that natural gas consumption would increase to 1.6 trillion cubic feet per annum.

It is very simply, at the current and projected rate of consumption, that the current proved reserves would be depleted in 10 years. Simple arithmetic. You do not need to be an energy expert to understand that. But that state of affairs is a frightening state of affairs for the future of this country. PricewaterhouseCoopers in the 2008 budget memorandum entitled: “End of the Rainbow?” had this to say and I quote:

"The recent Ryder Scott Gas Reserves Report has once again put the spotlight back onto the Country's gas reserves and shows that we are consuming our gas reserves faster than we are replacing them. In the absence of any further discoveries the country's proven gas reserves will be exhausted in twelve (12) years. Given the importance of this sector to the economy there has been surprisingly little reaction by the public to this announcement."
Because of the propaganda machinery of the Government and the subterfuge, and the cloak of secrecy. I continue to quote:

"Furthermore media commentary has not been particularly illuminating nor insightful. This probably stems from a general lack of understanding and/or confusion over the definition of petroleum reserves. The Government exploits this confusion and adds to it as they attempt to class Probable reserves as Proven, thereby making the situation look a little better."

PricewaterhouseCoopers in their budget memorandum is saying, you cannot trust this Government, they are fudging the figures. This is what PricewaterhouseCoopers is saying.

The hydrocarbon reserves of this country belong to the people and therefore the people have a right to know how these resources are being utilized and what the available reserves are. It is accepted that formation of oil and gas reserves takes millions of years to form under certain favourable conditions of temperature and pressure.

Therefore, it is in this context, I want to take this opportunity to really debunk this mystique that the Prime Minister likes to have, that surrounds this whole question of gas reserves. I would like to take this opportunity to explain what is meant by proved, possible and probable reserves.

Hon. Members: "Oh gawd!"

Mr. Manning: From what? From what?

Mr. G. Singh: You see you want to hide the Ryder Scott Report and you do not want us to talk. It is time that we educate our people. [Desk thumping] All we are getting from you is a lot of gas. The presence of possible reserves is based on very limited technical information. The method utilized is to take samples of the seabed, the water and determine whether there are hydrocarbons in the water and soil samples of the seabed.

A further consideration is whether the geology of the area is part of a continuum of an area in which hydrocarbon fields have been found. For example, the Gulf of Paria is regarded as a continuation of the Venezuela Lake Maracaibo, in which significant finds of hydrocarbon resources have been made.

If there are hydrocarbons in the water and the seabed soil samples and these are located in an area in which there has been found proved hydrocarbon, this raises the possibility of hydrocarbon reserves. Having established the possibility of hydrocarbon reserves, the next step is to conduct a seismic survey.
There is no magic in this. What is done is that explosives are detonated in the area located and as a result of the disturbance sound waves are emitted and these sound waves are recorded.

Oil, gas, sand, et cetera have their own peculiar sound waves. Their responses are quite different from each other. If these seismic surveys show the possible presence of hydrocarbon deposits the next phase is exploration drilling. When exploration drilling is done and there is finding of hydrocarbons then you can conclude that there is a high probability of hydrocarbon reserves. However, notwithstanding the high probability of hydrocarbon reserves, the question of that reserve cannot be determined with any degree of certainty.

The possible and probable reserves have significance in terms of how you plan your exploration programme. However in terms of investors and their financial institutions, the figure that is of any significance to them is the proved reserves. And that is one of the main reasons that the Ryder Scott Report is commissioned on a regular basis. Because the investors and their financial institutions require authoritative third party assessment of the gas reserves prior to making an investment decision.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Caroni East for giving way. I would just like to ask him a question. What is the ratio of conversion for Trinidad and Tobago of probable and possible reserves into the proven capacity or category?

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, you know if the hon. Prime Minister were to lay the Ryder Scott Report in the Parliament, I would give him an appreciation, because they provide the necessary mathematical and geological modelling in the Ryder Scott Report. So provide it and we will tell you. You are keeping the information for yourself as if it is yours.

Under the Petroleum Act all the data acquired by the oil and gas companies from the beginning to end, from the seismic surveys to the exploration wells, is provided to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. And then, the Consultants, Ryder Scott, take that data and do their own reservoir modelling and statistical analysis and thus derive possible, probable and proved reserves.

PricewaterhouseCoopers in their Budget 2008 Memorandum at page 11 continue to provide the following definitions of proved, probable and possible reserves. They gave a very good example of it in layman terms.

“You are out fishing on a pond in your boat. You have caught fish, which you can weigh, smell and eat; this is like Proved petroleum reserves coming
online. Then there are those reserves that might be candidates for
developments—they are like fish on the hook that are ready to be boated. You
are not sure of the size and they may still get off the hook.

Then, there are the probable and possible reserves—the fish may be there but
you don’t know for sure. Finally the more fish you catch from the pond the
harder it is to catch the next fish.”

So this is a layman appreciation of this mystique and this report that he is keeping
under his bed in the emperor’s palace. We need to get an appreciation of the
background. In 1995 the proved reserves was 6.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.
This is what the UNC administration inherited from the PNM of 1991—1995: 6.5.

The then government took a decision to aggressively monetize the gas
reserves by developing downstream industries, for example, ALNG Trains 1, 2 and
3; PCS 04; CNC 3, Methanol 4, Titan Methanol, Mittal Steel DR3, Farmland and
others. At the same time it embarked on a massive exploration drive and during
the period 1995 to December 2000, 14 production sharing contracts were awarded
and the North Coast Marine area was unitized and converted from an exploration
licence to a production sharing contract to make this particular field more
attractive for commercialization.

10.45 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, it is because of this change in policy that the UNC administration,
the proved reserves position was increased to 22 trillion cubic feet and an increase
of 200 per cent and oil increased from 500 million barrels to 800 million barrels at
33 1/3 per cent increased. This is what the PNM and Prime Minister, Patrick
Manning, inherited and this is what is currently being utilized and monetized.
Because of these timely initiatives, you have that significant reserve coupled with
that significant reserves, these are significant reserves to build a stable economy
for improving the quality of lives of all our citizens.

We have been the beneficiary of the quadrupling oil prices and the doubling
of gas prices. What a windfall, like manna from heaven. But let us look at PNM,
2001 to 2007. The PNM has only found dry holes for this period. In the last two
years, exploration wells have not proved up any significant reserves. The best
prospects in Columbus Basin offshore have already been drilled. Exploration in
this area will likely discover small pools of gas, less than 0.5 trillion cubic feet.
The low hanging fruits have already been plucked. In fact, these fields have been
considered mature by experts.
On land, the results of exploration drilling have not been encouraging. I am
told that there may be some oil and gas in the Iguana and Manicou fields in the
Gulf of Paria, although gas to market will take approximately five years.

The deep water prospect—12 wells have been drilled to date. Nothing! The
last bid round offered by the Ministry was a failure in terms of attracting bidders.
The fiscal package it is said, was too onerous; there are significant technical
challenges and so on. Multinational companies require significant incentives. We
have now lost because of our lateness sleeping on the job; we have lost most of
our leverage in negotiations as these multinationals will realize that at 12-year
reserves to production ratio, Trinidad and Tobago has very few options.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing this reality, a sane and prudent government would
have raised the alarm bells and would have dictated a much more conservative
gas monetization policy. But, however, if you are delusional like the Prime
Minister and believe that you have in your hand a divine prospecting rod, then
you can throw caution to the winds. Throwing caution to the winds is exactly
what this administration did. Wooed and fooled by the multinational oil and gas
companies, this company made a fundamental mistake in agreeing to ALNG Train
4.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, the almost orgasmic delight that the Prime
Minister took in relating to this House the attributes of BP’s HIVE technology.
Razzled and dazzled with this technology, coupled with his delusion, the hon.
Prime Minister created an illusion that gas would be found easily. ALNG Train 4
consumes 1 billion cubic feet of gas per day; this is 100 million cubic feet per day
more than Atlantic Trains 2 and 3 which is combined consumption is 900 million
cubic feet per day.

To compound this fundamental error, was the failure to put in place
accompanying policy measures to find gas. Why was there a policy failure? I
want to suggest it is because they put square pegs in round holes. I am of the view
that the policy failure to provide appropriate measures to engage in an aggressive
exploration is related to the lack of competence and experience of key personnel
in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the dysfunctional energy sub-
committee of Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, the highly competent and experienced and someone who is
considered an expert in oil and gas matters, in particular, in the area of production
sharing contracts, Permanent Secretary Andrew Jupiter was removed as Permanent
Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and replaced by someone
who is competent, but whose competence is in finance, that is Mr. Leroy Mayers. For the first time in memory, someone who did not have competence in the petroleum sector, a non-hydrocarbon expert, became the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. This mismatch between competence and role position was compounded with the appointment of Dr. Lenny Saith as the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Mr. Speaker, the institutional level, the highest position was held by an energy neophyte and the political directorate level, the Ministry, another energy neophyte. Together with another expanded energy Cabinet sub-committee, including members of the private sector, Ken Julian, Dr. Trevor Bhoopsingh; persons with a private sector agenda reminiscent of Ken Lay and Enron. They are the persons who make the decisions in the oil and gas sector for us. A recipe for disaster! No wonder we find ourselves in the current predicament of only 12 years of gas reserves left.

Mr. Valley: Who case are you fighting?

Mr. G. Singh: I am not fighting any case; I was a member of the energy sub-committee for several years. Mr. Speaker, so we have a dry hole scenario and this is what the Prime Minister had to say:

“I am completely repugnant (of) the articles that I have seen in the daily newspapers over the past two or three days and I would like to set the record straight—the oil and gas in T&T is not about to run out…” in my official capacity as Prime Minister, I say that the oil and gas is not about to run out. Trinidad Guardian, August 13, 2007. Have some faith. The belief in salvation by faith is of medieval times, that is, the 15th Century, when each religious denomination proclaimed its way as the only right way.

I want to remind the Prime Minister, like King Canute, the Prime Minister cannot command the tides and the Ryder Scott Report is our reality, and is his reality and that reality is beyond your control at this point in time. I have a lot more to say in this area, but I want to add to indicate that this administration also engaged the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. But this Government has never taken the steps to become compliant with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. Why? Minister Christine Sahadeo went up and down the place because this Government wants to hide the truth from the people. They do not want to tell us the gas price or the terms of agreement for ESSA, for Alutrint—not at all, you must know nothing, but you must come to make decisions and vote for the budget.
Mr. Speaker, it is very important to recognize that you cannot trust this Government. Lack of trust is critically important, so when the Commissioner of Police was asked today, what is his response to Mr. Manning's statement that the Monteil matter was referred to him, he said, "If Manning say so, is so."

Mr. Ramsaran: What?

Mr. G. Singh: Now this is a Commissioner who said, he could dance until his retirement, but if Manning says so, is so, is meant for me. Mr. Manning did not tell him anything. I am told that in the legal fraternity, it is said that in the Office of the DPP, the Prime Minister referred nothing to him. The Prime Minister wants to produce the letters. A Prime Minister does take up the telephone and call the DPP—produce the formal correspondence that you sent to the DPP, the Integrity Commission and the Commissioner of Police.

Mr. Speaker, it tells you when you start to engage in mendacity, the truth comes out and I want to make this point with respect to the Police Commissioner. We have always maintained in this House, throughout the debate on the police legislation, that the police should be independent and impartial and in their operation they should not be under the direction of anyone. But, I am advised that at a PNM cottage meeting in Ellersie Park, in which a pamphlet was sent out to invite persons to a PNM cottage meeting, advertising the Minister of National Security. The Commissioner of Police went to a PNM cottage meeting in Ellersie Park and spoke. If it is that he was invited to speak as Commissioner of Police then he must make himself available to all other political parties in that capacity, but if he went as Commissioner of Police to speak only at PNM political meetings, he must remember what Lord Denning said.

Mr. Hinds: [Inaudible]

Mr. G. Singh: Well, it is a matter for him to say. It is a matter now for him to clear up. It is the duty of the Commissioner of Police to say who invited him and in what capacity he went to that PNM cottage meeting. He must tell us that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hinds: [Inaudible]

Mr. G. Singh: No, to say it because it is an election year and there is a role for the police to be independent and impartial and we must recognize that role. If you are seeking to fudge that—[Inaudible]

Mr. Ramsaran: You are a junior Minister of National Security and you cannot understand that.
Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, but I—[Interruption]

Mr. Hinds: Rubbish!

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr. Ramsaran: So the Speaker could go to political meetings too.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Member for Chaguanas, I think you should go and take your seat. Your assigned seat is Chaguanas, that is where you have to go; I am ruling that you go. Take your seat. Not there, you are assigned a seat, it is down behind the Member for Fyzabad, please go and take your seat now.

Dr. Rowley: Now!

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, so you have the Commissioner of Police who we have given significant powers, ought to be independent and impartial, but he is demonstrating a level of partisanship; if he attended a PNM cottage meeting in Ellersie Park at the expense of his office, I call upon the Commissioner to clear the air for the time being.

The next matter that was raised in the Prime Minister's Budget Statement was the issue of CEPEP and the 15 per cent increase in that area. The Prime Minister said that CEPEP has been much maligned. Mr. Speaker, in the Auditor General’s Report, in the Audit Committee Report of the Division of Investment in the Ministry of Finance, they said that CEPEP is not achieving any of the objectives and they pointed to corruption in the selection, in the monitoring, in the procurement, and in every area. You did not correct those ills, but you seek to now add. What is the addition? The workers get very little. An unskilled labourer in CEPEP moved from $75 to $86.25; a semi-skilled labourer moved from $110 to $126.50; a foreman moved from $125 to $143.25, that is fine.

But, Mr. Speaker, the real beneficiaries are the contractors. [Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: How?

Mr. G. Singh: I will tell you how. Mr. Speaker, we recognized that CEPEP and the Government, the Government pays SWMCOL a management fee of 15 per cent to manage CEPEP. So for the period 2002 to 2006, we calculated that SWMCOL received 15 per cent of the $1,362,810,000.84 as management fees.

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, 15 per cent of that will amount to $204,421,557. The Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL) is getting $204 million plus to
manage CEPEP. Who are the persons managing this and what is their management system? The board is comprised of three persons: Mr. Brathwaite; Mr. Wally Yearwood; Mr. Vern Britto; Mr. Rodil Clarke and Mr. Teddy Stapleton. Can the board of directors account to us and the people of Trinidad and Tobago for how these funds have been spent over the years? Can it be held responsible if these accounts cannot be accounted for? Why have no audited financial statements been prepared, finalized and laid in this House? The appointed external auditor is a firm of Ramdass & Company. Can he tell why these accounts have not been prepared? [Interruption]

Mr. Hinds: Is the Member aware that the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament responsible for overseeing that institution has had them before it on several occasions and a report was laid before the general sitting of the membership of this House?

Mr. Sharma: Poor response!

Mr. G. Singh: But it does not deal with the compelling issues I am raising. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. G. Singh: The report of the Central Audit Committee stated that moneys advanced for CEPEP are deposited to a SWMCOL bank account. There is no accounting for transfers between SWMCOL and CEPEP, so there is a sweetheart arrangement. Who approved this method of arrangement?

There is an Investment Club. The Auditor General’s report which was laid in this House spoke of this club. It was a matching dollar-for-dollar arrangement between the CEPEP contractors and SWMCOL. So you have money funnelled to an account—the contractors' contribution to a Christmas party.

The report continues:

"CEPEP operates from our own investigations three bank accounts."

A main account at the First Citizens Bank; an Abercrombie Fund at the First Citizens' Bank and a Unit Trust Money Market Account. There is a lot to be said about that.

Who operates the Investment Club? Prime Minister, you are putting billions of dollars in the hands of these persons, and you put no procurement, no checks and balances in place? Mr. Speaker, 113 contractors, but no legal contracts; ghost gangs and so on. The Prime Minister was talking, but who are the real beneficiaries of this increase? I will give you an appreciation.
"Contractors terms for remuneration”

Mr. Speaker, 16 per cent of their commission on the gross payroll of their teams; a transport allowance of $14,835 monthly or $178,000 per annum; an additional 4 per cent for special teams. There is a 20 per cent for special teams; 15 per cent valued added tax on the above. But there is no monitoring as to whether VAT is paid. So you apply it to the current scenario.

New Image Contract and Maintenance Company Limited for 2006 received $1,661,618. So if you apply 16 per cent to that, the initial pay packet is $265,858 plus $178,000 transport allowance; VAT of $66,000, a total of $510,454. The ordinary worker gets $186 per day, but the contractor is getting $510,000 per annum. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. G. Singh: Gap Environment Experts, $1.7 million; apply 16 per cent and that is another $280,000, plus $178,000 for transport; VAT off, $68,000; a total of $527,000. Gap is based in Fyzabad. Two J’s Beautification Limited is based in East Morvant; fees, $1.9 million. You apply 16 per cent, $309,000 plus $178,000 and you have a VAT of $73,000; a total of $560,583. There is also Darwin Limited. [Interruption]

[Mr. Manning rises]

Mr. Speaker: The Member is not giving way.

Mr. G. Singh: The calculation of these figures represents only 11 months of operation on a sample of contractors. [Crosstalk] I am right. I know I am right. Every time the Member for Diego Martin West says that I am wrong, I know I am right. [Desk thumping]

Dr. Rowley: You are wrong as usual.

Mr. G. Singh: This is what CEPEP operates: Special events, $348,000; rally, $620,000; calypso competition, $328,000; Carnival, $140,000; employee forum; youth eco day, $328,000; total expenses, $1.9 million for 11 months.

And you want to increase SWMCOL and the contractors' fees?

[Mr. Manning raises hand]

You are creating a group of people not fulfilling your mandate and you are increasing the moneys while you take no risk to build entrepreneurial talent in this country. [Desk thumping]
Mr. Manning: I merely want to remind hon. Members what was said in the budget, that we will be increasing the salaries of the workers by 15 per cent with effect from January 01, 2007. Where the Member for Caroni East got all these increases from, I am in no position to say.

Mr. G. Singh: I can recall very clearly. You said across the board; you did not confine it to the workers. [Crosstalk] So you are not increasing the transport allowance? Tell us. You are not increasing the contractor fees? Tell us. [Crosstalk] [Laughter] The contractors are your soldiers for the election campaign. I want you to get up and say that you are not increasing their fees, but only increasing the fees of the workers.

Hon. Members: That is what he said!

Mr. G. Singh: Say it! Tell us! I move on to a next matter which the hon. Prime Minister in the budget statement called the crowning achievement of his administration.

He states in the budget statement:

"We want our young people to inherit a land where integrity reigns in all public places and where transparency and accountability are seen as accepted modes of behaviour."

I cannot disagree with that. But how do you reconcile this statement of intention, in the light of what is happening at the University of Trinidad and Tobago, which the Prime Minister regards as a crowning achievement? I have raised in this House previously the kind of orchestration of crookedness and corruption that takes place. The Prime Minister regards the UTT as his crowning achievement, but the UTT sought an opinion from Martin Daly, dated March 21, 2005, in which they sought to avoid the embrace of the Integrity in Public Life legislation. Having received the legal opinion from Senior Counsel Martin Daly as to how they could avoid the embrace of the Integrity in Public Life legislation, they then effected that; institutionalized corruption. So they sought now to effect that to avoid it.

Martin Daly told them, "This is the architecture you need in the context of their shareholding", and they implemented that. When we raised the matter in this House and it went into the public domain, what did they do? They went to court. So this is an institution taking billions of dollars of the taxpayers' money, but it goes to court. I have the documents here.
"In the matter of the integrity in public life as amended, construction of the paragraph to determine whether the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) falls within the integrity in public life…"

It should be consistent with what you told us in the budget, that you are keeping the highest standards and so on.

Not only are they seeking to avoid the embrace of the Integrity in Public Life legislation, they are also seeking to avoid the jurisdiction of the Freedom of Information Act. They filed two matters; so they keep the Integrity Commission away and keep the ordinary citizen from finding out what is the corruption in UTT. I have a lot to say on UTT; there is a lot happening there.

**Hon. Members:** You need three hours.

**Mr. G. Singh:** I need more than that.

Why were the local consultants being replaced by a new concept of design and build after $35 million was spent for them to design UTT? In fact, why did you waste this $35 million? There is so much more to say with respect to UTT. Is it true that the Chinese are now going to build UTT Tamana Tech Park, because they have doled out a loan of US $2 billion? Tell us; clarify the air. The UTT really is smoke and mirrors for the real technology scam taking place in Trinidad and Tobago.

I turn the attention of this House and the population to Government's attempt to diversify the non-energy sector through E TecK. E TecK’s vision statement and mission statement are laudable and acceptable; it cannot be faulted. But what is the reality? Like everything that this Government does, it cannot be trusted. They take an excellent idea and bastardize it. In January 2007, the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry answered some questions that I asked. Those questions really asked about the list of investments made by E TecK. [Interruption]

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

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

Question put and agreed to. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. G. Singh:** I thank hon. members and, in particular, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant who I generously gave some of my time.
The hon. Minister Indicated that E TecK made certain investment in four companies. Medical Data Caribbean, dealing with medical transcription, was an investment of $25 million as of October, 2006; company No. 2, Vallio, Interfix, a software development company, $5 million; company No. 3, Joint Venture, $6.7 million and company four, Bamboo Networks Limited, and international technology solution provider, an investment of $31.5 million as of date. There were four companies: Medical transcription Data, Vallio Interfix and Bamboo Networks. I asked several questions, because I was getting information in my mailbox as to the corruption taking place at that level.

In answering those various questions, I asked the Minister this particular question:

"Could the hon. Minister indicate whether or not a due diligence was done on Bamboo Networks Limited?

**Hon. K. Valley:** That said question I am aware of, the answer is yes.

**Mr. G. Singh:** Could the hon. Minister indicate to the House what was the finding of the due diligence?

**Hon. K. Valley:** At some subsequent time I can.

**Mr. G. Singh:** Will the Minister give an undertaking having regard to the investment of $31 million, that he would provide the House with a copy of the due diligence?

**Hon. K. Valley:** I have no difficulty."

It is clear that the hon. Minister was not aware of the contents of that due diligence. The Government invested in Bamboo Networks Limited in July 2005, $31 million of the taxpayers' money. I want to read into the record a letter from the Ministry of Finance giving specific instructions to the chairman of ETecK not to invest in that company.

**11.15 a.m.**

The letter is from the Ministry of Finance and it is dated January 06, 2005:

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January 06, 2005
Professor Kenneth S. Julien T.C.
Chairman
Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development
Company Limited
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Dear Professor Julien

Re: Due Diligence Exercise on Bamboo Networks Limited

Reference is made to my letter dated December 30, 2004 on the captioned subject.

I am to advise that the report from Dunn and Bradstreet on Bamboo Network Limited contains the following comments:

- the ‘risk’ predictor for the Company is 1.00 which is 8.5 times above average risk indicating that the likelihood of financial distress over the next twelve (12) months is 29.40 %;
- there is evidence of three (3) court suits;
- the company has two (2) collection records;
- payments to suppliers are generally one hundred and twenty (120) days beyond terms, compared to an industry average of fifteen (15) to thirty (30) days;
- the Tangible Net Worth of the Company is negative US$7.0Mn.

In view of the above, the Ministry of Finance confirms its recommendation that ETecK not invest in Bamboo Networks Limited.

A copy of the report by Dunn and Bradstreet is enclosed for your information.”

Mr. Speaker, this is an instruction from the Ministry of Finance, the guardian of the Treasury telling Prof. Ken Julien, Chairman of ETecK, the Chairman designate of the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) not to invest, but he goes ahead and invests $31 million in Bamboo Networks Limited. And this letter is signed by Christine Sahadeo, Minister in the Ministry of Finance on January 06, 2005, but by July 2005, they had invested $31 million of the people’s money.

Mr. Speaker, this is institutionalized corruption. How can you explain this? A directive from the Minister of Finance, yet you go ahead and invest! If you intend to book the Minister of Finance and the ministry, then you should have something to show for it.
What is the reality of Bamboo Networks today? You know I do not talk off the top of my head. The reality today is that it is nothing but a shell. There is nothing happening, no technology solutions provider and $31 million gone in somebody’s back pocket, gone down the drain.

I then asked about the Medical Transcription Company: How many persons have been trained, because we see $15 million for training out of an expenditure of $25 million. The Minister in his answer said 750 persons had been trained. I then asked for a listing of the names of the persons. What did I find? I found four cohorts for training: Cohort 1, 75 students with their names, Cohort 2, 52 students; cohort 3, 27 students; cohort 4, 41 students, 195 students. Therefore, you cannot believe anything they bring to this Parliament. The Minister in his written answer said 750, today, 195 when the answer comes.

Mr. Speaker, the mendacity of this PNM administration! I do not have the time, but if you see the kind of orchestration that takes place between Medical Transcription, Interfix, LLC and Interfix Joint Venture and a real estate agent in Atlanta. Gary Higby is the CEO of the software company called Valeo, and he is also a primary shareholder at Interfix in Atlanta.

Who is the man linked to Atlanta in the folklore of Trinidad and Tobago? None other than Ken Julien and that is what is happening. Millions of dollars by joint venturing mergers, acquisition and nothing to show for it. I want the hon. Member to explain.

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of technology scam; the corruption has entered into the area of technology which is supposed to be an avenue for us to provide sustainable employment for our people. You must be able to recognize the commonality between what is happening in UTT, the orchestration at ETEC by one man by a series of corrupt activities and bearing fruit for his friends and family and what has happened in this so-called Monteil transaction.

Mr. Speaker, when you recognize what transpired in this transaction with Mr. Monteil you must keep in mind the historical background of how it took place and why there is a repetition in this second Patrick Manning administration of such a transaction.

During the period 1991 to 1995, Mr. Monteil was the Chairman of Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC), he was Chairman of the pension plan and during that period, Mr. Monteil took the pension shares of the workers of T&TEC with the connivance of people like Sylvester Ramqua and sold it to a company called Vivica in which he had an interest in order to take over Republic
Bank of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what transpired. That is the kind of insider trading and dealing. So fast track from 2001 to 2007.

Mr. Monteil is now the Chairman of the PNM, the Chairman of the HDC, he is also the Chairman of the Home Mortgage Bank and the Vice-Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited. So he carries a series of hats, in the private and public sector, but clearly with an agenda for the continuation of the kind of T&TEC rape and plunder.

In this situation, Mr. Monteil as Chairman of the Home Mortgage Bank orchestrated and manipulated this Government into bringing legislative change in 2005 that will remove the question of disposal of shareholding from under the ambit of the regulatory authorities and in 2007 removing it from the ambit of the Financial Institutions Act and placing it under the regulatory control of the Central Bank Act and only awaiting Regulations.

Whilst Regulations are being drafted and passed, Mr. Monteil makes his move as he did at T&TEC. He made a profit there and it was only because of the vigilance of the Republic Bank Trustees and the fact that the administration changed that we were able to save the people’s pension moneys.

Mr. Monteil paid back over $400 million, but made a profit of $104 million in that transaction which can be verified with the court record and at Fitzwilliam Stone Furness-Smith & Morgan through Mark Morgan, the lawyer there. All these are factual. Today he has stolen a march and purchased 43.1 per cent of the Home Mortgage Bank which the Central Bank said he ought not to have done. He acted unethically.

There is need for moral suasion for him to reverse the transaction. So this done, somewhere during the period 1991 to 1995 nothing was done to him, he got away scot free and comes back to suck egg in 2001 and 2007 and now this Prime Minister attempts to hide that reality from the people of Trinidad and Tobago by quoting the Central Bank’s opinion selectively and that was exposed yesterday.

Mr. Speaker,

1. Was there any insider trading under the Companies Act as opposed to the Securities Industry Act by Andre Monteil with respect to his position in the Home Mortgage Bank?

2. Was there any insider trading under the Companies Act with Andre Monteil with respect to his position at Clico?
3. Was there any illicit financial assistance under the Companies Act to Clico Investment Bank by Clico in providing the security for the loan to Stone Street Capital?

4. Was there any improper disposal of assets under the Companies Act by Clico in selling its shares to Stone Street Capital, a company owned by one of its directors?

5. Was there any improper conduct at Clico Investment Bank for a loan to Stone Street Capital, a company owned by Monteil, one of its directors?

6. Were there any breaches of the Home Mortgage Bank Act?

7. Was HDC’s deposit to Clico Investment Bank made to allow Clico Investment Bank to meet its prudential requirements under the Financial Institutions Act?

The Member for Diego Martin West is here. The law under the HDC Act, No. 24 of 2005 is very clear—disclosure of interest of the Managing Director and board members. I ask the hon. Member for Diego Martin West if he knew of the transaction in which the HDC for which he has responsibility deposited $60 million into Clico Investment Bank? What was his knowledge? He ought to have knowledge. So it was deposited in February and the shares were bought in March. It goes in a certain sequence. Did you have knowledge? If you did not have knowledge, what were you doing?

Certainly, in the same way there is a legal requirement for the board to inform the Minister if it is making any investments outside the realm—and it raises other questions. Did HDC seek to have a tender to see whether it got the best deal for that investment of $60 million? Did the other commercial banks get the opportunity?

These are questions in the public domain that deal with ethics and proper governance in the country and I hope the Minister answers that.

8. Was there any impropriety in the HDC’s deposit with Clico Investment Bank?

Mr. Speaker, who are the Members of the Board of Directors from HDC? Mr. Monteil, Chairman; Mr. Forbes Charles, Deputy Chairman; Members, Jeffrey Herera, Krishna Chankasingh, Rajnauth Chanka, Clifton Winchester and by virtue of his Managing Director position, Mr. Noel Garcia.

Mr. Speaker, did these directors open up in a transparent fashion the competitive nature of this deposit so that they could get the best deal for HDC and the people of this country?
9. Was there any breach of the Housing Development Company Act?

10. Was there any breach of Andre Monteil’s duty as a Director of Clico (conflict of interest, disclosure, acting in the best interest of the shareholders) in selling the shares to Stone Street Capital?

11. Was there any breach of Andre Monteil’s duty as a director of HDC in making a deposit with Clico Investment Bank?

12. Was there any breach of Andre Monteil’s duty as a Director of Clico Investment Bank in making a loan to Stone Street Capital?

13. Were there any breaches of the Integrity in Public Life Act where it is said you cannot utilize your office for private gain?

Mr. Speaker, those are questions that must be answered. They go to the heart of this administration—insider trading. Monteil and his wife, the Prime Minister and his wife in the Ministry of Education; Kenrick Burgess and his wife, Global Competitive Strategies. All over the place the Prime Minister has allocated a value system, once it is your wife, you could rape and plunder the Treasury of this country, but she must be your partner.

11.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing so in the context where we are seeking to build a financial services economy. Can you imagine? A financial services economy! PriceWaterhouseCoopers says there must be trust and confidence, but what you have here is a raping of the public purse, a continuum that started in 1991 to 1995 and continues in 2001 to 2007.

This is exactly what is taking place under this administration, that they utilize the opportunity not to deal with the public matter; in the same way the UTT has an orchestration and the conductor is Prof. Ken Julien, so too, in the financial services sector, the conductor of the orchestra to rape and plunder the economy is Andre Monteil. The Central Bank says in its advisory opinion, and it is worthy:

“...we may consider...moral suasion to convince Stone Street Capital to divest its shares so as to preserve the purpose behind the 2005 Amendment, i.e. to arrive at a broad-based shareholding democracy.

The latter is obviously the preferred option as it supports the original mandate of the institution. The pursuit of this ‘public purpose’ mandate has brought significant benefits to the population since HMB has acted to provide liquidity to the mortgage market, and more recently contain the cost of mortgage lending and increase competition in the mortgage market.
However, putting the preferred option into practice may raise several challenges.

On the issue of valuation, for instance, one would need to guard against the likelihood that the sale by Stone Street Capital results in sizable capital gains to the company. One way to avoid this is to use the NIB as the initial purchaser at a pre-determined price, equal to the amount paid by Stone Street plus all interest and expenses incurred. Of course, there would need to be (i) a prior agreement that the shares will be listed publicly by a specific time (a public share offer could reserve specific allocations for targeted groups such as trade unions, credit unions etc. so as to avoid the concentration of shares); and (ii) some agreement on compensation to the NIB if it suffers losses on an IPO would need to be reached.

The specifics of this proposal and all its implications would need to be studied further."

It is clear that Central Bank, by virtue of its understatement, recognized that this transaction was ethically wrong. In addition to that fact, the question arises: Is Stone Street Capital a fit and proper person in accordance with the Central Bank requirements? I want to know. You have the Director of Public Prosecutions now, albeit late, investigating; the Police Commissioner investigating and the Integrity Commission, but Mr. Monteil continues to straddle the private sector.

I call upon the shareholders of Clico to remove Mr. Monteil, pending the outcome of these investigations, from all positions within Clico! You see, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce has a code of ethics. I wonder what the guardian of corporate ethics like William Lucie Smith has to say on a transaction of this nature. Because, you see, in the Express of June 10, 2004 it states:

“Insiders manipulating the market, says Esau

Allegations of heavy insider trading and manipulation of the stock market by brokerage firms raise many eyebrows at yesterday’s forum of Understanding Capital Markets. He chastised the…(SEC)…”

The same SEC that gave Monteil a clean bill of health:

“which, he said, ‘for years have done nothing to improve the system and has focused on all the wrong things.’”

So you have heavy insider trading taking place and the treasurer of the PNM protected. We call upon his immediate removal for proper ethical governance of the private sector and we call upon the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce
to make a statement, having regard to the opinion of the Central Bank, in this matter. Because, you see, the code of ethics is worth nothing unless they can champion it and enforce it.

So you find a situation where the treasurer of the PNM, chairman of the Housing Development Corporation, decides that he is going to take over the Home Mortgage Bank in this incarnation of the Patrick Manning administration. He proceeds in a methodical and systematic manner, manipulating the unsuspecting Government—

**Mr. Yetming:** Not unsuspecting.

**Mr. G. Singh:** Not unsuspecting; so they are aware—manipulating this Patrick Manning administration because of his role as a vote-padder; his role as a man who could raise money, because you see how he acquires the money, and in that capacity he begins to orchestrate the dance.

We passed legislative change in this Parliament, which that Government of the hon. Member for San Fernando East indicated was necessary for the public interest. Camouflage is “tiefing” in a phony public interest undertaking. Then we continue the dance. In 2007, further legislative change and in the twilight zone as they seek to bring about regulations, he makes his move. Predator! Predator! Corporate predator! There is a whole book written called *The Predator’s Ball*, about Mike Milken and the junkies associated with that.

The Prime Minister is saying *sotto voce*, “you will see what we will do”. If you are going to do anything, do it now! Do not wait until after the election. Do it now! That is the only way you can redeem yourself and your administration in this matter. [Interruption]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. G. Singh:** We have been told you gave an undertaking to Mr. Monteil that nothing will happen. I did not believe it and I still would not like to believe it, but we have been told that; to go on his Baltic cruise; nothing will happen.

**Mr. Manning:** Who told you that?

**Mr. G. Singh:** A good friend of Mr. Monteil.

**Mr. Manning:** I know.

**Mr. G. Singh:** Therefore our laudable aspirations to become the financial hub of the region will really be nothing but an idealistic notion when you allow this kind of manipulation of the system, insider trading and the manipulation of the
legislative process and the Government. This brings into being the pay-to-play approach that the hon. Prime Minister, with his $100,000 dinner which caused a public furore—pay-to-play! You have to be able to pay $100,000 in order to gain access to the Prime Minister to have a conversation.

Mr. Yetming: Between the PNM—

Mr. G. Singh: The PNM, and Jerry Narace, an ambassador who is really peddling influence; an ambassador who is really selling the office of the Prime Minister and bringing the office of the Prime Minister into disrepute; an ambassador in his capacity as PRO of the PNM, become nothing than a pimp of the office of the Prime Minister.

When you have to pay $100,000 to get past the gatekeepers to influence the mind of the Prime Minister, who can afford that? Where will the ordinary man be able to access that? When the ordinary man calls the Prime Minister and the one who pays $100,000 calls the Prime Minister, whose call do you think the Prime Minister is going to take? He is going to take the call of the person who pays the $100,000.

It is unacceptable! We moved a motion for campaign finance legislation in this country. It is still on our Order Paper. We outlined the problems with respect to the capture of political parties by large corporate interests, by drug interests, and so on. A drug lord could afford to buy 10 tickets for $1 million and put his cohorts in that arena, but the ordinary man would not have been able to buy one. That is to bring the influence to bear upon the mind of the Prime Minister.

This is the kind of thing that is taking place. How can you trust this administration when the Prime Minister has been a serial interferer in so many matters: In the Marlene Coudray matter; the Devant Maharaj matter; the handling of the Police Commissioner, so many matters? When you allocate that kind of value system, Prime Minister, everybody else becomes interferers. You would become a serial interferer. If you go in another arena you would be charged for unlawful carnal knowledge.

It is clear that this budget statement is a rehash; a regurgitation. It does not address the fundamental issues affecting us. It is a continuum, but there are serious issues affecting the society and this Prime Minister seems to be not only a promoter of Machiavelli, but certainly he carries out, like Napolean Bonaparte who says: “If you wish to be a success in the world, promise everything, deliver nothing.” You are very good. You are Napolean-like. That is your French connection. You promise everything, but you deliver nothing.
The Prime Minister promised a bridge to Tobago. Where is the bridge? You delivered nothing. That promise was premised on another French connection, if my recollection is clear. On a budget presentation the Prime Minister said the French company is doing a pre-feasibility, and so on. Nothing is heard of that again! The Eastern Caribbean gas pipeline, when I heard Trevor Bhoopsingh talking, he reminded me of the book: *Confessions of an Economic Hitman*, in which they utilize their knowledge, not to promote the national agenda and the public interest, but their private agenda. He sits in the Cabinet subcommittee on energy—

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Trevor Bhoopsingh does not sit on the standing committee on energy. I just would like the hon. Member to take that into account.

**Mr. G. Singh:** Well, I am corrected.

**Dr. Rowley:** Apologize!

**Mr. G. Singh:** No, no. He is a very close friend of the Prime Minister, which is even better than sitting on the energy subcommittee. He is the promoter of the Eastern Caribbean gas pipeline, funded by the Unit Trust, NGC and Guardian Holdings, and that Caribbean gas pipeline in the context of the Ryder Scott Report is not going anywhere! But he comes out to talk about proven gas reserves. A con! And that sums up the budget presentation—a con approach to the budget of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Mr. Franklin Khan (Ortoire/Mayaro):** [Desk thumping] Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to make my contribution to this Appropriation Bill and to this budget debate. The Member for Oropouche says it is my last contribution to a budget debate. The Member for Arouca North did confess that it was his last; the Member for La Brea, but they are going into retirement; I am just going to come again. [Desk thumping]

I want to take this opportunity to do two things this morning and into this afternoon. One is to thank the people of Ortoire/Mayaro for their love and support over this five-year period. I think I have represented them very well and I will spend a significant part of my contribution to prove that point and to show clearly to this nation that the people of Ortoire/Mayaro, from Guayaguayare to Marac, from Grand Lagoon to Gran Chemin, the entire length and breadth of Ortoire/Mayaro, were well represented by their Member of Parliament.
Secondly, I would want to put my own two cents on what has become a very topical issue in the country at this time, which is Trinidad and Tobago natural gas reserves and the so-called Ryder Scott Report. [Interruption]

Mr. Manning: Hit him a right hand to face with it please.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. F. Khan: I say this in the context that over the last five years I have not said much about the energy sector, even though that is my forté.

11.45 a.m.

Probably it is opportune to this particular budget presentation, to really articulate in clear scientific language the state of the country's gas reserves and the context in which the Ryder Scott Report should be put.

Before I proceed to do those two, I want to rebut two people, my good friend, the Member for St. Augustine, for whom I have the greatest respect. I want to quote a part of his contribution and I would also quote the PricewaterhouseCoopers report called “End Of The Rainbow”. It seems as though there was some collusion between the PricewaterhouseCoopers Report and the member’s contribution. The Member for St. Augustine continually mentioned the phrase “the end of the rainbow”. While it is a catchy phrase, I think it is totally misplaced.

I now quote the Member for St. Augustine:

“Now there is a new government gamble on our gas reserves and our energy security, which somebody called the ‘wapie’ game. The Prime Minister says that there is nothing to worry about, since as a young geologist he came across a letter written in 1905, where Texaco claimed that oil was about to run out.”

It should have been TLL, Trinidad Leaseholds Limited or even before that. He continues:

“In other words, the Prime Minister's position is that the population must have faith in the self-proclaimed father of the nation. We have always found oil and gas and we will continue to do so.”

You are criticizing the Prime Minister for talking about the Texaco letter. I speak from page 13 of the PricewaterhouseCoopers Report. I guess the editors of this would be Mr. Peter Inglefield, et al. They went ahead to say that things are bad and we should be careful, watch it and do not build anything again, et cetera.

“The Hon. Prime Minister has often quoted a letter he saw when he was a young geologist in Texaco...”
The exact words.

“claiming that the oil was about to run out and this letter was dated before the Hon. Prime Minister saw it.”

PricewaterhouseCoopers continues:

"His position and belief is that we have always found oil and gas and we will continue to do so.”

This is the part that I personally took serious offence to. This last sentence by PricewaterhouseCoopers, I quote again; commenting on the Prime Minister's comment on the letter.

"This is faulty logic and some day our luck will run out, as will the gas and oil.”

What PricewaterhouseCoopers calls luck, in petroleum exploration, we call science. What PricewaterhouseCoopers calls luck, we call probability theory. What PricewaterhouseCoopers calls luck, we call stochastic modelling. What PricewaterhouseCoopers calls luck, we call Monte Carlo simulations.

When we say there is chance of finding oil and gas, it is not that we go on our knees and pray in the night and say: "God, please let us find oil and gas." We could probably do that.

A good Trinidadian friend of mine from Point Fortin, who works in Saudi Arabia with Schlumberger—I wish he could come back to Trinidad. To me he is the best petroleum explorationist I have ever met. His name is Steve Geetan and he now works with Schlumberger in Saudi Arabia. The Muslims pray five times per day. The Schlumberger management, which is an American management, took offence because they feel that it is unproductive. The Saudi Arabian guy said: "Allah has taken his hands and put oil here, whom should I worship, you or Allah?” While we acknowledge that divine nature has placed oil and gas reserves to the bounty of this country, we do not pray to find it. We pray for other things. Science has found it from since 1903, in Guayaguayare and, trust me, science will continue to find it in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Speaker, before I go through the petroleum exploration history of this country, I want to make another point, again, for the purposes of the economic scholars on the other side, in particular the Members for St. Joseph and St. Augustine. I see no economic scholars in the Front Bench, so I would have to keep my comments to the Back Bench.
Everybody in this country has jumped on the bandwagon that oil and gas are depleting assets. By definition, if they are depleting assets, we all know they are finite and they will finish. That logic carries across quite nicely to the fact that if you have a resource-based economy, it is imperative that there should be diversification in the economy. That process is well under way.

When you have a situation in which your commodity price is in a windfall scenario, your mean cannot be equal to your mode and your mode cannot be equal to your median. One figure is always so high that when you get your mean, that figure would distort the mean. That is basically the fundamental problem in the economy. You want mean to be equal to mode to be equal to median, and for the time being, once you have windfall price scenario, it cannot happen. The non-energy deficit would have to stay. It would stay once the oil price continues to be high. It is just a fact of life. We cannot spit in God's face and be vexed because there is a sound energy bounty in the country.

The point I really want to make about the non-renewable aspect of our resource base is that, yes, it will finish one day. I cannot say and nobody in this Chamber could say when it would finish. Science would continue to push the barriers for us, probably for decades to come. But the most fundamental aspect of managing a depleting resource is—I am really speaking to my good friend, the Member for St. Augustine—when you are managing a depleting asset, the State has to extract maximum economic rent from it.

When Ryder Scott brings out a report—I know what is done when they do reserves reports. They check the geological maps, take the reservoir engineering parameters, calculate volumetrics, do decline curve analysis and determine what your resources are. The point is that if we are managing a wasting asset, we have to extract maximum economic rent for the state. To do that, everybody now falls into the trap. The first thing you are saying is to give fiscal concessions to the oil companies to do exploration. You are picking your own back pocket.

The Prime Minister did announce in his budget that some adjustments would be made. Do not go down that road lock, stock and barrel. We are still in a basin, in which the potential for finding oil and gas is very high. Most importantly, you do not give incentives in a period of high prices. The investment scenario is that oil companies have, last year, announced the greatest and highest level of profits they have ever made in history from ExxonMobil to Texaco Chevron to bpTT. What does an oil company do? PricewaterhouseCoopers talked about bankable projects. No oil company borrows money. Oil companies make so much profit
that they have to find ways to reinvest their profit. When you reinvest—largely we invest in field development on the upstream side—we reinvest in exploration.

As we speak, there is sufficient surplus capital within the oil companies to invest in exploration. I am not saying that we should not look at our fiscal policy and start to talk about some adjustments. As a matter of fact, as we speak, our fiscal incentive for exploration is quite good. An oil company can write-off 100 per cent of the cost of an exploration well entirely, in the year in which it was spent. They do not have to amortize it over time. The very talked about US $85 million Ibis Well could be written-off in one year. If it is written-off in one year, it would mash up the government's finances. These are some of the things that the population is not aware of. When everybody jumps on the bandwagon and say do this and do that, I want to caution this population.

I no longer sit in the Cabinet, but if I should confess here, the only thing I miss is being on the Standing Committee of Energy. Anybody who sits at those meetings for five years will learn so much and be party to such advanced, technical, fiscal and developmental discussions that you come out much stronger. I congratulate the Prime Minister in that regard. He chairs those meetings. I understand he has not chaired it in the last couple of weeks, but that is where the cerebral power of this country resides and good decisions come from the Standing Committee of Energy.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Why are you not there?

**Mr. F. Khan:** I am speaking to the Back Bench today and not the Front Bench.

Mr. Speaker, Ryder Scott has stated that we have 17.05 tcf of proven reserves, 17.6 probable and 6.23 possible. Based on our current drawdown, this is approximately 12 years. A very nice piece of lineal logic but operationally it works much more complicated than that.

The fact that there is a very good likelihood of the continual success in oil and gas exploration. I would rewind the tape and start from the beginning. Commercial quantities of petroleum were discovered in my constituency in Guayaguayare. I know the spot. In 2003, some youths from Guayaguayare cleared the spot and we had a small function. We did not invite the press. They wanted to feel attached to a very historic situation in the Guayaguayare area on the Pilot River.

In 1903, oil was found in commercial quantity. Do you know how they found oil in those days? You looked for an oil seep in the forest, dig and collect it in a
bucket. They started doing cable tool drilling and rotary came afterwards. We found oil from oil seeps. Trinidad is littered with oil seeps. They went to the Los Bajos faults in the Point Fortin area, saw oil seeps, drilled and were successful.

As we came into the 1920s and 1930s, geologists understood that you need structural trap to trap oil. That was the era of anticlinal exploration. There were massive anticlines throughout Trinidad, the largest of which is the Fyzabad Forest Reserve. Dr. Kugler mapped out—for those who do not know Dr. Kugler is the father of Trinidad and Tobago’s geology. The big geology map of Trinidad was edited and actually done by Dr. Hans Kugler.

Just for the record, in 1983, I was elected President of the Geological Society of Trinidad and Tobago, at the tender age of 25. I was elected by my peers to lead the fraternity in this country. Subsequent to that, I was President on several other occasions. But in 1983—the letter is framed in my study at home—Dr. Hans Kugler, at the age of 96, wrote me a hand-written letter congratulating me on my elevation as president. [Desk thumping]

Dr. Kugler mapped out all the anticlines and major faults in Trinidad and Tobago. Forest Reserve and Fyzabad were discovered in the late 1919s, early 1920s. To date, the Forest Reserve Fyzabad anticline had produced in excess of 1 billion barrels of oil throughout Trinidad.

Geological surface mapping and wireline logs continued for approximately three decades. Then the seismograph was invented, where explosions were created and seismic waves were shot into the earth.

**12.00 Noon**

It rebounds on the various layers. There will be refraction and reflection for those of you who did physics, that information is processed. Put another way, seismic waves were giving you an X-ray of the earth in medical terms. Just as a doctor could do an X-ray on your hand and see your bones, a seismic wave can image the sub-surface for you. As that technology came to the fore, it went off in Soldado in the Gulf of Paria and in 1967 a billion barrel oil field in Soldado was discovered.

So, every time you meet a hurdle, science takes a quantum leap and carries you forward. There was American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) memoir which was a “Series of Articles”. The title of the memoir was that oil is found in the minds of men. The quotation that started the book said that many times when we think that we are running out of oil and gas we are, in fact, running out of ideas.
As the science and the scientists of this world put their brains together—some
of the better oil field professionals on this planet were born and trained right here
in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Hinds: Member for St. Augustine, you have run out of ideas. [Laughter]

Mr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, we found oil in the Gulf of Paria, and then they
started exploration off the east coast. In the profession of exploration geology,
there are differences of opinion. Dominion Oil, which is now Union Oil of California
(UOC), was offered the entire east coast of Trinidad as a concession, and they said
that there was no oil out there. Some years ago, I met one of the old managers of
Dominion Oil, and he told me that.

Amoco which was Pan-American Oil at the time drilled 13 consecutive dry
holes off the east coast, before drilling a well call OPR4 which is Offshore Point
Radix 4 and that well was the discovery of the Teak Oil Field.

The AAPG produced a memoir in the early 1980s called Giant Oilfields of the
1970s and ranking with Guyar in Saudi Arabia and some of the fields in the
Zagros fold belt in Iraq and Iran, my little Trinidad Oilfield, Teak, was part of that
book; close to 600 or 700 barrels of recoverable reserves.

Then we came into a new phase and then 3D seismic came out as a permanent
piece of technology. What we did, we carpeted the entire east coast with 3D
seismic, and imaging technology is what has taken our industry forward.

Imaging technology has now been able to image the sub-surface in great
detail. There is now software available to model three-dimensional visual images
of the sub-surface and rotate it in all different fashion. BP has something called
the hive, and it is a pity it cannot be opened to the public. That technology is what
has transformed petroleum exploration. It is the same technology that has
revolutionized medicine.

Long ago, when you went to a doctor, he would have to feel you in your back and
open your eyes and watch for a colour inside your retina, and now we have MRI and
CT-scan and so forth. That is imaging technology. So, the doctor could now look at
you and say that you have a tumour in your brain or a lump in your stomach. Before
he had to look at the symptoms of the lump—the capillaries in your eyes might be
blurred or something like—and then back calculate and decide what is causing that.
Today, imaging technology is making you see inside the human body and, by the
same token, imaging technology is making you see the sub-surface in greater detail.
So, there is a greater level of confidence in success.
When a CEO of bpTT or British Gas—I think it was the Member for St. Augustine who said it sounded like if we pay Derrick Hudson and Robert Riley to come and say something. I withdraw that. It was on the newspaper that we virtually coerced host these guys to come and say that.

Mr. Speaker, I just spent that last 15 minutes or so to put to rest, and really to defend the Prime Minister statement when he draws the analogy of the letter. It is not that he is an obeah man saying that we must find oil. He is capturing the science of his profession and telling you that the science and the technology are now available so that we have a more than likely chance of making the discoveries that we know that once the investments are made, it is very likely. That is the science.

The other part of the equation which I would not talk about is the fiscal aspect which falls into the realm of the Minister of Finance. What I can assure is that I have all the confidence that the people who make fiscal policies in this country, especially petroleum fiscal policy—while it is the forte of the Ministry of Finance, much of the ideas are discussed at the Standing Committee of Energy. That is the basis on which the Ministry of Finance articulates fiscal policies.

I have articulated the science part, and I am confident that my Government will do what is right when it comes to the fiscal incentives if they are needed at all. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Dookeran: Thank you Member for giving way. I am glad you raised the issue of the CEOs of BP TT and British Gas. Would you wish to comment on whether it is appropriate to have an entire nation debate a critical report about our future and the findings of that report which appeared to be in the hands of the heads of this multinational corporations and not available to us as Members of Parliament?

Mr. F. Khan: Well, obviously, I would not be able to answer that. I was hoping that the Member for San Fernando East will get up. The fact of the matter is that I am sure in time it will be made available.

[Mr. Manning on his feet]

Mr. Speaker: No, no.

Mr. F. Khan: I guess during the budget debate when the Prime Minister is wrapping up he will address that. Mr. Speaker, I just want to spend probably about five minutes on—[Interruption] Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the final aspect of the gas situation is the geology. What I am going to deal with now is the utilization aspect.
What people have failed to realize and Members on the opposite side—a large part of the population of Trinidad and Tobago—is that most of the gas reserves in this country were not found looking for gas.

In the 1960s to early 1970s, Amoco discovered, Poui, Teak and Samaan. Teak was considered one of the best oil discoveries in the world at the time. They continued looking for oil. They kept exploring and all they were finding was gas. Every time an exploration well was logged—there is a particular wire line log called FDC/CNL log, which is a formation density log and it tells you whether the reservoir has oil or gas. Every time that log tells you that there is gas, men used to “steupes” because nobody wanted gas at the time.

As a matter of fact, it is my understanding that in 1995 it was the first time Amoco deliberately drilled a gas prospect. Prior to 1995, all the gas was found in the search for oil. The gas was stranded. It is only because of this administration’s policy of the monetization of the gas resources of the country that this country catapulted into a level of development. [Desk thumping] It was that decision. I am not sure what is confidential and what is not but, at the time, Amoco was planning to leave Trinidad because Amoco was not interested in gas.

Amoco brought a certain gentleman to Trinidad to wrap up the company and to say that it has no more economically exploitable oil reserves. It was the PNM policy that catapulted this gas matter forward. It was stranded gas; it was not an economic asset. Today, as we reap the bounty of the gas economy, let us give gratitude where gratitude is deserved.

Mr. Speaker, just for the record, during that time, the only persons who were deliberately drilling for gas was the State in the north coast on block nine. Over that period, we found Dolphin, Mahogany, Flamboyant, Immortelle, Amherstia, Cassia, Kiskadee/Banyan, Pelican, Ibis, Orchid, Chaconia, Hibiscus, Poinsettia, Osprey, Star Fish and Dolphin Deep; 15 gas fields of varying sizes and then the exploration process continued.

The final word on this is that oil and gas reservoirs, like most phenomenon in nature are binomially distributed which means that you will find the big fields first. The binomially distribution goes like that and then you will go to smaller fields.

So, in the known province of the shallow horizon the chances are that we will continue to find smaller fields than we found before. A lot has been said—not the whole province, just in the shallow horizon; the known province.
If we want 1.5 to replace production for any particular year, the chances are that we will find three-500 billion fields instead of a 1.5 field. Nothing is wrong with that, because that is the nature of the basin as it approaches some level of maturity. However, there are two new provinces that have not been explored as yet which is stratigraphically deep; the deeper horizon offshore on the east coast. The first well was unsuccessful, but it was unsuccessful for other reasons because they did not find reservoir and deep water.

So, exploration modelling theory will tell you that as we go into these provinces—these provinces are petroleum provinces, because once you have a source work and you have reservoir work you are in a petroleum province. So, our exploration thrust into these new provinces which is deep offshore, stratigraphically deep meaning deeper horizons and deep water, the chances are that you will meet some major and, hopefully, some massive oil and gas discoveries. [Desk thumping] That is the story. It has nothing to do with obeah man science; it is the highest level of scientific thinking in the world, because oil and energy are the pinnacle of research and development in this world. It is at the pinnacle of financing. The world’s largest corporation is Exxon Mobil. Of the top 10 largest corporations on the Forbes top 100, I think five or six are oil companies. So, oil companies are not a jokey thing; oil companies are driven by R and D, by science and by strategic investment decisions.

So, I feel that the little that I have said in the last half an hour or so should have put this thing into context. People say things, and they may say that it is a summary position. If somebody is a Minister, he cannot go into a speech and talk about all the things that I have just talked about. It may be totally irrelevant. As a matter of fact, in the Parliament it could be totally irrelevant. I had to go into this depth only because there are so many misconceptions out where the Prime Minister talked about some letter in 1902. Everything he has said is rooted in good science and proper advice from the oil companies and from all the advisors who sit on the Standing Committee of Energy. [Desk thumping]

12.15 p.m.

Just to put icing on the cake. I was talking to some of my colleagues on Friday in the tea-room; what I have explained to you is the scientific and hard geological reservoir engineering reality of the Trinidad petroleum province. But to put icing on the cake, God in his wisdom, hear where he put oil and gas; in the most hostile, physical and political environments on earth.

The largest oil and gas reserves in the world are found in the Middle East. What typifies the Middle East? Hostile physical environment and the most
volatile political situation on the planet. It is not the best place in the world to invest. With all the old talk people are afraid to go to Saudi Arabia. No American executive in the energy sector wants to be posted in Saudi Arabia or Iran or Iraq, because of the hostile physical environment and hostile political environment. People fail to realize Al Qaeda is strongest in Saudi Arabia because Osama bin Laden was a Saudi Arabian businessman. His father owned the biggest construction firm in Saudi Arabia at the time.

The next largest province for oil and gas in the world is where? Siberia. I see Putin was bare back in Siberia the other day, but that aside; hostile environment. Venezuela, politically unstable. Some of the largest fields discovered in the late 1990s that brought bpTT as No. 10 straight up to No. 3, were two fields in Colombia called Cusiana and Cupiagua, mega billion oil fields. Every six months guerillas blowing up the pipelines in Colombia. So to put icing on the cake, Trinidad and Tobago still offers to the international energy community a pedigree, so to speak, petroleum province of worth, but it also offers probably the most stable and eco-friendly and people-friendly environment in which to live.

So that international executives line up to come to Trinidad. Understand the modern international worker today is not only interested in salary, they are interested in lifestyle. In other words, you might have your best scientist coming out of Houston and he would take a life decision that I am not going to Russia to work, because it too dangerous. And you could pay him $1 million bonus, the modern knowledge worker—and you guys like to talk about the knowledge worker—is not motivated by only the pay package; they are motivated by the experience. They may see a new cultural experience in Trinidad and it will attract them to come. The modern knowledge worker is not going after money only and I said, to put icing on the cake, we also offer, apart from a world-class petroleum province, a unique lifestyle in Trinidad and attraction for even foreign executives and technocrats to want to come to Trinidad to work and to operate. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, let me leave the energy sector and still go to the energy sector but in a different way and talk about what has happened in Ortoire/Mayaro in the last five years. As somebody who came from the energy sector prior to my entrance into politics, it was always my ambition to develop Mayaro how I saw Point Lisas was being developed.

In discussions with the political leader at the time, he outlined to me a national policy for energy, in which the People's National Movement policy position was that industrialization would take place along the Gulf of Paria from Point Lisas in
the North to Icacos in the South and that Mayaro and Galeota would be the upstream locus and the upstream base for the energy sector.

That was the genesis of what we call Port Galeota and bringing back of a helipad into the Galeota area, so that the helicopter service could operate out of Point Galeota. As we speak, helicopter services are operating largely out of Piarco which is a much longer distance. The helipad construction is almost completed in Guayaguayare and I have here with me a report from the National Gas Company which gives a status on the Port Galeota and how it will be done. We have already procured design consultants and it is expected that construction of this port should start some time in 2008. So, one of the main promises as it were, that we have made to the people of Mayaro, which is Port Galeota, is well on stream.

Recently, we opened a major indoor sporting facility at Mayaro comparable to what we have at Maloney and some of the more urban areas of Trinidad and Tobago and I must say that it is state-of-the-art. I was very impressed with what I saw, so that the young people of Mayaro have a world class facility that is already operational.

We repaired the Guayaguayare road properly, so from Mayaro straight into Guayaguayare is like a highway. All the slopes stability work, all the landslips were repaired and those of you, Member for St. Joseph who visit Mayaro on weekends, must be pleased with what you have seen and your property value has surely gone up over the last five years. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Member: Under the PNM. Good shot.

Mr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges we faced in Mayaro was water. Mayaro, one of the few growing towns in Trinidad, that had what you call an isolated water supply. There are water wells in Mayaro and that was the sole supplier of water, because Mayaro was not part of the national grid. Because through the coconuts from Manzanilla to Mayaro there were no water lines and from Mile End Village to Mayaro on the Rio Claro side had no water lines. So if those water wells broke down for whatever reason, Mayaro would have died of thirst, because there was not the physical transmission infrastructure in place to route water from any other part of Trinidad to bring it into Mayaro.

I am pleased to announce that we have started to lay a 22-inch pipeline from Rio Claro straight into Mayaro; that work is about 50 per cent completed and that will now bring water from Navet into the Mayaro grid. So that the Navet water will now supplement the water wells that currently exist in Mayaro and if those
wells go off for whatever reason we can bring the full supply of Navet into Mayaro. [Desk thumping]

Let me just move to the other parts of the constituency, the western part, which is the Moruga, St. Mary’s 5th Company, 6th Company area—

Mr. Panday: And Barrackpore.

Mr. F. Khan:—and Barrackpore, well that is part of my region, four. If anybody has been driving along the Naparima/Mayaro Road from Princes Town to Rio Claro in recent times; while certain parts of the road are bad, you will have to admit, it is the best set of engineering work you have ever seen. Every single landslip is being repaired. In the past people used to just pave the road and within six months the road slipped again. Because—again I do not want to get into geology, I talked enough about that—there were a lot of clays up there and they failed quite easily at gentle slopes. Most of the landslips have been repaired and the road will be re-sheeted very shortly. The same thing is happening on the Moruga Road from Indian Walk straight down into Gran Chemin. So I would say within the next three to four months the major network infrastructure in that part of the country would be up to speed as it were.

Finally, the major election promise we made to the people of Moruga was the Moruga Fishing Facility. I am pleased to announce that that project is now being handled by the National Energy Corporation. I have all the designs here, very impressive; causeway to drive out and docking facilities for 175 pirogues. It will be the largest and most modern fishing facility in the entire Eastern Caribbean. So when the Prophet Benjamin says: “you are coming from Moruga with 10 pound of Colly”; you will be coming from Moruga with 10 pounds of Carite from 2008. [Laughter] [Desk thumping] It is the single most important project for the people of Moruga, who are largely fisherfolk and largely agricultural workers.

They are very humble people that do not ask for much, but for those who ask little a lot will be given to them. Today I feel proud to stand especially for the people of Moruga and as a Member of Parliament for Ortoire/Mayaro, to say that we have delivered to the people of Moruga; we have delivered to the people of Rio Claro; we have delivered to the people of Mayaro; we have delivered to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And I make the point about the port in Moruga, because a lot has been said that nothing is happening in the rural area, but this is serious infrastructure we are talking about here. This is estimated to cost in excess TT $150 million. It is serious fishing infrastructure for the people of Moruga.
Dr. Nanan: I just want to ask the Member if it took five years or six years for that design to be completed.

Mr. F. Khan: We did not wait five or six years. Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Member for Tabaquite brought up that. We had a lot of issues as to where to site the port. Understand these are not natural harbours; that is why you have a design with a causeway going out into the sea. To get the sign, we had to do major batimetric studies; we had to do sedimentation patterns. You do not want to build a port and it is silting up every six months. So you had to do two-year cycle studies to look at sedimentation patterns; you had to look at wave action; oceanography; marine engineering, coastline erosion, aggradations and what have you. And finally, when we have finished all this, the EMA said they want an environmental impact assessment for one year to look at fish stock, bottom dwellers and some of the things I do not know much about, shrimp and blah, blah, blah and that would be finished in January of next year and, hopefully, by the first quarter of 2008 all will be in place to start physical construction. [Desk thumping] Royal Dutch Haskoning out of Holland is the world’s No. 1 hydraulic firm. I guess they dropped the Dutch somewhere along the line and I did not realize that.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I close at 12.30 p.m. because that is a good time for lunch, [Laughter] I just hope that I did two things: I accounted for my tenure to the people of Ortoire/Mayaro and probably more importantly, in terms of the national community, that we put some piece of good science into this whole oil and gas reserve scenario. Something that has baffled me in the last five years, I mean being in public life and coming out of industry, is that there seems to be this impression that if things go bad you are happy. In other words, if the gas reserves are dwindling, we should all be concerned and we should all be happy to hear a fresh idea that puts it in a positive perspective, because if you do not have the optimists in the society we cannot develop.

So I have attempted to show that there is good science behind the optimism of the Prime Minister. That is all I have tried to do. There is good science and there is good fiscal thinking behind the optimism of the Prime Minister as it relates to the state of the country’s oil and gas reserves.

Mr. Speaker, as I take my leave, as I said, hopefully to come again, I want to thank this House for the five years that I have been here and I hope I have done my small part to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members—

Hon. Member: Lunch “ain’t” reach yet?
Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (Caroni Central): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I listened to the spirited contribution from the Member for Ortorie/Mayaro, but with all due respect, his contribution did nothing to allay the fears of the population or to address the concerns of the population with respect to the energy reserves, because at the end of the day, regardless of how advanced the technologies may be and regardless of how many tax incentives may be offered, you can only discover what is already there. The technologies do not create oil or gas, they only discover and so far what he has said does not allay the fears of the populations with regard to what is already there. But when the distinguished Member for Oropouche speaks, he will address that in greater detail.

Mr. Speaker, all the speakers who have contributed from that side so far, have congratulated the Prime Minister for his excellent budget and the kind of political environment that we are in, that is expected. But I am sure when they reflect—especially the Members for this House who represent people—they will realize that there are certain concerns of the population. As a matter of fact, the most major concerns of the population have not been addressed. Major concerns of course being crime, that has not been addressed adequately in the budget; the question of the cost of living, especially with respect to food prices, that has not been adequately addressed; and the third issue of congestion on the nation’s streets, roads, that also has not been addressed. So to the extent that these three have not been adequately addressed, this budget is a failure.

Mr. Speaker, I really want to spend some time dealing with the health sector, the question of crime; the cost of living; and especially the food prices and the third one being the congestion on the nation’s roads. Those are the major concerns of the population.

Yesterday, when the Member for St. Joseph spoke and this morning when the Member for La Brea concluded his contribution, both of them made reference to the article in the Sunday Newsday that was written by Nalinee Seelal with regard to the death of her brother. I do not intend to read this in any great detail, I want to just read half of the last paragraph from this article because that to me,
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[DR. RAFEEQ]

characterizes what is happening in the entire heath sector. What Miss Seelal has said here in the article is of concern to us and I quote:

“The experience of my brother has been an eye opener for me and I am doing my best to live a healthy lifestyle and avoid having to be warded at the POSGH (Port of Spain General Hospital) where apparently there is little or no regard for the lives of citizens.”

In the article she mentioned that if you do not have money to pay for private health services, then it is quite likely that you will suffer and even die.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sad incident, the incident dealing with the brother of Nalinee Seelal but this also applies to hundreds of patients who have died within the last couple of years for want of treatment for cancer. Cancer as everyone knows is almost epidemic in Trinidad and Tobago and the Oncology Centre was supposed to have been completed and treating patients since 2006. We are now in the latter part of 2007 and yet we know that the Oncology Centre is no way near completion, we have to wait another two or three years before we can access services at that centre.

In the meantime, patients will continue to die and if what we are hearing is correct, if our information is correct and that is, if this project is going to be delayed for whatever reasons, whether legal reasons or so, then all I can say to the Minister is that we told you so. From the very beginning, we knew that this project would have had difficulties because of the way that the consultant was selected.

As you would recall, there was a firm that was selected to conduct the feasibility study for this project and that same firm was selected by this Government to engage in the construction of this centre. We told them that was wrong, and we knew they would have had serious difficulties because of the way that that contractor was selected. If that comes to pass, we take no pride in that; we take no comfort in that; but all I can say, we told you so. We would lose a lot of valuable time and at the end of the day, that project may very well end up the same as the Scarborough hospital in court; it may end up with a lot of cost overruns and at the and of the day, a lot of patients will continue to die for lack of treatment from cancer.

Mr. Speaker, coming back to the budget statement itself, the budget statement of this year has had several deficiencies and my colleagues have mentioned—

[Interuption]
Mr. Rahael: On the oncology?

Dr. H. Rafeeq: The Oncology Centre? Yes.

Mr. Rahael: Because I realized that you have just moved on. Thank you, Member for Caroni Central. First of all, I just want to allay your fears, that the CCI and CCC are not responsible for the construction of the Oncology Centre, and therefore, whatever issues that may arise with CCC and CCI, and the Ministry of Health, will not affect the construction of the Oncology Centre that is now under construction at Mount Hope because the contract for that has nothing to do with CCI.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: I hope you are correct. I am saying that cancer is epidemic in this country and the quicker the centre can be constructed and people can access treatment, all of us of course will be happy for that. I hope that is so; I hope the completion date that you have set yourself at the end of 2009 will really come to pass and that patients can begin accessing treatment at that center at the end of 2009. But, we keep our fingers crossed.

Mr. Speaker, I was saying that budget statement has several deficiencies and a lot have already been pointed out by my colleagues. I thought that being the final year in government and this being an election year, the Prime Minister would have realized the opportunity to review his five or six years in office and relate them to the goals and targets that the government had set itself at the beginning of the term, the beginning of the five or six-year period.

I thought that the Prime Minister would have reviewed the prescriptions and the policy positions that he enunciated at the start of his term, and tell us to what extent he has succeeded; to tell us to what extent he has not succeeded; and to what extent he needed to change course, if of course, he returns to office. This was certainly not the case at least in the Ministry of Health, where I thought again that the Minister would give us an assessment of how his Ministry has performed in relation to the goals and targets that he set himself at the beginning of the term, that is the five-year period.

What the Minister has done instead, is that he has told us about some of the activities that the Ministry is engaged in over the past year without any reference to the goals and targets that the Ministry may have set itself at the beginning of the year or at the beginning of the term.

Mr. Speaker, if there is a document that tells us what the benchmarks are that we want to achieve in 2020 with regard to developed nation status in the Ministry of Health, the Minister should have told us what he had planned to achieve in the
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[DR. RAEEQ]

five years and then what he has planned to achieve every year; what incremental achievements he would liked to have; liked to realize every year leading up to the five-year targets, and again leading up to Vision 2020. But as I said, we have had no such analysis.

My feeling is that no such planning exists; no such incremental goals and targets exist; so that the programmes are not put together with reference to any one of these. But the programmes are done on an ad hoc basis that the Minister operates on the basis that someone will come to him, will tell him that this needs to be done; he will access it and say, well, this looks like a good idea, this sounds like a good idea; he gives his approval, provides the resources and the activity is engaged in.

In health, there are two types of target and goals that you set yourself. First of all, goals and targets must be established for the health status of the population. For example, what you would like your infant mortality to be; what you would like your maternal mortality to be; what you would like your life expectancy to be; how much you will want to reduce the incidence of cancer, the incidence of diabetes, the incidence of hypertension and so on.

The second major sets of goals and targets that you will want to put together, should be linked to your action plans, and that is, linked to the health services that you provide or you will want to provide. For example, how much would you want to cut your waiting times in the clinic; how much would you want to cut your waiting times in the accident and the emergency; how long would you want to cut your waiting time for an ambulance to arrive at your doorstep; what percentage of prescriptions would you like to fill; what you will want your doctor/patient ratio and your nurse/patient ratio to be and things like that. These are the kinds of goals and targets that you need to set yourself.

Mr. Speaker, again, I have a feeling that these really do not exist. In that way therefore, the Minister will never know and he will never be able to measure the success or failure of any one of his programme, except on an anecdotal basis where patients may tell him that they are satisfied with this particular service or they are not satisfied with this particular service or so. If this is in fact so, it is no wonder that the Minister really is unaware of the problems, difficulties and hardships that face most of the patients who seek care in the public health sector because he lives and operates at a different level and in a different world. He insulates himself and isolates himself from what is taking place at the nation’s public institutions.
Mr. Speaker, this is a far cry from reality and a far cry from the hardships and horror stories that most of our citizens experience on a daily basis at the nation’s public institutions and which are well documented in the Gafoor Report, the Commission of Enquiry into the Health Sector and the Report of the Joint Select Committee.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister made reference when he started his contribution to what he met in 2002—he would have come to the Ministry a little later than that, but what the situation was in 2002 when this Government assumed office. But I just want to cast your minds a little further back with your indulgence for a few minutes to the year 1995. In 1995, remember that the PNM had been in office for 35 years prior to that and you would recall that at that time in 1995, the state of the health sector was a state of near collapse—the PNM as I said, had been in office for 35 years and they had passed through an oil boom where money was no problem.

1.30 p.m.

In 1995 at the Ministry of Health there was no plan, programme, policy document or direction; nothing was in place. The health sector was at a virtual standstill. You will recall that at the end of 1994, the five Regional Health Authorities were created and literally left on their own without any guidance or direction for them to follow. The Ministry which was supposed to formulate policies for them was at a virtual standstill. Staff morale was low at that time.

There was a shortage of staff at almost all levels of the health sector and, in the midst of this shortage the Ministry had discontinued the training of nurses and nursing assistants, thus preventing any chance of the health service having its full complement of staff, at least with respect to nurses and nursing assistants. The drive to recruit our nurses from abroad was on and so we were losing nurses both by way of attrition and migration. There was no replacement, because all the training programmes for nurses and nursing assistants had been discontinued.

At that time in 1995, basic equipment was almost non-existent. Simple and essential equipment like blood pressure apparatus, blood sugar machines and ECG machines were either in short supply or not available. Medications were in short supply and simple consumables like syringes and needles were a luxury.

You would recall that in those days patients and their relatives had to walk with bed sheets, pillows and pillow cases, and we had the spectacle of newborn babies being wrapped in brown paper, because of a lack of basic supplies. There was severe overcrowding at the nation’s hospitals with pregnant women having to
share beds with two or three colleagues. Patients were sleeping on benches in the corridor and patient privacy was a luxury not available at the hospital.

The hospitals and health centres were rundown and dilapidated and many of the health centres were deemed unfit for occupation, but were kept open because of necessity. To get a blood report and x-ray in those days was a luxury and patients on many occasions had to be discharged without even a proper diagnosis being made. There were no ambulances in the public health system to transport patients from one institution to another, far less to respond to emergencies on the road or at home.

Most of what I have described was echoed by the then Minister of Health who, when he piloted the Bill to establish the five Regional Health Authorities, said almost the same things I am saying here today. After 35 years of PNM rule and an oil boom in which billions of dollars were spent and money was no problem; that was the state of the health sector in 1995.

The UNC came into office at that time and during the five years that we were there, we spent $3,935 million. That was the money allocated to the health sector between 1995, 1996 and 2001. That was the money allocated and that was the money spent. What did we do with that $4 billion? We had the task of negotiating the health sector reform loan with the Inter-American Development Bank. Anyone who has had experience negotiating a loan with the IADB will understand the cumbersome nature of such a negotiation. After we satisfied all the conditionalities and began drawdowns, we set about to build the public health sector block by block to satisfy the needs and demands of the population. [Desk thumping]

We immediately reintroduced the training of nurses and nursing assistants. During the course of our term in office, we also reintroduced the nursing apprenticeship programme, thus bringing the number of student intake to over 300 annually. We immediately purchased upon going into office 15 new ambulances for the hospital sector. We introduced the emergency health service by purchasing 50 used ambulances establishing control centres and modern communication equipment and trained over 100 emergency medical technicians. This was the first time a service like this was introduced anywhere in the Caribbean.

We completed the construction of two district health facilities, one in Mayaro and one in Arima, and constructed two other district health facilities, one in Couva and one in Princes Town. [Desk thumping] We refurbished or rebuilt over 40 health centres all over Trinidad. We completed over 200 infrastructural
refurbishment projects at the St. Ann's Hospital and the Port of Spain General Hospital. We did massive refurbishment works at the St. James Medical Centre and made the environment of care pleasing to the patients there.

We purchased and installed a new cobalt cancer treatment for the Oncology Centre, while preparatory work was being done for the new oncology centre. [Desk thumping] We opened the Wendy Fitzwilliam Pediatrics Hospital at Mount Hope, making it the most modern pediatric facility in the Caribbean.

We commenced the free cardiac surgery for children suffering from heart disease and completely cleared the backlog when we left office in 1991. [Desk thumping] We completed the designs for the Scarborough Hospital and were about to go out for tender for construction when we left office in 2001.

We completed the feasibility study for the National Oncology Centre and sent staff abroad for training to work at the new oncology centre. We purchased equipment valued at over $100 million for the public health institutions. We enacted the Human Tissue Transplant Act, which was on the drawing board for over 25 years. [Desk thumping]

We performed over 3,000 cataract operations during our term in office, thus substantially reducing the backlog. We introduced the family medicine programme at the University of the West Indies for family care physicians, in order to upgrade their skills to better be able to provide care at the primary care centres.

We established the pension plan for all monthly paid Regional Health Authority employees, which was one of the best pension plans in the country incidentally. [Desk thumping] We transferred all the daily-paid workers from the public service to the RHAs, and in order to assist with the shortage of nurses, we introduced the category of staff called patient care assistants. [Desk thumping] Most importantly, we did this with a budget over the five-year period of $4 billion. [Desk thumping] At the end of 2001, we demitted office. [Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: You were voted out; you did not demit office.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: The government was stolen from us in 2001, if you prefer that. [Desk thumping]

Dr. Rowley: You were put out of office.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: On June 09, 2004, three years ago, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a Commission of Enquiry into the health sector. All of us know the history of that Commission of Enquiry, with Government putting all sorts of obstacles in its way in order to prevent it doing its work. It needed just a
lawyer and it took several months before the Government could allocate a lawyer
to that Commission of Enquiry. Finally, three years after the appointment and a
lot of hard work, the commission submitted its report which was laid in the
Parliament. The Prime Minister then did a very strange thing. He referred the
report to a committee. That committee was to recommend an implementation
schedule and was supposed to report to him in one month. We told them that it
was just a ruse to waste time.

Today, three months have elapsed and I do not know what the status of the
committee's report is, because we know nothing about it. To our mind that was
only designed to waste time. I told the Prime Minister when he laid the report that
he should have taken the report, given it to the Regional Health Authorities and
the Ministry of Health and asked them within one week to give him their
implementation schedule and what resources were required in order to implement
the recommendations of the committee. No such thing was done. I hope this will
not just be another Commission of Enquiry report into the health sector that will
just lie on the shelves.

When the UNC was in office the figure was $3.9 billion. The figure for the
Minister of Health in this dispensation is $13,976 million; that is $14 billion.
After six years in office and $14 billion, what state is the Minister leaving the
health sector as he demits office at this point in time?

Firstly, he is leaving the health sector with a lot of broken promises. In fact, he
is leaving the health sector in which 70 to 75 per cent of the promises he made
over the last six years have not been fulfilled. [Desk thumping] I will deal with
that a little later in my contribution.

He is leaving the health sector in a state in which patients have to lie on
trolleys, benches, on the floor or sit on chairs. They have to sit on a bench for six,
12, sometimes 24 hours before they can be put in a bed.

He is leaving the health sector in a state in which pregnant women have to
share a bed with some of their other colleagues. Sometimes some of the patients
take their chances on the corridors of the hospital or they go home in their sick
condition.

The doctors sometimes have to discharge ill patients in order to make room
for patients who are more ill. Sometimes you go to casualty and you have to
remain for 24 hours before you are seen by a doctor. Recently we saw the
relatives of a patient actually walking with her bed to the hospital so that their
relative can have a bed to sleep on. A lot of patients still have to carry their pillow
cases, pillows and so on. All this is happening in Trinidad and Tobago in the
health sector, at a time when we are rolling in money, $14 billion.

The Minister in 2007 is leaving the health sector in a state in which, despite
his lavish claims that he has dealt with the surgical waiting list, and despite the
millions that have been spent on the surgical waiting list initiative, that in itself
has dark and shady arrangements, but we will not deal with that today, today if
you go to a clinic for an appointment for a cataract operation you will get an
appointment for 2009 or 2010. That is after having to wait for a considerable time
to be seen at the clinic itself. That is the same for many other categories of
surgery.

The Minister is leaving the health sector in a condition in which many patients
still have to face the private pharmacies to purchase expensive medication. Most
of the cheap medications are available at the nation's hospitals or through the
CDAP programme, but a lot of the expensive medication is not available. Those
who can afford to buy, of course, would buy the medication, those who cannot,
will just have to do without. Some of them die in the process. Mr. Speaker, I will
deal with the CDAP programme in a little while.

Dr. Rowley: CDAP is for programme.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: I do not want to engage you in that kind of discussion. You
are in Government, you are in Cabinet, I am sure you come across Cabinet Notes
sometimes from the Minister of Trade and Industry. Have you ever heard about
KC Confectionary? What does KC stand for?

Dr. Rowley: [Inaudible]

Dr. H. Rafeeq: You tell me what KC stands for. KC stands for "Khan's
Confectionary", but it is called KC Confectionary. [Desk thumping]

Dr. Rowley: Reverse back to your speech! [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. H. Rafeeq: I am saying "C-DAP Programme". [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. Rowley: That is the kind of "dotishness" that entrenches itself.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: And you are part of that. [Desk thumping]

The Minister is leaving the health sector in a state where patients are dying
because they are not receiving appropriate treatment for cancer. That cancer
centre was supposed to have been completed since 2006. We know now that the completion date is set for 2009. I hope that promise is kept.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in 2007 the Minister is leading the health sector in a state in which public confidence is eroded to the extent the people are afraid to go to the nation’s hospitals for treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I would not have time to read everything but just let me read two incidents, the first has to do with Jonathan Belix, 22 years who died in 2004. While we celebrate independence, the Belix family will be remembering the death of 22-year-old Jonathan Belix who died on August 31, 2004 of complications arising from a broken leg he sustained in an accident two days before. A young man with his whole life ahead of him died from a broken leg in this day and age.

Do you remember Christine Loubon? Her 13-year-old daughter Chenelle Sookoo who was diagnosed with a brain tumour died last December, hours before she could receive the much needed operation that may have saved her life. Her parents were saying—when you are a parent, you have a huge responsibility. “Chenelle was in excruciating pain and was vomiting constantly and they told her to go home, because there was no space. If my sister had money she would not have suffered like that today.”

Mr. Speaker, Anthony Blanc died 11 days short of his 7th birthday at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex after battling for almost six agonizing hours with an asthma attack. The whole incident is related, but I would not go into all of it except to say at the end of it he said to his mother: “I am tired, just let me sleep.” Those were his last words; he died a few minutes later.

Mr. Speaker, 17-year-old Ronald Gill complained of abdominal pain, sought treatment at the Port of Spain General Hospital where he was diagnosed with muscle strain, a few days later he died from what was in fact peritonitis and acute appendicitis. These are just a couple insights of what the health sector in Trinidad and Tobago is at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is leading the health sector in a state in which the staff, especially the doctors and nurses are disgruntled. He does not realize particularly in the field of health, that the sector will not perform efficiently and if the citizens are to get the kind of care and service they need if the staff is disgruntled.
After six years, the Minister is leaving the Ministry of Health in a state in which he has not transformed the Head Office of the ministry into what it should be. The Ministry of Health, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is supposed to be transformed into what it should be. It is supposed to be transformed into a policy formulation body which would monitor the health services and provide the financing and that has not been done.

The Minister of Health is leaving the health sector in a state in which the Regional Health Authorities are guilty or accused of nepotism, corruption, mismanagement, negligence and favouritism. Mr. Speaker, there is much of that in the Gaffoor Commissioner Report, and the Joint Select Committee Report.

Mr. Speaker, there is not always bad news; there is good news as well. The Minister has not failed at everything. He has built around him a formidable and strong team of communication officers whose job it is to make the Minister look good.

In response to a question sometime ago, the Minister told us he has a Communication Consultant who works for over $40,000 a month; a Manager/Adviser of Communications, $16,000 per month; Communications Policy Implementation Officer, $11,500 per month; a Communications Specialist, $12,000 per month; a Communications Analyst, $8,000 per month; a Video Technician, $6,000; a Video Technician Assistant, $4,700 per month and a Secretary/Office Assistant, $6,000. That constitutes the Minister’s communication unit.

In the past six years he has spent over $20 million in communication activities and that money could have been better spent to deal with some of the issues that I have mentioned before.

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister could have pursued having competent teams of research officers, health planners, accounting personnel and so forth, then with the same vigour he did with the communications unit, a lot of the problems at the ministry would have been solved. That is what the Minister is leaving in 2007 as far as the health sector is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that the policy prescription of the Minister of Health will not succeed and it will not succeed because the Government pays lip service to primary health care and they do not put the resources to deal with it.

Primary health care at this time is not an option, it is an imperative. The reason the Minister only pays lip service to primary health care is that I am sure he does not understand, neither does the Prime Minister understand what it is.
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[DR. RAFFIQ]

Yesterday the Minister mentioned a lot about primary health care and said he was engaged in primary health care; he is looking after the children in primary school. [Laughter] Primary health care has nothing to do with primary schools.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health likes to cut ribbons and engage in public relations activities and tertiary health care offers him the opportunities to do that. Primary health care is more bland and for the Minister, less exciting and this is one of the dangers the ministry faces when the communications department is allowed to run the ministry. That department does not have the technical or the intellectual capacity to determine policy for the health sector, and that is where the ministry is strongest. I will give you an example.

Let us take the Freeport Health Centre for instance. It caters for a catchment area of 10,000—15,000 persons. The person who is in charge of that health centre should have a computerized database of how many diabetics, hypertensives, asthmatics and patients suffering from heart disease and children are in that catchment area.

Armed with that data, you then determine how often you want these patients to attend clinic, and you request your resources accordingly. With that kind of information, you should be able to track your delinquent patients who for some reason have been missing appointments: a telephone call, or a visit by the District Health Visitor should correct this and pick up early warning signs with the problems.

In that way, you will have full control of all persons visiting that clinic who are suffering from chronic illnesses and, as I say, you will be able to pick up early problems and be able to determine which patient needs to see a specialist and so forth, and prevent the complications from arising.

Mr. Speaker, when a patient comes to a clinic and spends three minutes at an office and is given a prescription for 16 weeks, that is four months, that would not work. Because sometimes the patient might miss an appointment, that means the patient would not be seen for a period of eight months, and you know what can go wrong in managing, diabetes, blood pressure, and heart disease over a period of eight months. Many things can go wrong. So patients need to be seen more often and they need to spend more time in the doctor’s office at these clinics. As I said, three minutes once every four or six months will not do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the budget statement and deal with two issues before I move on. The first one is on the two pages that were allotted to the health sector; half of one page has been allotted to the CDAP, the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme.
I want to say as I have said inside and outside this Parliament that it is a good programme, but there are difficulties and deficiencies in that programme which I want to mention. I asked the Minister yesterday and he mentioned that for the last fiscal year, $40 million has been spent on CDAP and 300,000 persons are benefiting from CDAP.

I am in a position to know and I can tell you that in the CDAP, 50 per cent of the funds go into administrative service. So if $40 million is allocated, it means that $20 million goes into administrative fees. It means that to purchase the medication itself $20 million per year is allocated.

Mr. Speaker, $20 million divided by 300 persons, each person would be allocated $133 per year, that is 22 cents per day. Twenty-two cents per day with a budget of $42 billion? How can patients survive? Patients are getting the very cheap medications and they have to face the pharmacies to purchase the expensive medications and I will give you an example.

There is a particular drug that is very important and essential in preventing heart disease. It has been recognized in medical services across the world as very important in preventing heart disease and strokes.

Dr. Moonilal: What is the name of that drug?

Dr. H. Rafeeq: The name of the drug is Plavix and one tablet costs $20, and CDAP is allocating for each person 22 cents per day. One tablet has to be taken every day.

Mr. Speaker, a large section of the population is denied the treatment because they cannot spend $20 a day for this particular medication. So while you will get the medication that costs 5 cents and 6 cents, you will not get the one for $20 because it is not available on CDAP and many patients do not have money to pay for that, so it means they have to do without.

They will have complications from their disease, heart attack, then they may need to do by-pass surgery which would cost $100,000 plus. All this could be prevented if the proper medication were available with CDAP.

So while it is a good programme, I am saying that cheap medications are being given and the more expensive ones that actually save lives are not given at this time, and the Minister should seriously look at putting that on the programme.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday when the Minister spoke, he mentioned although he had a powerful communications team, he was doing a lot of health promotion
activities on the newspapers on the television, the radio and so forth, and that is where the money was going.

That is entirely false and I want you to look at this advertisement.

[Member holds up advertisement]

It is saying that the Minister purchased X-ray machines, a CT scan and how many prescriptions he filled during different years. How does this benefit patients? This must have cost about $10,000. Do you know how many Plavix tablets this could have bought for patients who cannot afford? This is only one advertisement.

2.00 p.m.

I am saying that the Minister definitely has his priorities wrong. I am saying that the focus of the Minister is wrong and he should cut down on the expenses or the money that he is spending on the communications unit and satisfy the needs of the population for the more expensive drugs on the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme.

I want to deal for the next few minutes with some of the promises that the Minister has made over the last six years and have not kept. It is important to do that because, in this budget, quite a lot of promises have been made and I am saying: Why should we believe the Minister and what is there to give us any kind of comfort that the promises that he made in the budget will be fulfilled? Because we have, over the last six years, over 100 promises that the Minister has made that were not fulfilled. As a matter of fact, as I said at the beginning of my contribution, about 70 to 75 per cent of the promises that he made, have not been fulfilled. So I would like to just mention some of these.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes.

[Dr. R. Moonilal]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the 2003 budget it states:

“…we will install approximately 20 dialysis machines in the major Government treatment centres.”

That has not been done:

“… expand the capacity for a cancer treatment with the establishment of the National Oncology Centre.”
That was supposed to have been completed in 2006—not done. The next promise:

“revisiting the National Health Insurance System to ensure that the poor and terminally ill are not excluded from access to life saving health care…”

with a view to early implementation. Not done. The next promise:

“…the Ministry of Health will begin implementation of the Trinidad and Tobago Mental Health Plan. The plan will rationalize and reorient the provision of mental health services using a holistic and integrated approach to mental health promotion, treatment and care.”

Not done. The next promise in the 2004 Budget:

“Health quality legislation, prescribing proper standards for the quality of health care in our public and private health sector, will be enacted in 2004.”

Not done:

“…we will accelerate our review of the National Health Insurance system with a view to early implementation.”

Not done:

“Construction is expected to begin this year (that is 2003) on the National Oncology Centre…”

Of course, not done:

“…the St. James District Health Facility…”

Not done:

“…the Point Fortin District Hospital…”

Not done:

“…six district health facilities…”

Not done. In this is included, of course, the Chaguanas District Health Facility. We have had many promises from the Minister as to start-up dates. He has even given, on previous occasions, completion dates for the Chaguanas District Health Facility. To date, not even a contract for the construction of that centre has been awarded. It continues:

“Substantial improvements will be made to the Port of Spain General Hospital…”
“…the San Fernando General Hospital,…”

“…the St. James Infirmary…”

“…the Sangre Grande District Hospital…”

“and several other health facilities.”

The 2005 budget now:

“…we shall commission a new wing of the San Fernando General Hospital, which will include an Intensive Care Unit, the outfitting of a Burns Unit and theatres for same day surgery.”

That has not been achieved. Well, we have the continuing of construction of the Scarborough Regional Hospital and the National Oncology Centre being made every year.

“Upgrade works will begin in 2005 at the Sangre Grande Hospital and construction of an enhanced health centre in Sangre Grande would be completed in 2006.”

This has not yet even started and this was supposed to have been completed in 2006.

“Construction of the new Point Fortin Hospital will begin in 2005.”

We are almost at the end of 2007 and not even a contract has been awarded for the construction of that particular hospital. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to draw you into the debate but I recall that the Member for San Fernando West at that time when, between 1995 and 2000 said as soon as the PNM gets back in office, immediately it will construct the Point Fortin Hospital—the then Member for San Fernando West—not done. Another broken promise:

“…we will begin in 2005 to offer scholarships to train radiation oncologists and pathologists, among others.”
Not done. In 2002 the Prime Minister announced that he will construct in Tobago an AIDS testing facility that will be completed in one year. That has not even started. This is 2005 still:

“…we will be providing before January 01, 2005, two renal dialysis treatment centres, one in the north and one in the south, each providing treatment for 200 persons.”

Again, that was supposed to have been completed by January 01, 2005. A contract has not even been awarded for the construction of those dialysis treatment centres, as we speak.

“The Charitable Cataract Surgery Programme…”

Mr. Speaker, this is an insult to patients who seek health care services at the nation’s hospitals telling them that you are giving them charity:

“The Charitable Cataract Surgery Programme…will…eliminate completely the waiting list for this procedure.”

That is the cataract operation. I told you that if you go now to the eye clinic, you will take a long time before you get an appointment to see a doctor at the eye clinic, and when you are finally seen, you will get an appointment for 2009 or 2010 for a cataract operation. This was meant to completely eliminate the waiting list for cataract surgery. The next one:

“…research in many fields, including the development of tropical medicine…a state-of-the-art laboratory facility will be provided for research into herbal medicine and tropical diseases.”

This was in 2005. We are nowhere near even beginning that project:

“Completion of the upgrading and renovation of the Mayaro District Health Facility.”

That is has not even started.

“Purchase of hardware and software for the Regional Health Authorities and Ministry of Health to form the backbone for an IS/IT strategy linking all service providers in Trinidad and Tobago with the planning department of the Ministry of Health.”

As we speak, none of the departments in the Ministry or the Regional Health Authorities have been computerized; not the HR departments; not the finance departments; not the clinical departments; none of them.
Next promise: By 2007 we expect that the construction of the Point Fortin Hospital will be completed; Scarborough Hospital will be completed; National Oncology Centre will be completed; the new wing at San Fernando General Hospital, of course, with burns unit and intensive care unit will be completed. None of them has been completed.

I would just like to mention two more: The construction of the National Health Laboratory will be completed by 2007. The year 2007 has gone. As a priority, the Government will initiate the Port of Spain General Hospital Replacement Facility and thus will become a medical campus that will include provision for medical education and training and clinical research.

The Port of Spain Hospital Replacement Facility, nothing has been done with regard to that. There would also be a new Central Trinidad Hospital Facility with in-patient and out-patient capacity. Nothing has been done with regard to that.

Just let me say two words on the central health facility, because whenever I talk about the Port of Spain Facility, the Minister says you are not talking about Central Trinidad, so let me talk a bit about the central facility.

There was a hospital in Couva some years ago. The Member for Diego Martin Central, I am sure will be aware of that hospital in Central Trinidad, in Couva. Many years ago, some 15—20 years ago, that hospital was deemed unsuitable and unfit and had to be decommissioned. Since then, the people of Central Trinidad and Couva, in particular, have been clamouring; they have had marches, petitions, motions in Parliament and all kinds of representations for a replacement of that facility. After 35 years of PNM rule and after we had passed through an oil boom, nothing was done to replace that facility.

When we were in office—as I said—with the limited resources that we had, we constructed the Couva District Health Facility and, as I said, we allocated 25 acres of land because the plan was that as soon as money became available we would have a full-fledged hospital, bearing in mind that you have the Point Lisas Industrial Estate there and you needed to have a hospital in that area, not only to cater for the residents of Couva and the surrounding areas, but also to cater for industrial accidents. As I said, nothing has been done by this Government to further that process, but still, there have been promises:

“There would also be a new Central Trinidad Hospital Facility with in-patient and out-patient capacity to cater for the specific medical needs of our citizens in Central Trinidad.”
I have told the residents of that area: “Do not hold your breath while this Government is in office.” This promise was not only made in the Parliament here but has been made in the election campaign itself. No less a person than the Prime Minister himself went to Couva and promised the residents of Couva that he would construct a full-fledged hospital there. I am talking about six years ago during the election campaign. He also promised the residents there that he would construct in Caroni, a military hospital.

How then do we put any reliance on the promises that have been made in this 2008 budget? How do you put any reliance, having had the track record of this Government, over the last six or seven years? If they have not been able to fulfil 75 to 80 per cent of their promises and they have promised a few things in this budget, how do we locate those promises and how do we tell the people in Central Trinidad that: “You can look forward to better things because the Government has promised.” Promises for this Government do not mean anything.

I want to spend a few minutes now saying what a UNC Alliance government will do when we get into office, because as a responsible Opposition and as the alternative government, I will not only come here and criticize and so on, and point out the shortcomings of this Government, but I want to tell the citizens of this country when the UNC Alliance forms the government what they can expect as far as the health sector is concerned. Bear in mind, as I said, when the UNC was in Government the last time around, we were allocated $4 billion and our track record is there for all to see; the health sector in this Government has been allocated $14 billion, and again you have their track record. So I want to mention what a UNC Alliance government will do.

First of all, we will construct in the shortest possible time the hospital at Point Fortin, the hospital in Scarborough and the hospital in Couva. Secondly, we will conduct a feasibility study into the construction of a hospital at Rio Claro area to cater for the citizens of Mayaro and Princes Town. From Mayaro to San Fernando there is no hospital in that area and it takes about two to three hours, regardless of how fast you can drive, to get from Mayaro to San Fernando. You need some kind of medical facility that will take care of patients from Mayaro to San Fernando and a district health facility alone will not be enough. In the same way, from Cedros to San Fernando, a district health facility in Point Fortin alone will not do. You need a full-fledged hospital in Point Fortin to be able to take care of the residents from Cedros down to La Brea.

In the same way we will conduct a feasibility study in order to give us information to construct a hospital somewhere in the Rio Claro area to take care
of the citizens from Mayaro to Princes Town. [Desk thumping] We will set up a medical advisory service in which any member of the population can call and receive appropriate medical advice, especially in cases of emergency.

2.15 p.m.

Sometimes there is a parent who has a child—they would not call Dr. Rowley—who probably would have swallowed a coin and want some medical advice as to what they should do. They do not have to travel to the hospital to get that kind of advice. They can call the facility. You might have a relative whose elderly parent had a stroke and they want to know what to do, if they should move the patient, leave him right there, or what kind of emergency things to do. The emergency health service cannot respond to that kind of thing. There would be a medical advisory service where you can call and get advice free of charge.

A UNC Alliance government will reconstitute the council of the medical board to include laypersons and a representative from the Ministry of Health, but leaving the election of the council and its officers to members of the medical profession. We are in total agreement that the council of the medical board should have lay people. We are in total agreement with that. We are in total agreement that the council of the medical board should have a representative from the Ministry of Health. We are also saying that the medical profession must regulate itself and they must be able to elect their own officers just as nurses, surveyors, engineers and other professions do it. They must be able to elect their own regulatory board.

We would enact quality legislation to give legal status to the patients and health care providers rights and obligations and provide a mechanism for the speedy resolution of complaints.

We know that many people are not satisfied when they go to public health institutions. We would set up a mechanism by which we would have speedy resolution of these complaints. To give legal status to their rights and obligations, we would enact what the Government had promised to do since 2002, the health quality legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we would provide all persons suffering from diabetes with a glucometer and a supply of glucose testing strips. We know that Trinidad has a very high incidence of diabetes. As a matter of fact, it has an incidence of diabetes that is higher than the average around the world. One of the most important things in managing diabetes is that you must be able to test your diabetes on a regular basis, at least once per day. Mr. Speaker, many patients do not have the
wherewithal to test their blood sugar. Because of that, many times it goes out of control. When it goes out of control you get complications setting in. Why is it because they cannot afford to buy a glucometer or the glucose strips, they must be subjected to having complications? [Interruption]

That is not true. You are giving patients who are insulin-dependent. This is a senior Minister of Government and he does not even know what the Prime Minister has offered. Mr. Minister, let me educate you. The Prime Minister has said in the budget that he would give those patients who are insulin-dependent, glucose strips. We would give to all patients who are suffering from diabetes. You do not understand the difference between patients who are insulin-dependent and other patients? There are 145,000 patients in this country suffering from diabetes. Only 5,000 of them are insulin-dependent. They do not understand. That is why I said they do not understand primary health care. That is why they have not put any resources on primary health care. They equate primary health care with primary school. We would provide all persons suffering from diabetes mellitus with a glucometer and a supply of glucose testing strips.

We would expand the list of CDAP drugs to include the heart drug Plavix and other medications.

We will restructure the emergency health service to enable it to provide appropriate levels of response to different levels of emergencies. If you have a patient who is suffering from a heart attack, hardly breathing and turning blue, all those kinds of things, that person needs a different kind of response to a person who may have pain in the hands or shoulders. We would restructure the emergency health service to be able to respond appropriately to different levels of emergencies.

We would introduce healthy eating and living courses in the schools curriculum, not on an ad hoc basis. We would formalize it as part of the school curriculum and the SEA examination. They would have to deal with healthy eating and healthy living habits. When I talk about primary health care, all of that is included.

We would provide incentives to the population to encourage them to live healthy lifestyles. Just as an example, we can probably give a tax credit if you buy a piece of exercise equipment. This is to encourage people to exercise, to have healthy lifestyles and have a proper diet.

Replacement of the Port of Spain General Hospital is not a priority for us, but we will reconstruct and replace the mental hospital at St. Ann’s, in a more suitable location like the Caura Valley for instance with more appropriate environment for recovery and rehabilitation for the mentally ill patients.
There is no reason why a mental hospital should be put in the middle of our city centre. It is not necessary for the mental hospital to be in the middle of our city centre. It can be located somewhere in the Caura Valley where there is more appropriate environment for recovery and rehabilitation.

We would have a death review committee. Every death that takes place in an institution, whether it is a public or private institution, should be reviewed. There would be a committee that would review every death to find out the circumstance surrounding the death, because many times problems slip through the cracks. If there are problems that could have been solved differently they would be picked up. We would assist patients who come after. We would computerize the entire health sector.

Recently I had the cause to visit a doctor and he had seen me once, while I was abroad. He was able to go on his computer and download my notes from the hospital board. He was able to look at all the procedures that had been done and the medication that I was on and he was able to examine me and prescribe appropriately. We do not have that kind of service in Trinidad and Tobago.

If a patient is in an accident and ends up at the San Fernando Hospital, but lives in Belmont or Port of Spain, he must be able to go to San Fernando Hospital and they must be able to download his information with the appropriate password for privacy. Within a jiffy they should get all his medical records and be able to treat him appropriately. We need to do this. We need to computerize the patients' records. We also need to computerize the Finance and Human Resource departments, which is not done at present. That is another thing that a UNC Alliance government would do.

We would improve the environment of care in the hospitals and the public health care institutions. Sometimes, if you go to San Fernando General Hospital as a visitor or a patient—I know I would get support from the Member for San Fernando West—you probably would want to go to the washrooms in these institutions. Sometimes you would jump in your car and go straight home because you would not want to use the washroom there. You would not want to remain in that area. The environment of care is extremely important where you have sick patients and want them to get better. We would look at improving the environment of care for patients.

These are the final two. First of all, we would dedicate two months, one month for men and one for women, for national screening for cancer of prostate for men and cancer of breast and cervix for women. We have many people who are walking around, who have cancer and they do not know.
Cancer of the prostate is the leading cause of death of men in Trinidad and Tobago, as far as cancer is concerned. Cancer of the breast and cervix is the leading cause of cancer of women, as far as cancer is concerned in Trinidad. These three cancers: cancer of the breast, cervix and prostate, if they are caught early, you can get almost a complete cure. But many people are not motivated enough to go to their private doctors to get screening for these types of cancers. We would mobilize the resources—we have enough resources—from the hospitals, health centres and private sector for one month and ask all our menfolk to be tested and screened for cancer of the prostate. Another month, we would ask all our womenfolk to be tested and screened for cancer of the cervix and cancer of the breast. In that way, I am certain we would be saving many lives.

Finally, this is not an exhaustive list, of course, we would computerize, equip and give the necessary resources to all primary health care centres, in order for them to better manage their patients from their catchment area in preventing and controlling chronic diseases and their complications.

There is no need for us to have such a high incidence of people needing renal dialysis. There is no need for us to have so many patients needing amputation of their legs. There is no need for us to have so many patients needing cardiac bypass surgery. Many of these can be prevented if we approach primary health care in the proper way—disease prevention and control. We need to put a lot more resources into primary care and disease prevention, so that we do not have to engage in expensive procedures.

We should not feel proud in saying that last year we did 20 bypass surgeries, this year we are doing 40 and next year we should be doing 60. That is not what we should be aiming for. That is not what our goal and target should be. Our target should be that we should be saying to the population that last year we did 40 or 20 surgeries, we want to have less to do the next year and the following year because we are preventing the complication from setting in and we do not want to have more patients coming in for renal dialysis and heart surgery. That is what our target should be and what we should be aiming towards.

With the kind of resources that we have, both financial and human, that are available to us in Trinidad and Tobago, the only problem is one of management. When the government changes, within five years, we would be able to move the health sector from where it is at present, to one that would be the envy of the entire Caribbean and maybe this part of the world.

Thank you very much.
The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the good things that we have in this House is that there is a history. I sat listening to the Member for Caroni Central, as though he forgot that at one time he was the Minister of Health. I remember, in 1996, because at that time you may recall there was the health sector loan from the IADB and we could not meet the deadlines. That Minister of Health—I think it was in the 1996 budget—was cautioned to get his act together.

Today he comes talking about a Minister of Health who, with all the polls rating—the Trinidad Guardian polls have him at 71 per cent and NACTA polls have him at—beating me way out 44 to 17. He comes to talk about the Minister of Health, who is supposed to be the number one performing Minister in the Government. He is forgetting, as it were, there is a history. We know you. We know your performance. You cannot now come and talk about anyone, because you are known for your non-performance while you were there. That is the reality of the situation.

Mr. Panday: No!

Mr. Speaker: Member for Princes Town, we have a good debate so far. Do not sit there and shout, please, I am appealing to you.

Hon. K. Valley: Just quickly. The Member starts and said that the budget is a failure since it does not deal with crime, prices and traffic. It was my colleague, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, who, at another forum, made the point that the budget statement is at best an executive summary of the budget. One does not expect to find everything in this.

Members would know that the Minister of National Security was here. He outlined exactly what is happening at his Ministry.

Members would know that the first speaker on this side was the Ministry of Works and Transport, who dealt with infrastructure and what he is doing in that area.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to goals and achievements, the greater part of the budget statement spoke about the achievements, but then he covers it and says that it did not deal sufficiently with health. The Minister of Health is going out at No. 1. That is what the poll said; whether it is the Guardian poll or the NACTA poll. That is the reality of the situation.
Dr. Rafeeq: He is ahead of you.

Hon. K. Valley: The people are ahead of me, but I am not going anywhere. He talks about a number of things that are not being done. Mr. Speaker, whenever they speak about what is not done, and it is repeated in the budget statement for the new year; what is wrong is that? Is that not consistency? If we say that we are going to be doing A, B, C and D and we were able to accomplish A, B, C and D and E was not done; are we not still committed to do C, D and E? Should it not remain on the agenda until it is done? That is what we call consistency.

Mr. Speaker, I was supposed to speak earlier today. I was supposed to be the first speaker on this side, but the Member for Caroni East—he is not here at present—raised certain issues, and I thought that it was sufficiently important to delay my speaking to get the information relating to the matter. That matter related to the Bamboo Networks Limited. The fact is that when the Government was considering that investment—a proposal coming from ETecK—the advice coming from the Investment Division of the Ministry of Finance was that we ought to do a due diligence exercise and we need to tread carefully with this investment, given the company. The Government took that advice and went back to ETecK and asked for further information.

I would like simply to put into the record some of the Cabinet decisions. I want to make the point that this was only one of the companies that ETecK was looking at investing in at that time.

On May 05, 2005, a note coming from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, together with recommendations of the Finance and General Purposes Committee agreed to:

“(a) to accept the proposal of the Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited (ETecK) to invest:

(i) $5.1-Mn. in a joint venture with InterFix LLC of Michigan, United States of America, for the establishment of a Trinidad and Tobago-based software development company, ETecK to seek a 51% share of the equity of the joint venture company;

(ii) $6.3-Mn. in a United States-based joint venture with InterFix LLC to undertake marketing and client support for the medical transcription industry in Trinidad and Tobago, ETecK’s investment to provide a 49% shareholding in the joint venture;
(b) that the above-mentioned investments be subject to the conduct by Dunn and Bradstreet of a due diligent exercise on InterFix LLC;

(c) that funds be provided…

Cabinet referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for further consideration the proposal in the Note for ETecK to invest US$5-Mn. in Bamboo Networks Limited, a technology solutions provider based in Hong Kong, ETecK to make a presentation to the Committee in that regard."

So, here you had coming before the Cabinet, a request from ETecK to make investments in certain firms. Because of the accounts of the Investment Division, the investment with respect to Bamboo Networks was referred back to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Cabinet agreed to go forward with the others, in principle, subject to a Dunn and Bradstreet report.

I now go to May 12, which is the week following—perhaps, let me put the note on record. On May 12:

“Cabinet agreed:

(a) in principle that evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited (ETecK) invest the sum of US$5-Mn. in Bamboo Networks Limited (Bamboo), a Hong Kong-based company,

(b) that ETecK continue to hold discussions with Bamboo, such discussions to address certain concerns, including:

(i) whether the US$5-Mn. is a fair value for its share in the company

(ii) any relevant matters of a legal or accounting nature, including the latest audited financial statements and information;

(c) that the shareholders’ agreement for implementing the project be submitted to Cabinet for approval.”

We took a decision here to go out and talk to ETecK—investments as given, have brought some concerns; let us check them, and come back to us. It continues:

“Cabinet noted that ETecK would continue its research for other companies in pursuance of its mandate to promote and facilitate the knowledge-based industries at Wallerfield and elsewhere in Trinidad and Tobago.”

On June 01, 2005 there was another note from Cabinet, and I want to put that note on the record. Again, coming from my ministry and it says:
“The matter for the consideration of Cabinet is the implementation of the decision taken by Cabinet for ETecK to invest US$5 million in equity in Bamboo Networks Limited.

2. Cabinet will recall that by Minute No. 1271 dated 12 May, 2005 Cabinet agreed:

a) “in principle...”

To do certain things. It continues:

“3. Cabinet is asked to note that ETecK has been holding discussions with Bamboo Networks with a view to concluding its investment. ETecK has provided a status report entitled ‘A Note on the Proposed Investment and Cooperation Agreement’ between Bamboo Networks Limited and Evolving Technologies and Enterprises Development Company Limited attached at Appendix I.

4. A review of the Note indicates:

(i) ETecK proposes to invest US$5 billion in Bamboo Networks Limited which is registered in the Cayman Islands. In consideration for which, this investment will include:

a) The establishment of Bamboo Networks Trinidad and Tobago Limited to provide Business Process Outsourcing at Wallerfield;

b) Collaboration with University of the West Indies (UWI) and University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT);

c) Training of Trinidad and Tobago nationals in Software Development;

d) Software Process Implementation

e) CMMI Training and

f) 19% shareholding in Bamboo Networks Limited.

(ii) ETecK reserves the right to recover its investment, if Bamboo does not fulfill its obligations. There will be clear timelines for the implementation of the various activities including the business process operations and training. Further, ETecK will have the right to have representation on the Board of Directors of Bamboo Networks Limited and Bamboo Networks Trinidad and Tobago Limited.
5. The parties have now agreed that ETecK will make a conditional investment in Bamboo Networks within seven (7) days of the signing of the Investment Agreement. Bamboo will establish the Trinidad and Tobago Company by July 2005. ETecK is entitled to recover its investment if Bamboo fails to set up a local company.”

Mr. Speaker, based on the submission from the ministry, Cabinet approved the investment by ETecK; the conditional investment. I make the point that this was one of four investments. As you have noted, it was in the quest to develop the knowledge-based industry at Wallerfield, ETecK Park.

Yes, the reality of the current situation as of today is that Bamboo Networks Limited has not yet set up the subsidiary here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, when Bamboo Networks Limited contemplated the establishment of the company in Trinidad, the feeling was that they would be getting contracts from the energy sector, and it is a chicken and egg situation. Bamboo Networks Limited is saying that they want a sizeable contract before they set up to make it worth their while, and ETecK argument is that you have to be here to be able to do that.

At present, they are continuing in that discussion as of this time, failing which, in accordance with the agreement, Bamboo Networks Limited options will be, of course, to repurchase the shares of ETecK in the company.

However, I want Members to note that the other companies in which ETecK has invested are all doing quite well; whether it is the InterFix LLC or MediCorp

The Member also made the point that he asked a question with respect to persons trained with MediCorp, and I provided the response. I did not understand what he was saying. He asked for the list of names of persons trained by Medical Data Caribbean Limited for a specified period, January 2005 to October 2006, and I provided that answer for the Member. Mr. Speaker, that is simply by way of answering an issue that was raised this morning.

I really entered this debate to provide support to the Minister of Finance. The debate, so far as it pertains to the finance and the economy, centred on a few things that I thought I should deal with rather quickly.

First of all, the Member for Siparia claimed that the budget was inflationary. Well, the Member claimed a number of things. I think it was Prof. Theodore, in another forum, who made the point that the projected increase in spending in 2008 is a mere 2.6 per cent. The budget statement makes that extremely clear.
Spending is moving from some $39.275 billion to a planned expenditure of $40.292 billion, a 2.6 per cent increase. Now, I do not know on what basis the Member could consider that to be extremely inflationary.

As I said, the Member went on to make other very wild claims. I do not know where she got the figures, but she claimed in her three-hour plus contribution that over the period, the Government had collected over $200 billion in revenues, when the Minister of Finance was extremely clear in his budget statement to point out that the revenue over the period was, in fact, $162.7 billion.

2.45 p.m.

They like this type of thing. Let me put it on the record once more. Over the period 2002—2007, the energy sector provided $69.7 billion; the non-energy sector, $93 billion, accounting for 57.2 per cent of total revenues. I want to make the point again, that the non-energy sector has contributed 57.2 per cent, more than 50 per cent of the revenues over the period and I am hearing from the Back Bench, State enterprises. If you add the State enterprises it is going to be the non-energy sector would contribute even more.

When one looks at the expenditure one sees that the recurrent expenditure over the period was some $125 billion accounting for 76.8 per cent of revenues. The capital expenditure, improvement in our infrastructure and so on, some 12.2 per cent; $9.5 billion went into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and a further $7 billion was left on deposit at the Central Bank. So that our savings accounted for some 16.5 billion or 10.1 per cent of our revenues.

Again, if we were to look over the period, we would see that the energy sector accounted for a mere 20.1 per cent in 2002, peaking in 2006, accounting for 53.1 per cent of the total revenues and it has started to decline. What the mission is; what the goal is, is that very soon over the medium term to have the non-energy revenues being able to cover at least non-energy recurrent expenditure.

That is the direction in which one is heading. If one were to look at the later years, one would see that the non-energy income is accounting for a higher percentage of the non-energy expenditure. That is the reality.

Another issue raised in the budget—he is my good friend, the Member for St. Augustine. When the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro was speaking, when the Member for St. Augustine was asking for the Ryder Scott Report, I mentioned to him, why do you need that, you are not going to understand it because you do not even seem to understand what you ought to understand. He told me that I am not
going to succeed there. I really want to ask him to tell me what he means when he says, as he did, that too much of the Central Bank's reserves are being invested to support the country's TT exchange; to support the country's exchange rate. And in the next breath he tells me the International Monetary Fund had already warned the Government that the country's real exchange rate was under valued.

Mr. Speaker, you are a lawyer, not an economist, but if I tell you that the Government is pumping money in to support the exchange rate, does that mean that I am trying to protect it; he said that to protect the exchange rate, meaning that it is overvalued. [Interruption] I will give you time; you know I will give time. I am trying to protect it from depreciating. But if in the next breath you come and tell me that the IMF is saying that, look, your currency is undervalued; do you understand what you are talking about? Please tell me.

Mr. Dookeran: Thank you, Minister, for the opportunity to elucidate on the point. Clearly, the support of the exchange rate, which has been appreciating, has resulted in a rate that, according to the IMF report, is now overvalued. It is simple as that.

Hon. K. Valley: That is not what you said. You said that the IMF has already warned the Government that the country's real exchange rate was undervalued.

Mr. Dookeran: That is right. That is exactly right.

Mr. Manning: We are not understanding you.

Hon. K. Valley: He does not understand himself. But he goes even further. Please, go ahead, explain it.

Mr. Dookeran: By supporting the rate you are in fact supporting an appreciation of the rate when it should have been less. That is what the IMF Report is saying. [Crosstalk] Anyway, you do not understand what is being said.

Hon. K. Valley: And you obviously do not understand and "I tired tell you" that just remain quiet. As you remain quiet people would continue believing that you are bright. [Laughter] [Crosstalk] I am sorry, Sir. Please remain quiet, nod your head; people would continue to believe you are bright. [Crosstalk] "Listen, nah man, look." [Laughter]

Mr. Manning: You would get a heart attack; cool down.

Hon. K. Valley: I am not going to get any heart attack. Mr. Speaker, understand what is happening. At one point, the Member complained that our savings in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund was small; I mean we have a $40
billion budget; the savings is $10 billion, that is merely 25 per cent and few would argue that we ought to increase the savings in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

But in the next breath the Member tells us the COP, when they get into Government, would integrate the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund into a wider universal pension plan that would benefit every person in Trinidad and Tobago over the age of 60 years, with no one having to undergo prior qualification. People like security officers or police officers who are to retire before 60 years would benefit from the earlier retirement age. And that is not all you know, you take up the papers this morning and it is there—National Pension Plan in some advertisement:

“The Congress of the People would integrate the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund with wider pension plans in the public and private sector to introduce a national pension plan for all of Trinidad and Tobago. It would introduce a comprehensive universal pension plan that would be accessible to every citizen above the age of 60 years. There will be no eligibility criteria but we would introduce a payback scheme."

So I do not know when they are paying back, after they are dead. You understand what I am saying? I do not understand what he is talking about. Stay quiet, people would think you are bright.

I will go to the other thing. If you listen to the advertisement and so on about a book Uncertainties, Stability and Challenges, one would think that this bright boy write a book. I want to read from some acknowledgements. First of all, it says:

“Copyright the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

All rights reserved.”

This is not copyright, Member for St. Augustine, Winston Dookeran here; Central Bank. You know why? I will tell you why just now, Mr. Speaker.

“No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.”

This is the property of the Central Bank. And you know why? [Interruption] You do not understand that? I will explain it. Let me read the acknowledgment, because it is there. But when you see the PR, the PR would never suggest that that is so. The PR would feel that this is Winston Dookeran's work. This is the work of Central Bank people.
Mr. Speaker, I give speeches; I do not write any of my speeches. I have officers who would write the speech, they would send it to me and the night before I would tweak it; change a word here, put a nice style and so on and go and deliver the speech. I could take all of those speeches and put them in a book and put my name on it; then they should lock me up. [Laughter] That is the highest level of fraud that you can put on anybody—Harvard and all kinds of things. You understand what I am saying, Mr. Speaker?

I would just read from the acknowledgement. If I am taking my collection of speeches, I would have to put everybody’s name, Randal Karim, Dr. Ralph Henry and so on. It is not my work. Winston Dookeran, Governor of the Central Bank; it is fraud. I will give way; I will always give you time, because the more you talk, the more the people will know you. Let me read:

“I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of the staff of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and in particular, the research department in the preparation of the speeches I delivered as Governor.” [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. K. Valley: Yes, you acknowledge it here, your PR does not say that. Let me ask another question. My information is that it is the Central Bank that paid for this publication. I want to know who will get the funds from the sale of this book. The Central Bank paid for the publication of this book—Central Bank book. I want to know when you sell this book where the money going. Answer me.

Mr. Dookeran: I would like to put the record straight since the Minister has asked. It is true that the Central Bank has in fact supported the publication of the book in an agreement with myself. I have approved the manuscript; I have approved the book title; I have approved everything, because I did it properly. The essays or the speeches were my responsibility.

I have acknowledged all who have contributed, not only from the Central Bank, but from many other sources. But it remains my responsibility and I stand firm that those are my views that have come together on the basis of the research, which was done there, as well as at the University of the West Indies, as well as other universities. To make this attack, Mr. Prime Minister, is to reduce the Minister to the lowest level of political, personal attack here. [Desk thumping] If he wishes to confront this issue, I am prepared to deal with it openly.

Hon. K. Valley: That is exactly how I am dealing with it; I am not doing it behind your back; well, you do it anyhow; it does not matter. [Crosstalk]
Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. K. Valley: My colleague, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, made the point of the similarity between a PricewaterhouseCoopers book, the budget document and Dookeran, thinking that there was some collusion. There was not any collusion, it is plagiarism. PricewaterhouseCoopers put out their thing and the "fella" just change it around.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, another issue that was raised—[Interruption]

Mr. Dookeran: I am sorry for creating that desperation.

Hon. K. Valley: Desperation? I do not know what desperation you can create.

Mr. Dookeran: And you realized what—[Inaudible]

Hon. K. Valley: Desperation? No, no, no. There are certain people, Mr. Speaker, who, holding a little bit of esteem, integrity and so on, but when you see certain things, then you wonder. There is no desperation, you are not going to win any seat. If you do not know, you are not going to win any seat in the election. You can cause no desperation for anybody. You are not going to win any seat. Understand that.

Mr. Dookeran: As you wish.

Hon. K. Valley: My Prime Minister is not a gambling man, but I take a little bet from time the time. You want the bet?

Mr. Dookeran: I do not play, but that is your wish.

Hon. K. Valley: You want to bet? [Crosstalk] Mr. Speaker, let me continue please—another issue that was raised in the budget was that there was some over-reliance on the energy sector. In spite of the fact that the Government has been a pain over the years to point out that the whole orientation of this Government is to diversify the economy away from any overdependence on energy.

Mr. Speaker, let us just look at the performance of the non-energy sector over the period, 2002 to 2006. The non-energy sector average growth rate from 7 per cent and you had the manufacturing averaging a growth rate of 9.6 per cent; services sector 6.8 per cent. And when we look at the years, one will note that there were a few years when for example, the manufacturing sector in 2005 was growing at 12.6 per cent; the energy sector grew a mere 8.4 per cent and there is
at least one other year, in 2007, where the manufacturing sector grew at 8 per cent and the energy sector is projected to have grown at a mere 4.4 per cent. So that there is momentum in the non-energy sector and one will admit that some of that momentum will be caused by what is happening in energy because as a fact there is a coefficient for every dollar spent in energy, you would expect to have some increase growth in the non-energy sector.

When one looks at the trade performance over the period 2002—2006, total balance of visible trade increased from $2.2 billion in 2002 to some $48.3 billion in 2006 and when we look at the non-energy sector, non-energy sector exports have doubled, increasing by some 121 per cent from $9.6 billion in 2002 to $21.3 billion in 2006, that is non-energy export. Now when you compare that with the period 1996 to 2001, when the non-energy sector exports increased from $7.4 billion to $10.3 billion, a 38 per cent increase, so that one sees clearly that there is momentum in the non-energy sector.

The Government is being at pains to say, listen, there are 13 areas that we are targeting and in this budget, we have gone further. We have put in place the underpinning by indicating clearly that the Government is putting in place, what is call a business expansion, an industrial re-engineering programme that is going to cater for the manufacturing as well as the services sector. And, as I said it is at least, a two pronged approach. Some of us will say it is even more than that.

In the budget, the Minister of Finance increased the initial allowance from 60 per cent to 75 per cent and when one combines that with the normal accelerated depreciation of 25 per cent that one gets in year one, one sees that if the purchase is made in the same year that the equipment is put into operation, one gets 100 per cent right off in year one. A significant incentive to the manufacturing sector and the Minister of Finance indicated also in the Budget Statement that there would be four other areas that we would look at structuring between now and December, so that there would be a comprehensive programme for business expansion and industrial re-engineering come January 01, 2008 and those other areas are: an innovation facility, a marketing facility, a quality management—production management facility and a human management programme.

We will put in place an incentive programme to re-energize the manufacturing sector because at this time the feeling is that the manufacturing sector is at the capacity and if we want the sector to move into the new markets to expand exports to assist in the diversification effort, we have got to give them running room; we got to ensure that capacity is increased and a few other things that I would come to, shortly.
First of all, we have identified the sectors where we felt we were competitive and we have spoken about those, the seven sectors, I shall not go into them in any detail, but in addition to those said areas, we have just opened with what ETecK is and will be doing, that is looking at the ICT area; getting into joint venture arrangements with established firms in the ICT area; they would also be looking at downstream from the energy—what we call downstream, Mr. Speaker—from polypropylene, from the alumina smelter, they would be looking at developing products in that area, and of course, one knows that the Ministry of Tourism is developing that area; Ministry of Finance is developing the financial services area; and of course, this year, one sees the new initiatives with agriculture and agro-processing with which my colleague from Arouca South dealt so admirably only yesterday.

So, we have selected the areas where we believe we have a competitive advantage; we are putting in place an incentive package that will be attractive to the manufacturers and service players. We are getting new markets because that is, of course the other element; we are moving into Central America now. We have as you know, certain agreements already and as a matter of fact, next week we will be opening our Trade Facilitation Office in Cuba. I am sure Members would say that I have been talking about that for some time, as I said, nothing comes off the agenda until it is completed, and the fact that it is on the agenda and it is not accomplished in one year, does not mean that we must take it off and put new things? If it is not achieved, it means it has to stay there until it is accomplished. [Desk thumping] Quite simply, that is being consistent, I do not know what is wrong with that.

So that, we would be opening our Trade Facilitation Office in Cuba; we have our various trade agreements, but what is important at this time, we are now looking at going into Central America really in a big way, and Members would know that we are combining that effort with our arrangements with respect to air transport because it makes no sense having markets and not being able to get to those markets. So, last December when Constellation Airlines had invited me to their launch; when they were getting some planes to fly to North America and so on, I said that is fine, but look South; look at Panama. We now have them doing some charter flights to Panama twice a week—the last time the Prime Minister was going to Cuba, he did not have to go through Venezuela. He went through Panama, good connection. Copa Airline would also be flying here from December 15.
As a matter of fact, we are putting in place again—because Copa said that, Listen, if we are coming here, we want to be able to bring other Latinos here.

Hon. Member: When?

Hon. K. Valley: December 15. Just last week or week before we had a meeting with our colleagues at National Security and Foreign Affairs to work through easing the Visa requirements for persons coming in here from Central America, Mexico and Cuba because obviously, that will facilitate the Copa flights, and a submission would be made to Cabinet shortly with respect to that.

In other words, when one is planning for a particular eventuality, one has to ensure that all the pieces are in place. It makes no sense simply saying, we want to diversify without putting and ensuring that infrastructure is—that already?

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member’s speaking time has extended by 30 minutes. [Dr. R. Moonilal]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. K. Valley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, thank you Members. Yes, I am making the point that when you are putting plans in place, you have to ensure that everything is there so that things would in fact happen. I made a point that the Government is a facilitator, the plans for the industrial sectors that we have identified were developed in the main by private sector people. We had private sector persons chairing the various committees with some public sector involvement and they came with their strategic plan. We went to the Cabinet; we got approval and in the main, we are allowing for funding that they have identified over a five-year period.

The estimates for this fiscal year, the film company, the allocation is $9.62 million; the Trinidad and Tobago Entertainment Company gets a further $3.85 million; the Sea Food Industry Company $8.5 million; the Food and Beverage, $2.5 million; Inward Investment Non-petroleum Initiative, $2 million; and the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Service Provider there is an appropriation of $2.75 million for them.

Of course, in the case of ETecK, ETecK gets a much larger appropriation because as you know the area that I mentioned, the super downstream, ICT, they are getting involved in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, outsourcing and back office that is one of the areas that Bamboo was supposed to assist us with; medical
transcription, software development; technical support, call centres; computer software and hardware; software base, businesses, such as, software development, health care, oil and gas area and software related services, maintenance and integration, product development in the medical optical device manufacturer, electronic assembly and so on.

3.15 p.m.

I do not think I should deal with the agro-processing area. My colleague from Moruga South did an excellent job. When one talks about inflation, I made the point that the inflation rate peaked at 10 per cent. It has been on the decline. From time to time you will have a blimp, but I feel certain that come December the rate is going to be under 7 per cent. There is no magic in that. The Member made the point that there was interference with the figure; he thought it came down too quickly. [Crosstalk] It went up quickly.

I have spoken about our integration leading to Latin America, because, of course, market access is extremely important. We are looking for running room in terms of our diversification effort; that is critical and so also is our attempt to attract inward investment. That is why we had investment missions to Europe and the Far East and next year, rather than go to Latin America, we will be bringing Latin America to us. We are partnering with AMCHAM to host the Latin American and Caribbean AMCHAM conference in June of next year, where we are going to have quite a number of business persons and we will be making our pitch with respect to attracting inward investment.

When one looks at the budget, one sees clearly certain underpinnings. First of all, the budget attempts to build on the five areas that we identified way back in our manifesto of 2002. In 2002, what did we say? We said that while we had the various committees that would be working with respect to outlining the plans and programmes for Vision 2020, we knew clearly that there were five underpinnings that would be critical for 2020: education, health, housing, social services and person security.

When one looks at the budget it reports on the commitment to those areas. I think somewhere on page 14 we start with education. The Minister for Tertiary Education was here yesterday evening. The return to free tertiary education, to my own mind, if not the greatest, is one of the greatest achievements of the PNM Government over the period 2002 to 2007. [Desk thumping] I got a university education only because it was free. If I had to pay for a university education in 1968, I would not have been able to afford it; that is the reality. That is the PNM that I know.
When I went to university I paid $144 for tuition and examinations, simply because it was for a BSc economic degree. If I were doing art, it would have been completely free. I would not have been able to afford normal fees were it not for a caring government. We should consider that when a government finances the education of a young person, it is really making a direct investment. Over time, because of the higher income that person will make, the government can recover its investment handsomely. If one were to look at the rate of return on that investment, it has to be one of the better investments around via the tax. That is only the direct return; there are also indirect returns. It is known that a country develops faster the higher the ratio of professional tertiary level persons in that country; that is the reality.

There is that clear underpinning with respect to where we started, what we said in 2002, that these are the areas on which we would concentrate. We would concentrate on education. We would concentrate on health and housing.

Housing is another area that we have done extremely well. Congrats to my colleague from Diego Martin West and the Government. It is no mean achievement. One out of every two persons who come to my constituency office on a Thursday wants a house. They are not looking for work anymore, because as you know the unemployment rate is right down. It is 5 per cent. I think it has gone up slightly, but a job is not the issue as housing is at present.

We have done quite well, thank you. So that is one orientation of the budget. Another is diversification of the economy, where we have spent quite sometime.

Thirdly, there is the concept of taking care of vulnerable groups; that seemed to have been misunderstood by so many, when you hear some talking about an election budget.

The Member in his contribution made the point about the purpose of a government. Let me see if I can find it, lest I be charged with misrepresenting what he said. He said that our philosophy is that the State should intervene to protect the aged and vulnerable groups.

Mr. Speaker, we all agree with that. I do not have a difficulty and I cannot understand why anyone would have had a difficulty when we said that the vulnerable among us, those at the base of the society, those who are in URP and CEPEP, the minimum wage earner, the old age pensioner, the public service pensioner, that we would provide them with a bit more income—that is all we have done—in an environment where we know as a fact that prices are up.
To compensate for the increase in prices, we have given them a fillip, as it were. I do not know who can have any argument with that. We have to take care of the vulnerable groups in the society and we have attempted to do that.

The budget's orientation is also to be non-inflationary. The planned increase in spending is a mere 2.6. There is also an effort to curb price inflation. Page 15 of the budget speech dealt with that. My colleague did a fantastic job; I do not think that I need to do anymore.

Let me just touch on one or two other issues raised at different places. There is the issue of where we are with the pension plan. We are working on the pension plan. We have been working on it since 2002 and there were a few foul starts, as it were; that is the reality.

Perhaps we were too ambitious. We went out with the package, but we could not get any takers. When we did get the taker, the price he wanted was fantastic and we said no, that we could not do that. We have now divided the assignment into two packages and we have Mercer doing some work for us. They are supposed to give us a report at the end of October.

Let me just highlight some things. First of all, the committee identified four areas in pension reform. In component one, the establishment of the legal and regulatory framework. That entails the establishment of the supervisory and regulatory agency; the development of new pension legislation; the issue of portability and transferability of pension benefits; prudential criteria for the management of pension funds; introduction of international financial reporting; standards; reporting requirements and information disclosure; fit and proper criteria for fund managers and trustees; entry and exit criteria and corporate governance. All this work is being undertaken by the Central Bank. The expected date of completion is December 2008.

Mr. Dookeran: 2008?

Hon. K. Valley: Yes. As you know, the Central Bank has already taken over the supervisory and regulatory aspect.

Component two talks in terms of the harmonization and administrative integration of the national insurance system and the old age pension plan. You will see that we are moving toward that.

This year, for example, with national insurance (NIS) going to $2,000 from January 01, with an overall cap for old age pension and other income of $2,500. One sees that as NIS moves to $2,000, the amount of Government's liability under the old age pension plan will reduce, at least for some persons.
Component three deals with the development and introduction of a contributory occupational pension plan for the public service. Work on the valuation exercise and development of the contributory occupational pension plan for the public service, is expected to be completed by the end of October. I think that is not strictly correct, but we have asked Mercer, first of all, to deal with certain aspects of the plan. I think that is the aspect that will be dealt with by October.

Mr. Speaker, component four is to upgrade and modernize NIS; the completion of the ILO. The seventh actuarial review of the NIS has resulted in the proposed implementation of the following. This has been completed. From January, the minimum pension goes to $2,000. There will be a decrease in the maximum level of earnings on which contributions and pensions will be calculated, from $4,077 to $8,300. There will be a gradual increase in the NIS contribution rate from its current level of 9.9 per cent to 10.5 per cent in 2008, with further increases to 10.8 per cent to 11.4 per cent in 2010 and 2012 respectively.

Mr. Speaker, I am just putting it on the record that we will continue to work on reforming the pension programme in Trinidad and Tobago. I make the point also that with respect to the daily-paid pension, we have completed work on that since December of last year, as far as I am concerned.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance has been charged with the agenda; that was before us; we have dealt with it. We had discussions with the union. I understand that after we were finished with the assignment, they raised some other issue and have gone back to the drawing board. As far as I am concerned, that is the finished product.

Let me just say a quick word on the White Paper on procurement. Again, Members will know that, in fact, we had the White Paper in the House. We have tabled the White Paper. There were two institutions that thought they had comments and we gave them an opportunity to do that. After some time, they were supposed to submit comments to us by August 07. We did not receive them, so we have gone back to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and made that point. We will be moving on very shortly with the implementation of that White Paper.

3.30 p.m.

There are a number of items they would have to deal with on the way forward. For example, we have to get an approval for the proposed amendments to the procurement policy whatever they may be, we have to put the organizational structure and staffing in place and, of course, we have to appoint the regulator and get the legislation through Parliament.
I think it was the Member for St. Joseph who raised the issue of procurement and I want to let him know that nothing comes off the agenda until it is completed and, therefore, we would continue to pursue the implementation of the White Paper.

Mr. Speaker, just a word on the regulatory and enabling environment. Let me say that as part of providing the appropriate environment, obviously there would be a need for legislation. Members would know that we have put in place quite a few pieces of legislation over the period and only last year we had the Fair Trade legislation, in other words the competition legislation and we are in the process at present of setting up a Commission. We have the Caricom obligation to have that in place at the end of October and we are working towards that.

A regret of significance is that while there have been amendments to the Venture Capital legislation, I am still not seeing the use of it and the thinking is, perhaps, we may have to do some education in that regard, because, as a fact, with the liberalized environment now, a venture capital company can now have funds of up to $100 million, or such a company can invest in a vested company with equity capital of up to $50 million. Therefore, we are talking of the broad spectrum of companies outside the energy sector and, therefore, it seems to me that financial institutions would be worth their while looking at this legislation because they can use it efficiently, it seems to replace debt financing by equity financing.

Remember there is still the tax advantage. A contributor to a venture capital company still qualifies for the 25 per cent tax credit—not a tax reduction. Perhaps this is a good opportunity to inform the general public through this honourable House that the ministry would be hosting a seminar on September 11th on our new draft investment policy. As you know, it came to the House and has gone out for public comment. We have had comments from Independent Sen. Mary King, a UWI lecturer, Mr. Mc Quire, and on Sunday there was a very interesting comment by a trade specialist who used to be with us. What is his name again?

He is saying, what we need to do is look at the wealth accumulation—look, it is right here—Dr. Barry Ishmael. He is making the point that we should move to a wealth-driven economic base and we should get our Heritage and Stabilisation Fund up and use that to take positions—not to give away by way of pension, but to invest for posterity as the main purpose. Invest so as to provide non-energy sector revenues as part of our drive to reduce as it were, the thing they like to talk about, the non-energy deficit. A very interesting concept.
We would be having that seminar on September 11, 2007 where there would be presentations. We have invited the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce, as well as some other persons to move presentations on this paper as we attempt to move it from a Green Paper to a White Paper.

Lastly, let me comment on this issue of the non-energy deficit. If one were to look at the spending of the Government, one sees that very shortly we would get over that hump and this whole concept of non-energy deficit would consequently reduce. In a period where we are building capacity, obviously by plan, that deficit would be higher than normal, it would reduce in time as our non-energy income continues to increase and as our expenditure on certain items would no longer be required.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the 2008 budget and I recommend it to this House.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the last hours we have heard varied contributions. We have heard from Members who indicated to this House it would be their last budget contribution, we have heard from others who are going and hope to return at some point and I want to wish all of them well.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in presenting this budget spoke about it being a “love thing”. That is very important, love is a tremendous motivator and perhaps one of the greatest vehicles in the world.

When the Prime Minister spoke about love, he also indicated that he was like the Energizer bunny going and going, in fact, he sounded like a young man in love. Mr. Speaker, you would remember those days when you courted, and when you are in love you say all kinds of nice things. “The girl asks if yuh coming tonight.” “Of course, I ain’t going home, ah sleeping right here.” You are going to love her all her life, you are going to buy this, buy that, and you give a bag of goodies and you cannot deliver any.

I am sure the Prime Minister means love, and it must be instructive that of the many budgets he has presented, that he chooses to describe this one as “a love thing” because the time has come in this country where love must resurface. One of the challenges we face in this country is too much hate. There is too much blight in the country.

When you listen to Members opposite, they puke hate and when our young children see us on television and listen on the radio what do they see and hear? It
seems as if we are fighting. What are we fighting for? Do we not want to love everyone in this country? Do we not want the best for everyone in this country? Any Prime Minister coming into office wants to make sure he delivers to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

When one reflects on the history of Trinidad and Tobago under a PNM Government, we have seen the resources of the State not reaching to the wider community. This is a challenge the PNM has had for many years. I am sure in the goodness of the Prime Minister’s heart he does not intend it to be that way but there must be a reason that five years later—a six-year-old would be 11 years. If that child wrote the SEA exam a few months ago, chances are the child is not in a school. The chances are that child is so far from the area where he lives that he cannot go to the school to which he is assigned. There are children from Fyzabad who are assigned to Point Fortin, so the love thing seems only to be an idea and I think it is important we put some body into it.

Mr. Speaker, we must also look at the budget presentation in the light of what obtains in Trinidad and Tobago today and that is we are two or three days away from our 45th Independence celebrations and when our founding fathers fought for this country to be independent in 1962 at Marlborough House, they must have been thinking something. Many of us were very young, but we want to pay tribute to those founding fathers, the late, great Dr. Eric Williams, Dr. Capildeo and others.

What were they seeing for us? Were they seeing a country 45 years later, in a short period of five years, $200 billion and 300,000 of our citizens are starving, lack of water, lack of roads, and infrastructure failing? More than that, the collective leadership of the country—and I mean collective on both sides of the fence—seems not to be reaching out to the small man, seem not to be communicating with the average housewife, the simple-minded person. We seem not to have that ability to communicate with them because we love them, the Prime Minister loves us.

You are the Prime Minister, you are my Prime Minister and I have said that 1,000 times, the country has one Prime Minister—hopefully there would be another Prime Minister but that is another story. As the Prime Minister you have to make sure—and we have come here year after year and begged for fairness, for equality; we have demonstrated by documentation and showing the evidence that the resources of the State are not reaching us.
In fact, my friend, the Member for La Brea last night demonstrated that. He could have called out 10 community centres in the constituency of La Brea that are being attended to, whether through renovations, repairs, rebuilding or whatever. He could have identified 45 roads—[Interruption] in fact, he boasted—29 roads. He boasted that he met the Minister of Works and Transport in a rum shop somewhere and talked about a road and three days later he drove on it with his Mercedes Benz. [Interruption]

It was at a restaurant, but let us not waste time please. [Laughter] He met a Minister wherever, forgive me for not remembering where he met him. I know he frequents restaurants and bars so I thought it might have been in one of those places.

The point is within hours he was driving his Mercedes Benz on that road and it was under repairs. What prevents the Minister of Works and Transport, a servant of the State, to treat with the Opposition Members the same way? I cannot tell you of any community centres that have gotten the same attention and I draw this to the hon. Prime Minister. If it is a love thing, you have to agree if the Opposition Members are bringing facts to your attention, what are you doing about it? It cannot be a love thing if you keep ignoring it. We write to every Minister, and they treat us with contempt and we represent people. We all took an oath of office to serve without fear or favour and it is not happening.

Within hours of the hon. Prime Minister’s presentation, his party caused to be published in the newspapers a number of indicators of what is happening, and I am sure it was paid for from party funds. Let us quickly look at some: The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund balance to date, $10 billion plus. Is that a good thing? Of course it is, but it should be much more than this and I would demonstrate why. It says that 26,000 homes were completed; that is incorrect, but even if it is so, we have spent approximately $10 billion hon. Prime Minister and 26,000 to $10 billion is close to $400,000 and we have not delivered a single home within budget. This must be very disturbing.

3.45 p.m.

When we boast that poor people can buy a home, it is not true, because when you have 26,000 homes costing in excess of $400,000, you are wasting $200,000 per home, and much more than that. In addition to that, when you look at the person earning $1,440, the guide from the financial institutions is that one-third should go to his mortgage. One-third of $1,400 is $500 average. There is no mortgage in this country offered by the Government at 2 per cent, or at zero per cent, that can give a person a house at $500.
So you are misleading the national community, but you do not intend it to be so. So, absolutely no house, hon. Prime Minister. You see, the hon. Minister of Housing is the most expensive Minister in this country. We are wasting money and getting nothing for it! And when we look at the comparisons with the United National Congress, we made fully serviceable lots available at $18,000, at $9 a barrel of oil, and people have built their homes on it.

It is a tremendous love thing when a husband and a wife get together and build their own home. When the relatives get together, they assist. We did those homes 30 years ago and we still do it in the rural communities. The father-in-law comes, the brother-in-law comes and the uncles come, and one is a mason and one is an electrician. You want to encourage that love thing. This housing policy of the Government is a hate thing, and some Member demonstrated three years later her house was cracking up.

Mr. Prime Minister, just revisit this housing thing. This country belongs to you and me. Soon you would be retired; you would be a pensioner and I would have to come and visit you somewhere. I want to make sure all of us can go in a house that we can afford. So the housing thing is not working. In addition to that, what must we do to make this point pregnant? We have said that the housing distribution policy does not reflect the people you love in Trinidad and Tobago. Let me tell you something about the hate that obtains.

Mr. Manning: I thank the Member for Fyzabad for giving way. I just would like to be certain I understand what he is saying. Is he suggesting that instead of the housing policy we have now a policy of land? Is it?

Mr. C. Sharma: A mix.

Mr. Manning: Explain, please.

Mr. C. Sharma: Low-cost housing authorities of the world obtain in India and Africa, where they have demonstrated where they can make the bricks on site, and they train the community people to come and they work and they go back and build their homes. So if you make lands available, more people will be able to obtain their houses and you will make the funding available. In fact, we had negotiated under the IADB, $600 million so that those poor families could get $100,000, as the case may be, based on their ability to pay back.

A family with $100,000 cash in hand could build one of the houses you are now building for $400,000 and furnish it, too. Because when you tell them about this additional $15,000, it is an additional expense. They have to pay it back at
some point. So now you are telling them, in addition to the house for $200,000, it is now $215,000. Now, 300,000 people are earning less than $3,000 a month in Trinidad and Tobago. Of that 300,000, more than 60 per cent are earning less than $2,000. Based on your policy here, none of that 60 per cent of 300,000 can borrow moneys based on your own plan. Moneys are not there.

It will be interesting—you see, the Minister always gets away. You know, under the Panday administration, you could not get away; you had to account. Let the hon. Minister show to this House—the same way they are paying for public advertisements—the Opposition will support that—print in the newspapers: 10 housing projects every week and indicate at what cost these homes were delivered, anywhere in the country.

I was making the point, the recipients of the house—listen, this is a country made up of people of African origin, Indian; there are Douglas, Chinese; let the recipients reflect that. Recently in El Dorado, 160 homes were given out; less than 10 per cent were families of East Indian origin. That is not fair! It is not good! It is destroying the fabric of our society; it cannot be, and you have to change that!

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I could not really sit here and allow that comment to go unattended. I am sure that the Member is talking purely about the ceremony that he saw with respect to which a sampling of keys was handed out. If you are going on that basis, then look and see what happened in Tardieu Gardens; look and see what happened in Oliera Heights in San Fernando. In fact, in every one that I have attended so far, the percentage of East Indians who got keys was significantly higher than Africans—in the ceremony that I attended. There are things I do not expect from the Member for Fyzabad and I ask him, please, to check his facts carefully before he makes those statements in this House.

Mr. C. Sharma: The hon. Prime Minister would remember, I went to court to obtain the listing of persons, because the Minister of Housing was saying that the listing available were those persons who applied. Information was there, including the racial origin of the applicants. I went to court and that was never given. But more than that, listen to what we are saying. This is a collective voice. I am not here today—I have never been here for that purpose—to say race exists where it does not exist. I am simply saying, look at all your projects; your housing; take 10 houses and look at it. It might be so calculated—because you are dealing with some smart guys; you are dealing with very smart men; they would stage-manage it to please you, because they know that you are not—I have demonstrated that you are not racial, in my view. You do not intend to be, but it is stage-managed in a particular way. Every one of us has been saying it, including Members opposite.
The truth is the truth. If there is nothing else, you speak the truth. When you live a life of deceit, you cannot come one day and pretend to be different, you know.

“We installed”
And I am saying, we, because it is taxpayers’ money:

“112,000 streetlights.”
That is a fantastic thing, but it is not adding to the value of the people’s lives.

Hon. Member: Do not say that.
Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Prime Minister, they have roads to go to their homes; they have water in their pipes; putting on the light in the night is useless. As I say that, in today’s Newsday, let me tell you how the street light is not helping. The headline at page 9 states:

“Robbery victims ready to leave
Two businessmen who along with their loved ones...”

You see how your love thing has reached the newspapers? [Laughter]

“were the victims of hold-ups at gunpoint in two unrelated incidents, have vowed to close down their businesses and leave the country for good.

And as police continued investigations into the robberies with no arrests being made up to yesterday,...”
The street lights were lighting, “eh”.

“the victims have declared that they are fed up with the crime...
In one incident, Mohanlal Bhagwansingh, 56....”

A fantastic human being; social worker, Rotarian:

“and his wife Leela....”
Mr. Prime Minister, today is Raksha Bandhan. Today is that Indian Hindu festival celebrated in 160 countries the world over, where a sister ties a thread around the hand of her brother—adopted brother. I am sure that might have happened to you some years ago—where they demonstrate love and care to protect one another. We need to have the Raksha Bandhan as a national thing in the country. We need to return love. It is a powerful thing. It means well. Leela tied Rakhi’s hand 16 years ago, so you would expect me to be a little emotional. I continue to read:

“were so badly beaten by two armed bandits who stormed their Crest Camp, Fyzabad home early Sunday morning that they had to seek medical attention following the ordeal.
Bhagwansingh, a kidney transplant survivor, is managing director of his company—TML Company Ltd. The other victim, Ramesh Jaimungalsingh, 49, and his son Mahesh Persad, 26…”

And they “ain’t get no” Nedco loan to open their business “eh”. I am sure they would have gotten it if they had applied. They did not apply, maybe.

“had just closed their business, Sispo’s Minimart…”

A popular shop in Siparia Junction:

“when two bandits held them up at gunpoint.

Yesterday, Bhagwansingh and Jaimungalsingh told Newsday that after ‘so many years in business’ they are leaving.’

I am begging them not to leave and I want you to beg them too. I will give you their phone numbers. Call them and just give them some hope.

“The masked bandits robbed the couple of $15,000 and $80,000 worth of jewelry before escaping in Bhagwansingh’s Toyota Prado SUV valued $250,000.”

Not held. Another person, Ispan Maharaj, Fyzabad Junction, held up four times; another person, Mr. Ragoonathsingh, a prominent contractor, Siparia Road—and many stories like that. So the street light is not working. I am not saying stop the street light programme, however, you know; I am not suggesting that, I am saying there must be a mix.

Mr. Manning: A mix of what?

Mr. C. Sharma: A mix of intelligence in terms of what do people need. There are a number of police stations without motor vehicles, as we speak; a number of police stations are without manpower as we speak; a number of police stations are without working telephones. Mr. Speaker, I hope you do not have to call a police station and hear: “Boss, we have no transport, you know.” “Well, call me when the transport come, nah.” “Boss, the phone ain’t working, you know.” “Well if I send a car, you will come?” “No, we only have one person in the station.”

That is what we have, and the Minister of National Security comes and tells you all kinds of things here, you know. You see, Government must really be a collective effort. Opposition must also inform Government of what is happening, and that is why we have representatives and that is why the State provides offices. But, you see, when the Government has any plan, they convert it—not you, hon. Prime Minister, because I am sure you do not subscribe to that. They convert
everything into a PNM thing—any and every thing. So if something is happening in Fyzabad, the Member of Parliament—forget the personality—is not part of it. There are public servants who are afraid to talk to Opposition MPs, you know. They are afraid the boss gets to hear. Imagine that, in 2007!

“Three thousand persons got CDAP.”

That is great, but how many times have we said that a lot of the medication is not working for the people? So giving the medication is not the answer; you need to have prevention. You should have less people accessing this thing because they are getting healthy.

Mr. Imbert: Under the UNC you will get no medication.

Mr. C. Sharma: This nonsense that the Member for Diego Martin East speaks about, under the UNC; the UNC is not in government. You cannot be so foolish every time in the public. You have to improve.

“Free HIV/AIDS treatment to six major cities.”

Why are we not reducing the AIDS? Why do you want to treat the ailment? Let there be more education. We have always said let every Member of the Parliament’s office be a centre where information could be made available. Government ministries are scared to send us information. They send to the PNM offices; by the way, though, not far from my office there is a PNM office; further down the road there is a COP office; a lot of offices.

“Senior Citizens Grants, doubled from $800 in 2002 to $1,600.”

What does that mean? It means absolutely nothing, because we have demonstrated that a number of senior citizens are maintaining their children because there are a lot of single families in this country where the average grandmother or grandfather is seeing about, one, two or three children, as the case may be. So are you measuring this $1,600 versus the cost of their living? The answer is no.

“Enrolment to tertiary education tripled, from 15,000 to 45,000.”

And today students are trying to get into the university but the grades are not being considered because of Government’s policy now. First, the Member for Diego Martin Central boasted about a young, bright economist—I have forgotten his name already—but I am sure he had good grades to get into the university. Today, they are using their contacts and putting persons with 12 points when it should be 14 or 15. It must not be so. But what we must do, however, is that all those students who wish to do medicine, must be encouraged.
“Junior Secondary Schools abolished.”

I am not too happy with that. I went to a Junior Secondary School. You did not mean abolished; you meant the shift system.

Mr. Manning: No, the system is abolished.

Mr. C. Sharma: You see here: “Junior Secondary Schools abolished.”

Mr. Manning: We are talking about the system.

Mr. C. Sharma: It is like “reverse back”. The other areas, very quickly; I do not want to spend so much time on this:

“350 purpose-built police vehicles.”

You call 10 stations now and six-and-a-half do not have vehicles.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the last item I want to identify is no down payment. The departure tax is abolished. That is misleading the national community. You still have to pay the $100 through a different medium. Why are you fooling the people? Is that a love thing? Abolish means that it does not exist. When you go to the travel agency you still have to pay the $100. No down payment and 2 per cent mortgage for homes costing less that $450,000. Who are you attracting with the $450,000 thing? I have just identified 300,000 citizens of Trinidad and Tobago earning less than $300,000. The mortgage formula is one-third of their income and $1,000 cannot pay for a $450,000 home. It does not appeal.

There is a $500,000 allowance for companies setting up daycare facilities. This does not attract the small man. He cannot make $500,000. [Interruption]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to avoid intervening in the contribution of the hon. Member for Fyzabad, but he seems to be so misguided in some of these things, I cannot sit and allow them to pass. The Government says that if you earn a salary of less than $8,000 per month, from $1,440 to $8,000, you are eligible to buy a home that the Government is selling for under $450,000 at 2 per cent interest with no down payment. It means that someone earning a salary as low as $1,440 per month can qualify for a mortgage for a house that is appropriately priced. All the houses are not priced at $450,000. Some are $155,000, $190,000, $210,000 and $250,000. There are different prices for different salary ranges. Based on your ability you can pay, assisted by the Government: in a 2 per cent mortgage, in subsidy on the infrastructural cost and in subsidy on the construction. I am just not understanding the Member for Fyzabad.
Mr. C. Sharma: Both the Prime Minister and I are saying the same thing. There are 300,000 persons earning under $3,000 per month and the $450,000 is not attractive to them because they do not qualify.

I am saying further, that out of the 300,000 persons, 60 per cent are earning less than $2,000. They cannot qualify for any of the mortgages that the Government is making available.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, that is not true! In Tardieu Gardens, where we have just constructed houses for squatter relocation, a two-bedroom house sells for $195,000 and a three-bedroom house is selling for $245,000 at 2 per cent interest. All the utilities are underground. If you see the environmental circumstances of those houses! They are properly drained and people at the economic base of the society are able to buy those homes and live comfortably in them. In fact, we are relocating squatters in them. Those who have been relocated are now talking about bathing twice a day. They have not used a shower for a long time. Mr. Speaker, they are sitting in their porch to dry their hair. They could not have done that long ago. What the Member for Fyzabad is saying is completely at variance with the facts.

Mr. C. Sharma: The Prime Minister is really demonstrating a love thing because he is helping me with my argument. Let us work it together; $195,000—let us round it off at $200,000 for easy math—at 2 per cent over 25 years is $250,000. The mortgage on that is one-third of the person's income. For the person earning $2,000, one-third is $650. He cannot make the mortgage payment. Let us work it out. You have an economist there. Your intention is noble but it is not available.

Let us move on. Increase in minimum wage from $9 to $10, a person working 8 hours has moved from $9 to $10. That is $1 per hour. For eight hours, that is $8 per day. A potato roti with some soorwaa from the duck is $8. They cannot buy a potato roti at the end of the day. Again, you have to make sure that it reflects the buying capacity of the worker. The CEPEP worker has a 15 per cent increase from $75. This has moved him to $10.48. He is getting 48 cents over the minimum income of $10.

The disability grant has increased to $1,100. I think Members on this side have argued that those persons who are getting the disability grant are prevented from working, even if they could make a day’s work. Immediately, when that goes to the attention of the other officers they stop the grant. I want to argue that we should encourage them to work and make them feel useful in whatever they are doing. They can do computer work or whatever they can do in that area.
Increase in CEPEP/URP wages by 15 per cent. I have indicated that was $10.48 minimum. It is 48 cents. We have argued that the CEPEP worker must move from being a worker to a business person. Not a single CEPEP worker has become a CEPEP contractor since it has come in five years ago.

Early education childhood centres—training of teachers. Based on the evidence presented to us, all of them are costing $10 million. The hon. Prime Minister indicated on the last day that is not so, but the documents provided show $10 million.

When a citizen gets up on mornings, wherever he is living in the country, the first call of service is from the local government body; whether he lives in Port of Spain, Point Fortin or Fyzabad. We have argued time and again that the local government bodies are not getting the funding to carry out their work and it is affecting the lives of people. When you do not treat with them fairly you would have to increase your health cost and police. It means when persons are not being serviced, when their needs are not met, they would turn to something to make a statement.

Let us look at the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, one of the largest in the country. This has 106 playgrounds, 32 cemeteries, one cremation area, 642 local roads and traces, 175 bridges and 900 kilometres of drain. Their homes require truck-borne water between three and five days. Let us see what this loving Government is giving.

Under drainage, $3 million was allocated. When you look at the cost per day, it is 5 cents. That is why flooding is always with us. You heard from the Member for Arouca North. It cost 6 cents or 10 cents for a plant. He has stopped paying for bandhaniyaa.

Recreation facilities, $1 million. That is 2 cents per day. Cemeteries and cremation site, $300,000. That is 1 cent per day.

Local roads and bridges, $4 million, 7 cents per day. Purchase of equipment, $700,000, 1 cent per day.

Maintenance of state traces, $7,255,000. It boils down to 12 cents per day. That is what the Government is giving.

Maintenance of buildings and grounds, $1.5 million, 3 cents per day.

Water trucking, $1.5 million, 35 communities serviced. Many days persons have to go without water. Hon. Prime Minister, I want to make a suggestion which I hope
you would consider. All the homes that are serviced by truck-borne water, I suggest that the Government pay for water tanks and install one in every home. A number of those families have barrels at the side of the road and it is not the best hygiene. Make sure we treat with families. Make sure that it is not an election ploy and it disappears.

Mr. Speaker, I identified Princes Town. I want to quickly go to Mayaro. Mayaro has three PNM councillors, three UNC; one PNM alderman and one UNC alderman. Let us see what is happening there. Please do not cry. We are making available in that area, for roads, $0.31 per day; recreation grounds, 46 cents local health, that is scavenging, repairs to drains and spraying, etcetera, $3. Cemeteries, 11 cents per day; markets, $0.06 per day; truck-borne water, 33 areas; 2,200 homes, 8,800 persons. Mr. Speaker, it means that for this area, if we are to provide water for 50 days—we count the dry season from January to May—they are getting water for a few cents per day. It cannot be.

The Government knows the areas that are without pipe-borne water. There should be special programmes for those areas.

The Government knows the areas that are without electricity. The average in the county is 90 per cent and in the Mayaro area it is 70 per cent. Let us buy them some safety lamps. Too often we hear of a family house being destroyed because a flambeau fell, the candle fell, or of a pensioner getting burnt. Let us show love. That is why, if you work with the Opposition—we are not begging. We are hard-working just like you. We came here midday yesterday and we left at 1.30 a.m. and came back at 10 o’clock. We work as hard as you. We love the constituents as much as you do. We want a beautiful country. We all have kids. Why this hate thing?

Look at the Member for Diego Martin East, the Minister of Works and Transport. He has never come to the constituency in Fyzabad in five years. What a shame! He is boasting. That is the area of discrimination. I always talk about geopolitical discrimination. That is discrimination. That is a UNC area.

He has never visited Fyzabad. The Minister of Housing—we can check. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has never visited Fyzabad. It is not the geographic Fyzabad, it is the constituency of Fyzabad. The hon. Prime Minister has been to Fyzabad on five occasions. He was well received by the Member of Parliament as well. We have to demonstrate that we love and care.

If this is the last budget that you would be sitting on—I am only asking—for me, it might be the last but I do not know. What would we go and tell the world?
We may not be able to write a book. What would we tell the world? [Interruption] I have many, many things. 

The other area I quickly want to run through is the number of lies. I do not know why the Government thinks it has to lie. 

The Prime Minister needs a guy like Dr. Ishmael and a few others. You cannot come every year in the budget and say you are doing this and putting money. That is where corruption takes place, especially in the Ministry of Works and Transport. There is enormous corruption. I will tell you what happens. They keep putting funds for projects, do some preparation work and the money disappears and the next year they will come back again.

Let us go to page 33 of this particular book.

“Contracts amounting to $3.5 million and $3 million were awarded for the start up of consultancies for the development of a communication strategy and development and implementation of a national strategy.”

This appears every time. You are paying the same money over and over again.

Page 34, 1.22 states:

“The public sector reform computerization programme received an allocation of $221 million of which approximately $204 was utilized in 2007. The aim of the programme is the further development and modernization of information and communications.”

We see money coming into it again.

Page 35, 1.27 and 1.29:

“The upgrade of electronic voter registration and election management system is expected to be completed in time for the 2007 general election.”

Mr. Speaker, can I ask something very quickly? I notice when the Opposition Members are speaking, the television collapses. We are not carried. I would be very disappointed if the constituents of Fyzabad who have been waiting since Friday to see me—Can we confirm that it is on air?

Mr. Speaker: I can assure you that you are well covered.

4.15 p.m.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, with respect to item 129, Construction of the official residence of the hon. Prime Minister and the Diplomatic Centre; commenced
in November 2006 with an allocation of $60 million. It was revised to $122 million. Of course, you know, Mr. Speaker, it has now gone to $148.1 million. Now, this does not include the furnishings of the Prime Minister’s residence.

On page 36, item 130, this is with respect to OSHA. This is very interesting. In pursuit of Government’s mandate to provide a comfortable working environment for public sector employees, work continued with the upgrade of physical infrastructure at the Eric Williams Finance building which accommodates some 850 officers. Mr. Speaker, $15.3 million was allocated to this project and $7.5 million was expended. We have seen too many projects like this where they cannot account for the money.

Mr. Speaker, this is an election year, and there will be many stories making the rounds, but what is coming to the Opposition’s attention is that there are many small contractors who are being paid a lot of money. We have to investigate that immediately.

On page 37, item 136: At the Forensic Science Centre $4 million. That has moved from $15 million to $25 million. As an interim measure, pending completion of the new facility a temporary DNA lab was purchased. The lab became operational in May 2000, incurring an expenditure of $200,000. So, you have money being spent for one thing and you have to go and find another approach.

Item No. 137, work on the construction of new facilities for the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), advanced 70 per cent. Not a single project undertaken by the majority of ministries has come within budget to date and within time as well. In fact, the failure rate is 77 per cent. The Government is achieving a rate of less than 25 per cent. What a shame! I was part of a government and our rates were not like that. Something is wrong. We had very little money. Your problem is that you have too much money and you are making too many deals.

Mr. Speaker, the last item that I want to identify here on page 60. You will appreciate that when the Government thinks that it is doing you a favour and they give you 10 books to study for the budget debate, and come back within 48 hours with no assistance. You see, they have the whole ministry at their disposal. When we return to government, and the Opposition has to debate, we are going to make sure that they have the resources. The contributions must by like what I am doing here; a high level and factual. [Desk thumping] Not like the Member for Diego Martin Central who attacked the Member for St. Augustine. He attacked the Member for St. Augustine, but he has no shame. He bought the book with the Ministry’s money. [Desk thumping] What a shame! [Desk thumping] I will deal with that matter in another place.
Mr. Speaker, I do not want to talk too much about the runway at the airport, but when one looks at what is happening there, it shows that the Government has the money, but it does not have the intelligence and the will power.

What emerged in this debate is a lot of corruption. Now, it would be nice to pretend that it does not exist, but you cannot do that because it does. Now, over the years, all government has been known for something; UNC for delivery, for making things happen, adding value to people’s life and making sure the resources reach as many people as possible.

Last week, during the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin East, he said that we did not build any overpass. [Interrupting] I withdraw it quickly. It was clownish in a sense, because he was making people laugh, but the Cross Crossing Overpass is a classic example. All the bridges on the east coast were done by the UNC; and all the bridges in Cedros.

We had a Monday night meeting in Cedros last night and a couple hundred of people came there. People are responding, because they are really getting fed up with the PNM. Now, the PNM did not set out to be a bad government; the PNM did not set out to discriminate against people, but something happened along the way. When this happens, one needs to sit and reflect and withdraw. Take five years off and come back. At the end of the day, we have to build a better Trinidad and Tobago.

As you know, I am the shadow minister for local government and works and transport, so I will have to treat with both areas. Now, with respect to local government, we have argued what the UNC government did. I want to encourage the distinguished Member for St. Augustine—in unity there is strength and purpose—do not waste time going to fight this election by yourself. You cannot obtain any success. Let us rescue Trinidad and Tobago—even Members opposite who are not going back and who wish to have a place to continue serving the country, let us pay tribute to the Prime Minister’s last budget presentation and make it a true love thing. [Interrupting] In my father’s mansion there are many rooms, I will make a place for you. [Interrupting]

Mr. Manning: In my father’s house.

Mr. C. Sharma: Testing. Mr. Speaker, I was making the point that a UNC government will immediately treat with the needs of the citizens. We are going to ensure that all the regional corporations—whether they are controlled by the PNM or the UNC—will get the resources that they require. Every single regional corporation does not have its required manpower.
Mr. Speaker, certainly, the multi-purpose companies are doing work but, again, you have to ask at what cost. How are they determining projects? Not a single Member of Parliament on this side has been able to get the attention of the bodies. We wrote to them telling them that we have roads to fix and they would just ignore us. Again, it is a miscommunication that it is a PNM thing, and they must not treat with the UNC. We also represent people. There are 15 of them. There is very little cost management in there. Nobody seems to know whom they are accountable to.

I think the Member for Caroni East raised the matter about SWMCOL. Mr. Prime Minister, every two weeks SWMCOL is having a graduation. Now, does that really make sense? Certainly, you want to educate people and you want to train them, but they are treating people with contempt. Every two weeks they would have a graduation and they would bring a set of Ministers—as my friend, the former Mayor of San Fernando would say, “ceremonial idiots” standing to hand out certificates. [Laughter] Does it make sense?

Hon. Member: Who is that?

Mr. C. Sharma: The former Mayor of San Fernando. Again, SWMCOL under Ray Braithwaite—hon. Prime Minister this will come out in the public sooner than later.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the distinguished Member for Fyzabad 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. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, this love thing is going too far. Mr. Speaker, I was making the point—all Members of this House were sworn in by whichever religious text they subscribe to—that SWMCOL is promoting the PNM’s agenda. They have been giving money and assistance to religious groups—no Hindu or Muslim group has received any money under Ray Braithwaite—in an effort to capture their little vote bank. This is wrong. We are seeing this happening in too many places.

Mr. Speaker, you see, what has happened over the years is that many state agencies like Petrotrin, WASA, T&TEC and these 15 multi-purpose bodies feel that they are obligated to the PNM Government and, as a result, they treat with them.
If, for instance, I write to the human resource manager making a recommendation and, my friend, the Member for Diego Martin Central did the same, as he usually does, he will get the employment.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, for the avoidance of doubt, when I write on behalf of any constituent, I do not make recommendations; I ask for assistance, please. I have no job out there. I ask for consideration.

Mr. C. Sharma: My friend does not know what the meaning of recommendation is. That is the meaning of recommendation. We all do that. We are obligated to do it. When constituents come to us they must not see us as being powerless; they must not see us not making that effort.

I told the hon. Prime Minister that the constituency of Fyzabad is one of the best constituencies in the whole country, because we deliver services. Everybody who goes there, we have to add value to their lives. When somebody walks in, my staff and I, if I am there, are quickly thinking how can we treat with this person; whether it is to assist that person in obtaining a birth certificate or a grant.

Mr. Speaker, the Government published in the newspapers—close to $1 million has been spent on these advertisements about this $15,000 grant. Last year, only 985 grants were given, but there are thousands of applications. People do not know what the criteria are. In this year’s budget, it is intended to give out 1,485.

If you take 39 constituencies and you process 25 applications in each constituency, it crosses that number. So, there must be some guide. They are frustrating people. They come into our offices and we are encouraged to do these applications. The same thing obtains with the house subsidy. Every Monday morning they are changing the rules. There is one for $35,000 and there is another one for $50,000. The point is, we cannot be misleading the national community. We cannot be saying to go to these officers and find out.

In fact, on Thursday and Friday in the newspaper, I saw where the community hotline was going to Point Fortin. On Saturday morning, there was another advertisement in the daily newspapers saying to go to Point Fortin and transport will be available; there is no planning. I asked the hon. Minister, the Member for St. Ann’s East—you are paying for maxi-taxis and you are moving them from Fyzabad to Point Fortin to offer them this service. This is an insult. Why are you moving them from the constituency of Siparia?

Let us make sure, whatever services are available, let us make the MP offices useful and more productive. I can give the assurance that a UNC Alliance government
will not do that. It is unfair and it is unkind. So, if there is something available, whichever offices are in the area it should be treated there. Do not make everything a PNM thing. It is destroying the fabric of our society.

On the question of manpower to the local government bodies, what is happening is that the Government in its wisdom thought that CEPEP and URP would have picked up the slack, but they cannot. The regional corporations have a constitutional duty to discharge their funding under a certain budget allocation, and they must do certain things. When you look at two things there, the manpower and the resources that are being made available for goods and services are not sufficient.

I was making the point that this year’s budget demonstrated very clearly that corruption is the biggest issue. Corruption has many meanings. In fact, the challenge in the world today would be to treat with acts of corruption. Corruption has many meanings. Mr. Speaker, in fact, the challenge in the world today is: How do you treat with these acts of corruption.

Recently, there was a conference in Mexico. It was said that good governance is impossible if members of a government and public officials are corrupt. One can argue: Do we have good governance in the country? Some people will say yes and some will say no, but let us treat with those persons who say no. This may amount to more than 50 per cent of the national community. It says that good governance is impossible if members of a government and public officials are corrupt. So, we are not in receipt of good governance because the Government and public officials are corrupt and we will have to treat with that. This is an issue in the country. May I continue after tea?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended for tea and we will resume promptly at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

5.00 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The love thing has to continue and let us see if we can get it into the public gallery. Just before the tea break there seemed to be an ugly incident which I hope never repeats itself. In the Parliament people will come from both sides to lend support and it appears—I do not have all the facts and I do not wish to get them, that is maybe your responsibility—that there was some ugly incident where a supporter of one party was interfering with another and engaging the police at the same time. We have to be very careful it does not go there.
Mr. Speaker, during the tea break, very interesting, I got a few text messages in response to the Member for Diego Martin Central, when he attacked the Member for St. Augustine with the book publication. I do not want to make that a drawn out argument; simply to make the point that Prof. Selwyn Cudjoe continues to get enormous help from the Central Bank and from a number of state agencies and no questions are asked, thousands and thousands of dollars. I do not know what was involved in the arrangement, but you see we have to be balanced; we have to have the love thing. So you cannot come and attack on one side and not know the facts of the whole story, but I am sure that could be dealt with at another point.

On the question of the resources of the State that belong to the taxpayers, the local government bodies and a number of communities are suffering for basic things. What we are seeing time and time again, the PNM has a habit of hiding money in projects. For instance, the water taxi. This was supposed to be in July, then it went to August, September, October and God knows when.

Hon. Member: Overrun.

Mr. C. Sharma: Overrun; a lot of wastage of money; Tobago airport is the same thing. It is time that we start the building of the Tobago airport. The Ali’s Creek in San Fernando West, moneys approved, $10 million, not a cent spent, but the money sits there and that is how it suddenly disappears.

I want to advise the Prime Minister—I know he has left but I am sure he is listening on the radio—Item 127 on page 35, the EBC is saying that they are not ready for elections with the electronic voter registration, so you cannot be talking elections when you are not giving them the resources or the manpower, because then you cannot conduct fair elections.

For years, the pride of the South was the Naparima Bowl. Again, page 13, Item 44: $10 million. You see, the Government does not have the intelligence; you cannot deliver. What is your problem? You cannot deliver and you can go on and on. What is the major reason for this non-delivery? It is really Government’s corruption; there is nothing else; if you bring it down to one thing.

Mr. Speaker, while I talk about the Tobago hospital in particular, every child is denied health care because the Tobago hospital does not exist. In addition to blaming the Member, the Government must also blame the Member for Diego Martin West. This Madam Justice Sealy Report—and I must tell you that one of Commissioners whose name is Chandrabhan Sharma, we are not related, the Brahmins
just carry the title of Sharma. He lives in Deonarine Junction, I understand that. [Laughter]

I want to refer you to page 20—[Interruption] Yes, Ken? Ken from all over the place—The report says:

“Further the Commission considered a letter of Tuesday, November 23, 2004 from NHIC requesting the removal of certain materials from the project to Tobago Plantations Complex on the approval of Dansar for such removal.

Such a request was a clear indication of the pretended claim of NHIC, that all materials on the project were the property of NHIC. It also demonstrated that such a claim was totally unfounded and the removal to the Landate…”

And this is where the materials went. NIPDEC is of the opinion and they have qualified it, that not less than $5 million worth of material has gone. An act of corruption, no matter how you play it.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the work that was done on the Landate project, the WASA lines, the T&TEC lines and the moneys paid by the developer, it does not reflect the quantum. The other findings there, very quickly, on page 30, 3.8, No. 1:

“The evidence of witnesses as above mentioned and the exhibits, that the appropriate authorities should visit the provision of sections 2, 3, 4 and 21 of the Larceny Act, Chap. 11:12, with a view to addressing the illegal act if so formed by them, committed by NHIC by the removal of NIPDEC’s material from the Scarborough Hospital to the Landate Development project.”

This is a senior Government Minister benefiting; an act of corruption.

“That NIPDEC should revisit its contract with NHIC, which it entered into on March 06, 2003, to ascertain whether a fundamental breach has occurred by such removal and the enforcement of such rights to damages especially in the light of clause 3 of the said contract.”

The short point of all of this is that the people of Tobago must not be treated less than the people of Trinidad. And the Scarborough Hospital that started at $160 million, now has reached about $900 million, not yet finished. [Interruption] Thank you. The former Minister of Health has confirmed that when this is finished it would be close to $900 million. But they are without health care and the only beneficiary from the Scarborough Hospital is the Member for Diego Martin West. What a sad situation! When you look at implementation, the poorest implementation in the history of
Mr. Sharman:

Trinidad and Tobago is under this present administration. [Desk thumping] So many.

Establish a Children’s Authority, not yet finished; Prison National Family Policy to the Public and Public Consultations, not yet finished; Implementation of a smart card, ongoing—PNM people getting the benefits—Implementing Skills Training programme, in progress; Project Sports—when you look at the distribution of these projects, let me quickly run the statistics for you. Under the National Commission for Self Help, the majority of projects are in PNM controlled constituencies.

In addition, the highest dollar value; when you look at NSDP, water and electricity, same thing. In constituencies held by the Opposition, we are still doing self-help projects by raising funds, in the PNM areas there is none of that. There is only so much the people could take. It is a very frightening development. Sporting facilities, Diego Martin, PNM; Sangre Grande, PNM; Toco, PNM; Point Fortin, PNM; San Fernando, PNM; Arima, PNM; Santa Cruz. What happened to the rural communities? What happened to the constituencies held by the Opposition? How long again you expect us to take this? Where is the love? This is a hate thing. Every project is in PNM areas.

The other area very quickly, projects again—NEDCO—the Government came in the thief of night and disallowed NEDCO information from being accessed by the public.

Mr. Speaker: In the dead of night.

Mr. C. Sharma: but I said “in the thief of night”; both are equivalent, “when you thief you have to dead and you should dead an ugly death”. When you look at the highway project, survey after survey, preparation work goes on and goes on, millions and millions. Who is benefiting from all of these? It will be very interesting. In fact, lots of authority say, the richest Members of Parliament in the Caribbean, in Latin America are on the PNM Benches. It is a frightening thing. As Ministers, their full-time employment is here. I wonder how many have blind trusts, or they are blind to it.

The Port-of-Spain East-West Corridor, on hold; construction of the interchange, again on hold. Look how much money you have spent there. The Diego Martin Highway, same story; Victoria Gardens to Acton Court; improvement to the Maraval access, ended; the importation of used vehicles. There seems to be a lobby by the new car sales people to prevent the small man from owning a car and the UNC government
will have to make sure that every citizen of this country can access a motor car. [Desk thumping] It is a tool; it is no longer a luxury item.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard from the Member for La Brea talking about the bus service. In the constituency of La Brea, you could get a bus in every corner of the constituency; Erin, Santa Flora, Palo Seco, La Brea, Lot 10. Again, the PNM areas. So, what is happening is that all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have to work hard, as they are required and rightfully so. They have to pay taxes, but when you look at where the taxes are spent, they are spent against them. Very interesting and very frightening. They have to work as hard as everybody else.

When you look at what is happening in medicine, there are 30 doctors, sons and daughters of yours and mine, not allowed to practise medicine here, but they have Cubans waiting to come in. It is a hate thing. It is a Government of hate and hate explodes—[Desk thumping]—and when it explodes blood comes with it. In all the countries that you have looked, you have seen this kind of thing wherever it appeared.

So, Mr. Speaker, what must be done? There must be a commitment from the Government to have total removal of corruption. There must be transparency and good governance as obtained under the UNC. [Desk thumping] Say what you want, UNC reached out to every man, woman and child in this country, whether they were living in Laventille, Port of Spain, Fyzabad, or Erin. Given the importance placed on the quality of good governance, it is important to have a clear understanding of what is meant by the term governance. And governance in this context is doing the best for all the people all the time. What you do now, you do the best for a few people all the time. It cannot be so, you have to put a stop to that.

When you do not put a stop to it voluntarily, it happens in a different way. Transparency is widely recognized as a core principle of good governance. In fact, the UNDP has observed that transparency means sharing information and acting in an open manner. Moreover, transparency allows stakeholders to gather information that may be critical to uncovering abuses and defending their interest.

Transparency and inclusiveness—very important. Transparency and civic engagement: civic engagement is understood as the active participation of citizens in public life and their contribution to the common good. Get the country involved in the governance of the country. Let them know if they want a road done how it is going to be done. Under the UNC Alliance government we are going to publish
all the roads that we have done every quarter in the year. [Desk thumping] We will publish all the public buildings that are going to be attached; the Leader of the Opposition indicated that for the first time in this part of the world there will be a maintenance element.

**Hon. Member:** “Mas, mas” and—

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Say again?

**Hon. Member:** “Mas, mas”—

**Mr. C. Sharma:** I was there before and I shall be there again. [Desk thumping] The important thing is to learn to come twice; very important.

**Hon. Member:** It is a good lesson.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Trust in public bodies is affected by two things, the quality of service that individuals and their families receive and how open and honest government is about their performance, including their willingness to admit to and learn from their mistakes. The PNM does not learn from its mistakes.

**Mr. Ramsaran:** They do not make mistakes?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** I am sure in the UNC we have made mistakes and we have learnt from them and there might be others that we learn. That is why I would advise the Member for St. Augustine, do not make the mistake and go alone; do not make that mistake at all. [Crosstalk]

Transparency and corruption. The term “corruption” was taboo in the 1980s and 1990s. Understanding corruption, while there is no universal agreed definition of corruption, most people agree corruption means the misuse of office for private gain. How many times have we heard that the PNM have misused their office for private gain? From Ministers to State boards; I mean, “oh gawd” everybody could talk about that; a child.

**5.15 p.m.**

Their office is a position of trust where one receives authority in order to act on behalf of an institution, be it private, public or non-profit. There are too many cases of corruption on this Government. Corruption comes in various forms. The PNM could write a book on corruption!

As there is no universally accepted definition of corruption, likewise there is no universally valid typed policy of corruption. All forms of corruption, however, are based on the potential conflict between the individual’s professional and personal
interest. A summary is available here: bribery, probably the most common form of corruption; theft and fraud, the taking of or conversion of the money, property or other valuables for personal benefit. Again, we see that in the PNM too much.

I am not suggesting that the only corrupt organization is the PNM. No, I am saying the PNM cultivates it. Once the PNM is in government, one thing that is associated is a big “C”, corruption, crime, high cost of living, no compassion, no care, congestion of traffic, abuse, favouritism, improper political contribution—very important, last week we saw a PNM dinner advertised for $100,000 a plate. For CEPEP worker, in 20 years he would not spend $100,000 in food, under the PNM you could go one night—Now, if it is $100,000 to have conversation with the Prime Minister, what will they pay to have conversation with the Member for La Brea? Ten cents? [Laughter] So, it is a very sad thing.

Mr. Bereaux: [Inaudible] for free.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, corruption is affecting Trinidad and Tobago; some would argue that corruption is cultural in this country now. Why is this so? The reason for it, is that in the years of PNM from the O’Hallorans’, to the Monteils’, to the Kens’ and to everybody, corruption is identified with them. They may not be, I am sure some Members opposite are not—[Interruption]

Mr. Ramsaran: You are sure?

Mr. C. Sharma: They should, I know Ken makes his money in various ways. I am not suggesting that there is no element of corruption in it, because when you look at the definition, I am sure he qualifies. [Laughter] When you look at the elements—[Interruption] [Laughter]

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, please ask Mr. Sharma to leave me alone. Withdraw the statement and leave me alone, please.

Mr. C. Sharma: I will never leave you alone.

Mr. Valley: Please, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: You only have about three minutes left. Yes, yes, you have to withdraw the statement, obviously.

Mr. C. Sharma: I did not say he was, I said based on the definitions, I am sure he may qualify.

Mr. Speaker: No, no. Remember we had this—
Mr. C. Sharma: Okay, withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: Right, good.

Mr. C. Sharma: Without the definitions, you may qualify. Is that allowed? Without the definitions, because I am—[Inaudible] for using the definitions. When will corruption strive? Most under the current state of governance because what happens is that the government comes and takes it all. They report to no one; they form these multi-purpose companies; they appoint anybody to any board; they decide to spend any amount of money; there are checks and balances.

Hon. Member:—[Inaudible]

Mr. C. Sharma: Me.

Hon. Member: Are you sure?

Mr. C. Sharma: You cannot win a county council election by yourself.

Hon. Member: [Inaudible] going and run.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, do not let you and I get in any argument today. Meet me at Hilton this evening. The UNC believes that institutions must be free from fear. The UNC Alliance will make sure that the citizens of the country are involved—in fact, we started that involvement. You would recall, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the village councils under the PNM, they all became party groups.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes it pains me when there is a PNM convention—because there will be one next week somewhere—and they have to beg people to attend it. They have to give them t-shirts, food and they have to buy drink; it is very sad because that is not how it must be done. The way it must be done is that persons who wish to make themselves available. When you look at where the PNM gets its candidates, they are all state-sponsored. I will give you the example of Fyzabad, there are three persons: Anjeni Beharry working WASA, using resources of WASA—[Interruption]

Dr. Moonilal: Cannot get any water.

Mr. C. Sharma:—Andrea Bernard from Petrotrin; Joel [something] from URP, in fact, I hope I used his name correctly, but he was the regional manager for URP Fyzabad. There were so many allegations of corruption, when his name [Interruption]—what is his name, the manager of URP. The guy who was in URP Fyzabad, what was his name?
Mr. Bereaux: I do not know if you are correct. [Inaudible]

Mr. C. Sharma: Okay.

Dr. Moonilal: So how do you know that is not correct?

Mr. C. Sharma: But the point is, when there were allegations of corruption, his name surfaced as the candidate, the office burned down. All the records gone; that always happens under the PNM. Petrotrin, mass corruption, all the records burned down and they have a fire station on the compound.

Mr. Bereaux: Just like. [Inaudible]

Mr. C. Sharma: And when you look at Sangre Grande, Wayne Joseph, WASA. You look where the PNM is searching for their candidates, they raid the State bodies and what they have to do, they have to cultivate them there; the resources have to be made available to them. They are either coming from MTS, like in the case of Lennox (something) Singh—we will use another guy.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, those who will not be with us on the next occasion, it is not the end of the world. We must continue to live good; we must continue to love. Those of you who have been in contempt of the people; those of you who treated people with contempt, like the Member for Diego Martin East and others, who do not respond—when the Member for Oropouche constituents came to him in his duty for which he took an oath of office, this Minister said they must write to him directly. It is the power thing, he wants to be empowered. Short in many respects, but he wants to be powerful. That is not what governance is about. [Interuption]

Mr. Imbert: How do you know?

Mr. C. Sharma:—it was not intended to be this way.

Mr. Imbert: Only know how to “thief.”

Mr. C. Sharma: And the Member for Diego Martin East is acknowledging he thieves, that is the word he just used. So, what government has come to in this country in 2007, as we move to 2010 or 2020, is a bunch of thieves, legally and otherwise; raiding the Treasury; raiding the resources, abusing people in the process; no development; nothing to show for $200 billion. I pray God will save us from the PNM.

I wait to welcome you under the UNC Alliance government, soon. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [Desk thumping]
The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely happy to be given the opportunity to present in this honourable House and to participate in this debate, the national budget 2008 which was presented by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on Monday, August 20, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in his budget presentation informed the national population of the successful strides being made in education and I want to quote what was said:

"We are in an advanced stage of developing and implementing a world class system of seamless education, stretching from Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) through to tertiary level …"

He also stated that:

"… Trinidad and Tobago is well on the way to truly revolutionizing its education system, a … system that will underpin the country's thrust to sustainable economic development; an education system designed to strengthen the social fabric, deepen our democracy and give our citizens the tools for success in today's world.”

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance shared with the population the mandate of the Ministry of Education which we incorporated in our vision and in our mission, and indeed, despite the observations on the other side, all works and all efforts over the last five years have been driven by a larger Government vision, a vision of 2020, of achieving developed country status by the year 2020.

Mr. Speaker, our office, in our Ministry, we have been working over the last five years to implement the operational plan of Vision 2020 and that is, to develop an innovative people. This begins with the child then moves to the family, moves to the community, and our aim is to transform our people into a highly skilled and a well-educated knowledge-driven society. We are talking about developing critical thinkers and talking about the strengthening of the social fabric of the society, and the development of a democratic society.

Mr. Speaker, these have been our goals for transformation and development and I am pleased to share that journey with the House today. In 2002, I inherited a landscape with the education Ministry that was totally different to what we have today. We recognized that transformation and development of society begins with the development of a robust early childhood sector for all our three-and four-year-old children. We recognized too, the importance of that holistic development of
the child. We recognized the need for a suitable, appropriate and a relevant curriculum. We recognized the need for assessment and procedures that permit the appropriate and timely intervention as we do continuous assessment for all of our children. And we have been doing that resulting in bold and daring initiatives with teacher selection, teacher recruitment, education and development, so that there will be a body of teachers well-equipped to drive the whole process.

Mr. Speaker, we recognized also the need to provide quality teaching; the need to provide a good learning environment, and hence massive construction programmes now exist to build new schools; to modernize the curriculum; to de-shift and to convert our schools.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we recognized the importance of parental support, the need to work with our stakeholders and our community representatives so that we create that sustainable development of our social fabric. And so, our present landscape talks to a strengthening of our relationship with the community outside there, it includes increasing a wide range of support for students and for their family, including parental education.

It ensures that all children have a full day’s schooling and so we can focus them into more productive ways; it ensures greater involvement of all our stakeholders because we know that education is everybody's business. And so, we have worked long and hard, engaging all those who are concerned with education on this journey of transformation.

Mr. Speaker, let me now direct the attention of this honourable House to our transformation efforts. Let me tell the nation what we have done and what we intend to do, to better develop the society in the 21st Century.

First, the Early Childhood Care and Education sub-sector. We believe that if we truly wish to make a difference in how we bring up our children; if we wish to make a difference in our children's performance in their behaviour, in their attitudes that we must seriously address early childhood care and education.

5.30 p.m.

We have started to formalize the sector by bringing it within the Government sector, so that the Government can manage and provide for the sector. We have done that by ensuring that we have spent some time, some planning, some funding on it, unlike the last administration where there were no architectural drawings, even though a Member on the other side said there were. The Member actually called the name of an architect who did not design any of the structures he talked about.
There were no architectural drawings when they built early childhood centres. There were no committees well formed. There were community groups out there; they would advertise and these groups would busily respond to the advertisements and pull some persons together and hopefully pull a community group together to bid for an early childhood centre; no structure; no foundation. [Crosstalk] There were no standards for teaching and learning.

There was no quality assurance; nobody to assess what they were doing. There was no accountability and no available land. They told these poor people outside there to come to them with their own land. Have you ever heard of poor people finding land to bring to build early childhood centres? There were no standards set, none. We have only now put the standards in place. The salaries were so meagre. The teachers and those who were working with the children could not even survive on the salaries they were offered. [Crosstalk]

We have the documents, the information to prove all that I have said. All this comes from the research of the Ministry. If we wished to see the desired change in the social fabric of this country by 2020, what they did in their time would never, never be able to provide it.

Over the period 2002 to 2007, this administration allocated and spent $93 million on early childhood care and education to be able to provide quality teaching and learning environment for all our nation's children. Unlike those on the other side, the development of the subsector was carefully crafted. We began with research which said to us that we had to build 600 early childhood centres. After the research identified what we had to do, we then had some study tours to find firsthand knowledge and information of a modern early childhood practice in the developed world. We held seminars. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: I did not go; the technical staff of the Ministry went, unlike the other side. We held seminars, consultations and discussions with the stakeholders and the general public to develop the national early childhood care and education policy. Then a structure was put in place and we had standards set. We then developed an overall management and governance structure which consisted of a director, a deputy director within the Ministry. We now have a unit established with a director and a deputy director.

We are putting in place curriculum programme coordinators; 32 early childhood programme facilitators; 20 quality assurance officers; eight family and community officers and a local school board representative in each centre. The
structure will be put in place to ensure that there is quality and sustainability. There was nothing like that at all from them.

We developed a teacher and administrator education plan. For the first time we have an ongoing training programme in place for the early childhood care and education subsector. Already we have the first cohort of some 30 early childhood administrators and teaching personnel. For the first time that batch has been trained. Curriculum and curriculum guides have been established for the first time.

For the first time there is a national curriculum guide for all early childhood centres in this country whether private or public. We put the standards in place and we have the facilitators to monitor them to ensure that there is proper monitoring and evaluation to make sure these centres are adhering to those standards.

We have well projectized the construction of the early childhood sector. There is a project in place and we then can guide what is going on. We have identified that we need to build 600 centres. We have identified 300 sites and projectized the development of the centres. We are not waiting for a group to run around looking for land to bring the land to the Ministry and say, "Build on my piece of land". That is what they did.

Mr. Speaker, these centres are being built by the Education Facilities Company at an estimated cost of $1.7 million to 2.7 million, depending on site conditions. [Crosstalk] That is where you have it wrong; they cannot even do the mathematics. They calculate the $62 million and come up with $10 million for an early childhood centre. It does not make sense.

The La Romaine centre cost $1.7 million and the La Puerta centre that was opened last week cost $2 million. [Desk thumping] These figures are a far cry from those quoted by the other side. They have a centre for $250,000. That was what they gave the community groups which gathered together quick, quick, quick; if you had seen the work that these community groups had to do. Community groups out there came together for this particular exercise. They gave them $250,000 and they did not have the skills. They went out there to build a shed, without skills.

The figures are a far cry from those quoted by those on the other side. They have been scandalous and irresponsible; misleading the public on this provision for our three-and four-year-old students.
Mr. Partap: They are standing.

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: I hope so. We had to go in and repair so many of them. Mr. Speaker, there were no standards; no earthquake or hurricane standards; none. I keep praying that nothing happens. I want this honourable House to know that for the first time this country has a policy on early childhood care and education that was developed by a number of focus group meetings.

We went around the country and spoke to the early childhood care and educational providers. We had regional and national consultations. We have developed a Green Paper on early childhood care, soon to be made into a White Paper, soon to be made into legislation. We have put standards in place for the operation of all early childhood care and education standards. Early childhood curriculum and curriculum guides are out there.

There is no comparison between the centres that we are building, compared to their shoddy workmanship with inadequate furnishing that they have put. For the first time in the history of the education system, we have a subsector that is a formal part of the education sector. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: It is now formalized in the education system. [Interruption] "I coming with the church just now". It is not hanging outside there. If you hear what we pick up with him and the church; you would not want to know.

Hon. Members: Aah!

Mr. Partap: I certainly will like to hear.

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Each centre now caters for 50 children and is designed to have pupil/teacher ratio of 10:1. Each centre is managed by an administrator, two teachers, two teaching assistants and an auxiliary staff member. It is now our plan to provide our young pupils with appropriate learning materials. We have already started. You must visit one of the new centres we are opening. Visit what you have put up and see the difference. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker, I want the Member on the other side, who used to be the Minister of Education, to visit because I do not think he understood what he was saying when he made his contribution. [Crosstalk] It is our plan that by the year 2010, 30,000 of our three-to four-year-olds will be attending the 600 early childhood centres that the State would have provided. We are going to achieve our plan. [Crosstalk] You wait and see.
While our construction roll-out programme has experienced some teething problems, it is now on track and moving full speed ahead. So far for this year we have spent $63 million on the early childhood construction programme for completed and ongoing works; this is where the figure of $63 million comes in.

Between April and August of this year, seven centres have been completed and opened. [Crosstalk] You can do the mathematics, hon. gentleman. Mr. Speaker, 33 are in various stages of construction; 18 are expected to be ready by the end of December, 2007, with a projection of another 100 at the end of 2008.

We have identified 351 sites. We have mobilized and identified the sites to mobilize so that we can build. Sixty-five of those sites are in areas that are very, very poor. That is how we plan on this side. We do not put an ad in the newspaper and tell communities to form a group and come; to bring their land and come, people who do not have land. [Crosstalk]

Not only are our early childhood facilities world class, but the curriculum sets the pace for others to follow. Therefore, we have a curriculum that talks to wellness through emotional, mental and physical well-being; effective communication; citizenship; intellectual empowerment and the ability for our children at that age to start developing creativity and imagination and to appreciate culture and the art forms.

The question is often asked: What is education doing with all the money it receives? Over and over that is what they ask. I have outlined the use of the $63 million on construction; furnishings; site preparations; cost and project management fees on the ongoing construction work on the early childhood subsector.

We now have a best practice and we are well known around the world for what we are doing. We are most progressive in the Caribbean, Latin America, the US and the United Kingdom. We could match strides with anybody anywhere. [Desk thumping] We sometimes have to hide the centres that they build. Any funds that are expended to strengthen the fabric of this society is well spent on our pre-primary level. [Crosstalk]

I want to invite you on the other side. Why did you not come to the opening at Sangre Grande?

Mr. Partap: I was not in the country.

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: We invited him, but he did not come.

I now turn to the issue of access to quality education. When this Government assumed office, Trinidad and Tobago had achieved universal secondary education.
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[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

That is another story. It left a legacy of students in environments that were neither educationally or socially appropriate. They just took all the children and put them in secondary schools without any preparation; that is what they did. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: And called the school "Kamla Sec". [Laughter] [Crosstalk]

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: The administration placed all the students in secondary schools, regardless of their level of readiness. This was evident by high levels of indiscipline; and they have the gall to talk about low examination pass rates.

Do you know what year the examination pass rates fell? They fell in the year 2005.

Dr. Rowley: Exactly five years after.

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: We have the statistics. I want you to go on our website; the same one that the hon. Member on the other side said was so bad. Go on that website. It had 3 million hits in 10 months. Look for the secondary level education. We have nothing to hide. It is information to show you how the results fell in the year 2005; the year when the universal education children started to take examinations. It was five years after the disaster of not preparing these children. It was only through our initiatives that there is now a turnaround in the system. We had to put in place programmes to ensure that our children could learn.

5.45 p.m.

Research carried out by the ministry showed that most principals noted that because of what they did there was high indiscipline in the school, and most of the problems had fallen now.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what we did. We introduced school safety officers into the system, expanded the student support services division, and we provide support for students; an integrated multi-disciplinary team approach for the delivery of counselling, diagnostic and prescriptive services for our students such as the provision of school psychologists, social workers and school guidance officers even at the primary level—for the first time—special educators and peer counsellors. That is what we put into the system to support the disaster they had created.

We had to collaborate with the Ministry of Health—and we still do—the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of National Security to identify and treat situations of abuse and we have formed new school governance
approaches. We now have the children involved in the management of the school by the establishment of student councils.

Mr. Speaker, the ideas came from 1993 to 2003 when we developed a White Paper. They took the policy from the White Paper which was developed by this Government in 1993 to 2003 and they have the gall to say it is UNC’s idea. [Desk thumping] They did not even understand what they were doing and could not implement the ideas.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to specifically draw your attention to our intervention in the area of special education. The Government is now meeting the full cost of education of students with special needs at 20 private special schools. They do not have a clue. And the Member in his response says it is only one school we are dealing with and we spent $1 million. This means that 11 more special schools are benefitting.

Cabinet has agreed to pay the cost of fees for students; partial cost for staff, full cost for utilities, electricity and water, partial cost of services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy. Cabinet has approved an estimated cost of $15 million for nine schools. In essence, we have strengthened the fabric of society in every way.

Mr. Speaker, we did not spend $1 million as the Member for Tabaquite stated in his contribution. He does not understand the document. [Interruption] We are living it you know, Mr. Speaker. In 2008 the ministry will undertake a comprehensive analysis of students. We have already engaged consultants through the IDB; as a result of these new interventions the new model for education is now being developed.

We have a draft of a document called the National Model of Education, and, therefore, based on that, we are moving forward to put in place a seamless education system built on the foundation laid for equity and exclusiveness and we will put forward the consultation soon and we will invite them on the other side to come to our consultations. It may not help them, but we will invite them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have also outlined a standardized approach to our education; the creation of Parent Teachers’ Association in the system. We are saying that every school must have a Parent Teacher Association body. The engagement of parents, and we have started talking to parents on a one-to-one basis, and we have already established 91 local school boards and we intend to have it in each school. [Desk thumping] That came from our policy document 1993 to 2003 which you
tried to implement and could not. In fiscal year 2008, we will begin our rolling out of the local school boards at the primary level and early childhood care and education level.

Mr. Speaker, another aspect of quality education is the Curriculum Modernization and Expansion. The vision is for education to produce citizens who can develop and maintain all the attributes of a vibrant nation; highly skilled workforce, a knowledgeable community and an economy that is vigorous, robust, and internationally competitive.

Mr. Speaker, the curriculum is the bedrock for achieving those goals and that is what we are doing, putting a curriculum in place that would meet the needs of the users and ultimately lead to the reduction in poverty and unemployment.

The Ministry of Education’s approach to curriculum reform involves the design, development and the revision of the curriculum at the early childhood level and the teacher training level. From 2002 to present, we have achieved the following:

- We have produced curriculum guidelines right through the system; early childhood care, primary and secondary;
- we have revised the science and social studies curricula at the primary level;
- we have a core of curriculum study subjects for Forms 1 to 3 of traditional and non-traditional subjects. The non-traditional subjects consist of visual and performing arts, physical education, technical education and we have made history compulsory.
- Ongoing development for the curriculum is taking place for Forms 4 and 5 and the development of the curricula for integrated arts, health, family life and morals and values education are also part of the system.

**Hon. Member:** [Inaudible]

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Yes, it is infused right through the system so it is part of the compulsory programme.

Mr. Speaker, there is ongoing process for the introduction of conversational Spanish at the primary level and the implementation of CAPE in all schools with a sixth form.
As I talk about CAPE I want to talk about the Member on the other side who spoke about leakages which he referred to in his contribution last evening. Every year when exams are taken in this country, there are rumours of leakages and we have always responded. We have responded; I do not know what they did. This year we heard the rumour and we sent our school supervisors to investigate it; we also asked the police to go out and investigate and the police are still investigating, we got in touch with CXC and asked them to tell us what they have found and they said that they looked into the matter and the item analysis and reported that there was no evidence to support the allegations.

Mr. Speaker, the Member on the other side needs to apologize to the children of this nation who perform so well in their examination. They do not believe the children can perform so well and feel that because they do so well he believes they have cheated. He said all the children up and down the country cheated. I think they need to apologize. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, a major innovation at the Forms 4 and 5 levels was the introduction of our Caribbean vocational qualification. It is a competency based qualification and is part of our new technical vocational thrust. The new Trinidad and Tobago qualifications would allow students to recognize qualifications which can ensure that they gain employment throughout the Caribbean in the Caricom CSME regions.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the interventions to improve students’ development. We have a continuous assessment to benefit all our students. We have continuous assessment to both public and private schools. All students now have the opportunity to acquire the National Certificate of Secondary Education (NCSE) at the secondary level. It needs to be stated that the NCSE was again articulated in the 1993 to 2003 White Paper.

Again the Member on the other side does not have a clue. He is talking about the fact that we are putting in NCSE Level 2, what happened to NCSE Level 1 because there were problems with the NCSE Level 1. He took it straight out of the White Paper, did not understand it, did not know how to implement it, he himself admitted that he had endless problems. I want to say to all of those on the other side that we have put NCSE Level 1 in place, and this year approximately 124 of our secondary schools have done the NCSE Level 1. It is well in place throughout Form 3 and it has replaced the 14-plus examination and next year hopefully, all our 133 schools, will be doing NCSE Level 1. It is now time to move on to NCSE Level 2. It assesses skills and competencies; it also assesses social, emotional and spiritual development of our students.
Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education has been observing, collecting, recording, analyzing; we are data driven. We do not say things out of the blues like some people. We make sure what we are saying is right and this information is being shared with the national community. As bad as the Member on the other side is saying it is, we have a website where all our information is, and as I said to you before 3.1 million hits have been made on that website in 10 months and data is used to share with our teachers and principals so we can help them to develop expertise and to do self-analysis.

At the primary level, the test has been completed and revised in keeping with international standards. Our national tests have given us some ideas as to where we need to go. We have established 61 Caribbean centres of excellence in the school system from infant to Level 2 to ensure that our children learn how to read. We intend to expand that to 200 centres in 2008. We have developed a national reading policy and soon we will be having consultations—again I will invite you—as we discuss our national reading policy.

We have been able to strengthen science and maths teaching at the primary level. From July to August, we have workshops for our secondary school teachers because we understand that there is a challenge to make sure that the maths and science syllabuses are strengthened.

We have been able to review the student:teacher ratio for our primary school system. We know that we need to look at it and make changes. We have also been able to review the ancillary staff—that is what the national test is telling us. We need to increase our ancillary staff to be able to support continuous assessment and testing in the system.

We need to look at the practice of semi-specialization so specially gifted teachers would be able to enter the school system to teach physical education, singing and music, et cetera. We need to understand that we are dealing with standards and students must attain standards to be able to move on. Therefore, we need to look at the fact that we have to do the research to ensure that repetition must take place if our students are not meeting the standards.

Our research has shown us that repetition is more prevalent at the infant level. So we are not waiting until the students get to Standard 5. We have also embarked on a process of international benchmarking. We have engaged the services of our international team in two areas; PIRLS which is the Progress In International Reading for students 9 to 10 years old in Standard 2 at the primary level. In March 2006, 4,250 students from Standard 3 wrote the Literary Study Examination of PIRLS.
6.00 p.m.

In the fiscal year 2008, we hope to expand the national test—that is information to identify the weaknesses of our students—to include students in Standards 2 and 4 to give additional subjects in Science and Social Studies. We want to complete the survey of PIRLS to get a clear sense of what the analysis is saying to us so that we can move in there and help our students. In the year 2009, we want to engage our secondary school children in PIRLS, Progress for International Student Assessment, at age 16. These initiatives in the international testing have helped us to develop our local testing and benchmarking.

For the development of teachers, we are saying that our professional development of teachers plays a critical role in the development of education in any country. We are saying that we should no longer have, what we have the $5 teacher. Our teachers now must be properly qualified:

- to improve curriculum delivery and the quality of school leadership
- teacher training in new curriculum areas, like visual and performing arts.

We have introduced a programme leading to BSc in Physical Education. We have given about 100 scholarships, making sure that our teachers come up to grade. We have introduced a programme leading to MSc degree in Reading and accelerated MEd in School Leadership. We are training teachers in reading to make every teacher a reading teacher and we have converted, as you know, the Training Colleges—Valsayn and Corinth—to university level at the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

Expenditure under professional development of teachers moved from $25 million in 2002—2003 to $88 million in 2005—2006, an increase of over 247 per cent. That is where our money went. We also established a division to provide support for our students and their families—the Student Support Services—because we believe that we must relieve the fears and the stresses of parents or families, who often wonder how provisions will be made for their children. We believe that we must bring peace of mind to families; that we must strengthen the confidence of children who would attend school without the embarrassment of not having textbooks and meals, and not having learning materials and school transportation. Children also express their gratitude to the Ministry of Education. They meet us; they write us; they tell us thanks for the meals, the books, the transport, because without it they would not have been able to go to school.
Over the five years the majority of our budget went to the alleviation of poverty that impacts on our students, to lift the integrity of the needy, to ensure that the poor and the common folks are looked after; to uplift the confidence of the needy students; to enhance their school performance. That is where the money went, because we know that education is the best ladder in an upward mobility to make life better.

Over the period we spent approximately $377 million on textbooks; the UNC spent none.

**Dr. Rowley:** I did not hear you.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Over the period we spent $377 million on textbooks over the last six years; the UNC spent none. [Desk thumping] On school meals, we spent $443 million; the UNC spent none. [Desk thumping] On school transport we spent $112 million, from 2004 to 2006, I must ask: How much did the UNC spend? None! [Desk thumping] Your government did not care about poor people. You did not care—

**Dr. Rowley:** The money in London! [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:**—that children could not get to school, especially in rural areas. They did not care that children had no books or meals and that there was no support. We care about the integrity of the common man; we care about the national society; we care about all our children and their families.

I now turn to the area of the provision of the full-day school at the secondary level. When I assumed office, one of the major challenges we had was the neglected area of de-shifting of the Junior Secondary School and converting of the Senior Comprehensive Schools to full-day schools. It has been an elusive objective for over 30 years. Nobody could get it going. But today, 17 Junior Secondary Schools and 10 Senior Comprehensive Schools have been de-shifted and/or converted. [Desk thumping]

There are only seven more schools to be converted and to be de-shifted. In 2001, during their time, schools had been built under the SEMP without a thought to de-shifting and conversion as part of the programme. We immediately developed a comprehensive de-shifting plan that was implemented in the year 2003, with stakeholder commitment and with the use of pre-engineered buildings to accommodate students. Every time you see a pre-engineered building, you
know construction is about to start on that site. So when they are telling the community how we are only building pre-engineered buildings for the students of this country, I do not think they understand. Every time you see a pre-engineered building, know that construction is about to start on that site.

The Member for Tabaquite got up and spoke about the fact that we seem to be extending the IDB loan; we have asked for an extension. They have no shame. When I got there in 2002 the loan was 8 per cent. They had spent 8 per cent of the loan. [Interruption] By December of this year we would have spent 60 per cent of that loan. We are rolling out the programmes.

A significant benefit that has been noticeable is the decline of 45.5 per cent in the number of students placed at Junior Secondary Schools, indicating that we have succeeded in placing more students in whole day schools.

**Dr. Rowley:** Where you running? “Doh” run!

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, like they “fraid”.

**Mr. Partap:** “Fraid” what?

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** I do not know, but they “fraid” us. Mr. Speaker, we have plenty to talk about here.

As I said before, only seven of the original 29 schools now remain to be tackled, but we see the benefits of our determination to address this difficult and complex issue of de-shifting. No longer are our children going to go to shift schools; no longer do they have to get up at 5.00 a.m. and get home 6.00 and 7.00 at night. No longer are they missing out on time. Their classrooms now have an increase of one-and-a-half hours per day; they have more time going to school. They have more time for extracurricular activities. They can now get involved in football, clubs, choirs, et cetera. Now they can go straight through the school system. They can go from Form 1 straight to Form 6, without having to interrupt their school career.

Under the de-shifting and conversion, we moved from $27 million in 2003 to $92 million in 2005, an increase of 234 per cent.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Education has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to. [Desk thumping]*
Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to you and my colleagues for extending my time. Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen, I will now turn my focus to the primary level where we are doing a number of things to ensure that students entering the primary schools will have sound education and training. [ Interruption] I am coming to that and you just now.

Students entering primary school must have a sound early childhood foundation. Our vision for early university training for teachers—[ Interruption] Mr. Speaker, we have been training our primary school teachers at the university level. Our vision for recruiting persons with the aptitude for teaching is materializing through the new approaches we have for human development and the measurement of the human resources.

The physical environment for learning is appropriate and equipped, and the modern facilities to support the new curriculum are all in place. We have a full computerization programme in progress. All primary schools and the physical upgrade of primary schools started, where labs are concerned. One hundred and sixty computer labs are already in place in primary schools; another 180 labs would be completed by November of this year.

We are keenly aware of the need to protect our relationship with our denominational partners since over 70 per cent of our primary schools belong to various denominational boards. Unlike Members on the other side who want to do away with the Concordat, we are committed to the Concordat. In addition, we are supporting the denominational boards in the development of their property, since approximately 50 per cent of the primary school buildings are in poor maintenance. [ Interruption]

When we did the research of the denominational boards, we were shocked at what we found when we looked at the companies they were setting up to be able to get contracts to build and repair schools. Many denominational boards are experiencing difficulty to upgrade and where necessary to rebuild their schools—serious problems. We wonder how much money they have. Through intense dialogue with them, however, we have agreed to 100 per cent funding of the repair works to these schools. [ Desk thumping] In the interest of the children of this nation, this year we are repairing a total of 281 schools at a cost of $123 million. That is what we are doing; we have gone that way.

For school construction, the Ministry of Education has 488 primary schools and 134 secondary schools; in addition, there are 881 early childhood centres, 97 of them are Government centres; 57 are government-assisted; 727 are private. We
have been able to build 17 primary schools from 2002 to today. Just to name some of them—they keep saying we did not build any school: Cunupia Government; Ste. Madeleine Government; El Socorro South Government; South Oropouche Government—Mr. Speaker, we have an advertisement and all the schools are listed there—Point Fortin Anglican; Lengua TIA.

There are also a number of primary schools at various stages of construction. Icacos Government will be completed next month and then we move into Icacos. St. Paul’s Anglican is ongoing. We have Arima West; we have Arima New Government. Tranquility Government—I am sorry the Member for Tabaquite is not here—the contractor began mobilizing on the site of Tranquility Government. So that contract is out and running.

There are a number of schools being evaluated at this time. Where secondary schools are concerned, we have built over 22 secondary schools between 2002 and 2006. We have converted the Russell Latapy—you remember the Russell Latapy School, Mr. Speaker? It used to be called Ibis, in a hole on London Street. That is included here too. We have built Vessigny, Miracle Ministries, Holy Name Convent, et cetera.

We have spent $93 million, a large percentage of the funds, for construction; for preliminary works, for survey, designs. The designs are completed for 62 secondary schools. Contracts have been awarded for 10 secondary schools, including Tunapuna Government Secondary, and tenders are to close in September for a further seven secondary schools.

I now want to turn to the issue of stakeholder involvement. All that we have accomplished has been with the support of our stakeholders: our principals, teachers, parents, students, our NPTA, our associations of principals, the denominational boards and TTUTA.

6.15 p.m.

Our policy is constant connect with our stakeholders. We speak to them all the time. We regard our stakeholder involvement in education as essential, since good governance, especially in times of change, requires continuous outreach. Therefore, we have sought to strengthen relationships with the NPTA.

For the first time, in the history of this Government, we have given the NPTA annual grants. The NPTA has a mandate to ensure that we have Parent-Teacher Associations in all schools and that they open homework centres where parents are unable to support their children. This year’s budget lends further support for the development of homework centres in the workplace. So good is our programme.
We have regular meetings with these stakeholders. Our commitment to stakeholder outreach is reflected in our consultations with them. We talk with them all the time regionally, nationally and we talk on educational issues.

In 2008, consultations with our stakeholders will continue on system performance, quality assurance and the revision of the Education Act. We have so many changes in education, that we are now going to change the Education Act to keep up.

Because of our commitment in this regard, we have built some major communication structures. That is why we spend money on communication. We have to be out there talking and listening to them. We have established the website. I want to say it so that the Member on the other side would know. He has gone but I would say it again. It is www. moe.gov.tt—3 million hits in 10 months.

We have public connect and annual outreach for sharing plans, researching and programmes. We have an annual education expo. We have research and consumer surveys to improve our communication structures. We use television production, radio and newspaper as part of our outreach to the public, to tell them exactly what the reform is about and to ask them to join with us in this reform.

We remain committed to such expenditure, even at the expense of being accused by those on the other side who have limited vision, who view it as mere public relations. To us, the communication process is a vital link in deepening the consultative process with our partners and stakeholders.

We want to hear what parents have to say. We want to hear what children have to say. We want to hear what teachers have to say. We listen to them.

Mr. Speaker, these major changes that we have effected from early childhood care, right through to primary, secondary and continuing to support the seamless approach to tertiary, now give us an opportunity to move forward to strengthen the leaps to the various programmes in the tertiary sector, thereby creating seamless movement for the child from pre-primary to lifelong learning. This is the essence of the world-class seamless education. This is our road-map.

Mr. Partap: Could you tell us when the SWAHA College would be opened in Sangre Grande?

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Mr. Speaker, if he puts a question to me I would come back here as soon as the debate is finished and I would spend all the time to answer that, but I have to finish. I have so much more to say because we have done so much in education.
The Government has already entered into consultations with the IDB, with a view to developing a seamless system of education, starting in 2008.

I have taken this honourable House through a journey of educational development; a journey which was marked by different paces, sometimes fast paced, sometimes slow paced.

I believe that we have arrived. There is not only light at the end of the tunnel but we have shown, as I have this evening, actual achievements. We have developed a national model for education. We have developed a corporate plan 2008—2012. We have deshifted. We have implemented a high quality early childhood care and education subsector. We have modernized the entire education system. We have built, upgraded and repaired schools. We have written over 1,000 Cabinet Notes in the process. We have seen our students take top honours in the international arena. We have seen Trinidad and Tobago’s education system on the regional and international stage. People have learnt from us. Our road-map is the development of a world-class, seamless education system.

Towards this end, we have accessed a Japanese grant to undertake studies to obtain a loan from the IDB, which would make this vision a reality.

In closing, I wish to thank the Permanent Secretary and the staff of the Ministry of Education for their dedication. They are a committed group of people. They are hard-working staff. They are full of passion for the education system.

I wish to thank all our stakeholders, TTUTA the NPTA, the denominational bodies and our students who have contributed to the education system.

May God bless all of them. Thank you.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Diane Seukeran): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to join the debate and to have listened to the hon. Minister of Education express, as she did, so clearly what this Government is doing about education in Trinidad and Tobago.

As I rise to support the budget, my objective this evening is to debunk some of the generally held myths, many of which were expressed in the course of the contributions of the Opposition and to speak to some of the realities facing this country. All these issues were raised one way or the other by Members of the Benches opposite.

First came the myth, so very clearly enunciated by the Leader of the Opposition, which was that the budget was a cut and paste budget. The sentiment was echoed throughout.
I want to recommend to this House and the Members opposite that they go through these two supporting documents of the budget. One is Government at your Service and the other is the transformation report of the Vision 2020 operational plan; both supporting documents laid in this House with the budget documents that say to us clearly, as you listen to the budget, that this Government is committed to achieving developed nation status via the operational strategic plan that came out of the Vision 2020 meetings.

The budget is a continuum of financial inputs to achieve the single most important thing, which is that of making Trinidad and Tobago a truly wealthy nation. That is, in the true sense of word, wealthy.

Wealth is not measured by the natural resource that we possess. It is measured not only by the physical stock of infrastructure that we put up: the buildings about which we complain so much, but by the productivity of its people; our ability to create sustainable growth and wealth and to enjoy, thereafter, the highest qualities of life.

You can see clearly in budget after budget, since 2001 to today, a continuity of purpose. If you look carefully at the flow of dollars injected into the five pillars, the foundation blocks are prioritized; they are prioritized, developing innovative people, nurturing a caring society, enabling competitive business, investing in sound infrastructure and the environment and promoting effective government; you see that each pillar is interdependent and each must be equally strong. The budgetary measures seek to empower these pillars.

The next myth that I want to deal with is the statement that has been made so clearly again by both Leaders in the Opposition and again echoed by so many Members, it is that of the non-development of the non-oil sector; the non-performance by Government. This is what they keep harping on, in terms of the diversification thrust. The fact is quite to the contrary, as is evident by the contribution of the manufacturing sectors so aptly expressed and eloquently stated by the Minister of Trade and Industry, in terms of its contribution to GDP.

As a fact of life, this Government supports the manufacturing sector and its does so via the Ministry of Trade and Industry. How do we do it? It is via trade negotiations in which the Ministry of Trade and Industry is involved. We seek market access on the most favourable terms for our manufacturing base, our productive sectors and our services sector, every sector that is a productive sector of this economy. That is done whether it is in the WTO, the EU, the ACP,
negotiations, the ACS, Caricom or the bilateral trade agreements of which Minister Valley spoke. As I pointed out, the idea is to open the market and to help penetrate the market by leading—the Ministry of Trade and Industry leads the manufacturing sector in many, many trade missions. We help fund them to do so.

We give developmental aid, research and development aid and we have an open-door policy to assist the manufacturing sector, an ongoing dialogue that has resulted in growth. We actually help diversify the economy. The existing stock business that exists is being fuelled, aided and abetted in growth by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

The other fact of life that exists is that there is a Standing Committee on Business Development under the auspices of the very distinguished Member for San Fernando East and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, and to which the Ministry of Trade and Industry is the secretariat. In that committee, the emphasis is on creating an enabling environment. It is for new existing businesses. This is where we brainstorm together with the private sector and target new opportunities that arise for business development for this country.

This committee examined very closely, the results of a 1999 study which threw up seven cluster industries as having potential; the comparative advantage to be grown in the non-oil sector. The committee found that there was still merit in the comparative edge for Trinidad and Tobago. Strategic industry teams were set up, led by the private sector. Strategic plans were developed by that private sector and paid for by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and companies were established to implement the strategic plans that emerged, that would give a foothold into new industries in the non-oil sector. Remember that all of these will continue to be funded by the Government until these industries become strong enough to take off on their own; to stand up to the coarse competition on their own.

These are cluster developments we are talking about. When you talk about cluster, you talk about the backward and forward linkages that exist. If you say entertainment, you think of calypso, pan, chutney and all the people who make mas, the designers, the costumes, the wire benders, the music, the musicians, the score sheets, the pan tuners and a host of different other things as you begin to think of a cluster industry.

6.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these companies have actually been formed. This is not a question of not diversifying the economy. I am trying to express to this House and
general public that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to business development; it is committed to the non-oil sector growth, and it is doing so in various ways; one of which is the development of these seven sectors. And, so, T&TENT which is the Entertainment Company, was formed. I want you to think of the linkages there. For the Entertainment Company, $3.85 million has been allocated to take them through the year and to help power the industry.

Mr. Speaker, there is the Film Company. The Leader of the Opposition pointed out during her contribution that there was a huge diaspora—in fact, she was referring to the Indian diaspora—which this country could target for the tourism market. I want to tell her that in the film industry, we are already doing that. It is not a question of “thinking of”, it is a question of actually doing.

We have seen filmed in Trinidad and Tobago, an Indian Bollywood movie called Dulhan Mil Gaya—most of us should know what it means then there was Branded and Shanti. There are many projects that the Film Company is funding, especially scholarships to a BA programme which has been opened in the University of the West Indies in film development. So, Mr. Speaker, that allocation for this year is $9.6 million.

Again, I think both Leaders of the Opposition spoke to the question of the fishing communities—the thousands of fishermen involved in the fishing industry in Trinidad and Tobago and the value of that industry to the food security of this nation. Mr. Speaker, that industry has the greatest potential for the export thrust provided, of course, the community can come together and develop the standards and learn the technologies that will allow it to become an industry; not disparate little pieces scattered everywhere and fishermen living on the edge of the poverty line. The objective of this Government is to harness this capacity, that productive ability, and to create out of the fishing communities an industry, and so the Seafood Development Company was formed.

Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that it was with great pride that I helped the Seafood Development Company speak with the fishermen from San Fernando; both from the San Fernando Wharf and from the Marabella community; and they chose to have an IT programme. They wanted to learn to use the computer and that is what was brought to them. A fisherman was asking for this. He did not ask what the quality standards are; what kind of net do I need; but he said he wanted to join the 21st Century. He said teach me how to use this piece of equipment to access information. That is the kind of thing that the Seafood Development Company is doing. That allocation is $8.5 million.
Mr. Speaker, as I speak to the seafood industry, I remember the enormous potential for Trinidad and Tobago in the aquaculture sector. We already have a strong little farm that is creating fingerlings for the red tilapia industry. Anybody who has ever eaten red tilapia knows that it tastes exactly like red snapper. Mr. Speaker, do you know what the cost of that is in Europe or in North America? You would be shocked at what it is, and to see the enormous potential for that industry, all of which is being studied and funded by GORTT.

Again, the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the potential for the development of the Gulf of Paria and saw filled in the Mosquito Bay all the things that we have seen over the years, and she also spoke to the leisure industry. Again, this Government is ahead of the game. We are actually developing that industry via the Yachting Steering Committee. There is enormous potential for this industry.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of visitors to this shore in the yachtie section. There is a high-end market and a low-end market in the yachtie industry. None of them will come here if we cannot attend to the regulatory environment that deals with their security and pollution issues, et cetera and that is precisely what this Government is doing. That leisure industry has been allocated the sum of $2.6 million.

I want you to think for a moment of the linkages that exist; of the thousands of artisans, craftsmen, woodworkers and the small engine repair men who will benefit from this; and all the sails that need to be overhauled. Think of the supply chain; the food and water. Think of the enormity of this industry, and the benefit to this country as we develop, not just the Chaguaramas Port, but port after port, haven after haven in Trinidad for the yachting industry.

Mr. Speaker, the fifth industry is the food and beverage industry and, of course, that links into the agricultural thrust of this country; links into Alutrint and the derivative of the aluminium industry that allows you to develop the canning industry. There are linkages in every sector that the Government has embarked upon. There are linkages for the productive sector in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to remind us of what is possible in Trinidad and Tobago from this particular sector.

There is SM Jaleel, an excellent company which has been exporting into about 60 different markets all over the world. So, it is a global company. We have a genuinely global company. Somebody spoke to dinner mints just now, and I understand from my sister that they are serving dinner mints after dinner in Paris in the most chic restaurants; Trinidad dinner mints. Mr. Speaker, you see, there is enormous potential.
What did SM Jaleel do having modified his processes, looked, planned, strategized, and done all the things that were necessary? He was innovative. He found that his greatest market lay in the younger generation. So, in order to hold that market and to develop it and penetrate it further, he devised a small bottle, the chubby bottle, and that bottle has been the true enormous success of the company SM Jameel. So, there is an enormous possibility in this industry.

The Minister of Finance spoke to the fact that we are going to be doing business with Guyana in terms of the development of our huge farms for agriculture to service Caricom. This country has the capacity to can all these things and will have the packaging sector.

Mr. Speaker, the sixth industry that we are actively developing in the non-oil sector is the printing and package industry that is run by an industrial council. Again, this will service the export thrust. It will service the internal market as we seek to package all that fish, all the food produce; and all the beverage produce into the advertising market as we seek to brand products, and the allocation for that is $2 million.

The seventh industry is built around our port development. We have an extremely good traffic of ships that arrive into Trinidad and Tobago in that port of Port of Spain and in Point Lisas. As we develop other ports—as the Labidco Port goes on stream and all the other ports come on stream—more and more, there is the potential for the merchant marine sector, that services that industry.

Mr. Speaker, can you think of our people being engaged in the shipping industry? We already have huge shipping companies and here we have the service industries for that, and now we want to actually have the men on board powering those engines. That is the next industry that is moving apace. Mr. Speaker, far from the myth of the Government not focusing on the non-oil sector, I hope to have exposed here today, the fact is that we are doing precisely that.

The other fact, as it relates to business development, is the Government’s focus on widening the economic base and development more and more businesses via particularly the SME sector, that small medium enterprise sector that powers almost 60 per cent of world trade, and upon which the strength of India is built; the strength of China is built; the two new emerging giants.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we have the Business Development Company, the National Entrepreneurial Development Company Limited (NEDCO), ETTIC to train small businessmen; and we have micro-enterprise development through a host of ministries. We see the Government focusing its efforts on facilitating business.
We do not do business; we facilitate businessmen to be born to be grown and to be nurtured. It is the same, sector that you can see today where there are 7,000 to 8,000 new small successful businesses that have grown during the last five years of the life of this Government.

We have the Fair Share Programme that we are committed to. I hear the Ministry of Housing being so maligned. The Ministry of Housing is, perhaps, one of the greatest advocates and implementers of the Fair Share Programme. This is where you will find the small business sector like the small contractors; the small service companies; and the small in-service individuals most employed—a ministry to the Government’s principle of 10 per cent of Government’s business being devoted toward the small business sector.

There is also the fact of the development of the services industry via the Ministry of Trade and Industry. There is the coalition of services working into the coalition of Caricom services entering, and using the market access that the Minister of Trade and Industry so adequately described as we negotiate the trade agreements; powering that business entity to be able to grow, develop and access the markets that we are exploring.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that puts an end to the myth that there is no real diversification of this economy in the non-oil sector. The fact is that there is. Categorically, there are a host of other programmes, but the fact of the matter is that although you are not hearing, you know that the good news is never sung. In this country there is a culture that sings the bad news out loud on every radio station. [Interruption] That is the fact of the matter. Good news is not sung, but there is a great deal of good news that is going on in this country. I think the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources spoke to what is happening in the agricultural sector, so I do not need to go into that.

Mr. Speaker, as I deal with this development of the non-oil sector; the growing of the industrial base, I want to compliment the Ministry of Trade and Industry staff. I am going to tell you why you need to compliment the Ministry of Trade and Industry staff.

They have been making a fantastic turnaround in attitude and in culture from the focus being upon regulation of industry—that was for the most part prohibitive—to a focus of facilitation of business. Mr. Speaker, these are diametrically opposed, particularly in the public service. You have to understand what I mean and how far they have come by understanding that there are two kinds of intelligence.
There is the certified intelligence with which the public sector is so well endowed, and that is built upon learning, training and certification. It is mathematically logical—must have precedents; must know where it is going; what it is doing; has to be sure of itself and has to be always checking—and, therefore, that agency becomes very slow. To the certified intelligence within the public sector time is a necessity.

On the other hand, in terms of the other kind of intelligence which is emotional intelligence, and upon which most business is built, the main characteristics here are instincts, creativity and risk taking. It is critical thinking. It does not have to be knowledge-based; it is critical thinking. It is almost instinctual, and it works with speed.

To the businessman, time is of the essence and it means money. Mr. Speaker, so, you see, the two are almost diametrically opposed and, yet what is necessary for the growth, development and sustainability of our business sector is the coming together of these two.

I want to particularly compliment the Ministry of Trade and Industry’s staff for having come—if you have to come 180 degrees in the term, can I say quite, objectively, that in my view the Ministry of Trade and Industry has come 100 degrees. We have a small way to go again, but the momentum—as you shift past the 90-degree angle, the weight is this way inclined, and they will get there faster than most other ministries. I just wanted to say that while I have the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the other myth—and, again, it was a distinct charge coming out of the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Siparia in this case and, again, echoed by the other leader on the Back Bench, the Member for St. Augustine—in another way was that the Government was failing to build competitiveness. That is substantially what she said. She spoke in fact to the IADB report which pointed to the falling of our placing in the competitiveness index.

6.45 p.m.

What was actually said, what one can take from her statement, is that the Government was failing in its diversification thrust. And Sir, it is a general belief in the population; that it is the Government that is responsible. The fact is that it is the business sector, the private sector, that is responsible for growth and competitiveness. It is they who will determine the success of their businesses; the quality of those businesses.
They will determine by that success and build competitiveness in order to survive and to grow and succeed, particularly in this 21st Century. It is the role of government, on the other hand—and this is another fact—to help to build the enabling environment and the institutions that facilitate and enable the business community to grow. That is the role of government; the role of business is quite another thing. And it is they, with a bit of our help that build that competitive edge.

I can say categorically that Trinidad and Tobago—and I think all of us admit it—is falling in that competitiveness index. A lot of it, I think, is based on the fact that we operate in Government as silos. I must tell you that coming into Government for the first time from my background, was quite an eye opener, because it sort of justified all I believed, in terms of this silo development, when you come into government and you see that it actually does operate as silos.

And that means that there is no information sharing because even within the silo there are gaps to information flow, and so you do not communicate with the private sector, because there are gaps within you, that you cannot acknowledge, and gaps within the government structure so there is no interchange of information between government ministries. So, the whole system becomes heavier and heavier, and difficult for the private sector to deal with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always thought it was the fault of the Government alone, from the private sector end, but coming into Government I have to tell you, that I have found—and I am very much a part of the private sector still in my thinking—that the private sector of Trinidad and Tobago is too heavily dependent upon the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. And that does not speak to innovation; it does speak to initiatives; it does not speak to the qualities of a successful private sector.

What I found also—and I think that many of the Ministers sitting around this table have also found and those on the opposite Bench; I am quite sure that the Member for St. Joseph will agree with what was found—was that the managers of the public service, in the management capacity, were unable to clearly enunciate objectives; clearly state what was the objective; clearly define the terms of reference; clearly say to a member of staff what they were supposed to do. And that meant that job specifications were incorrectly done; meant that people did not know what they were supposed to do, very often did not have the right skills, because the wrong people were employed since the job specifications were wrong.
All that did was to add layers and layers and layers to the bureaucracy that the public service has become over time and to frustrate the thousands of very good officers, who enter that service—some of whom have maintained that cutting edge; give them the credit for it, despite those layers of bureaucracy, that lack of clarity of purpose that lies within the management structure of the public service.

The result of all of that, very unfortunately for Trinidad and Tobago and contributing very strongly to our fall in the Competitiveness Index, is the development of very weak institutions, because the supporting and enabling institutions are not there. This transformation report really does speak to this issue very well and I hope that all Members and in fact, the general public will find the time to read this report. It really is a most enlightening document.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Siparia used as an example of what Trinidad and Tobago should do and should become and the competitive edge that we could develop, the country Dubai. [Desk thumping] I cannot agree with the Member that Dubai is the right example for us to follow; we cannot. Dubai is ruled by an Emir. He is—and I mean no offence by it—an absolute ruler. There is no democracy. There is the rule and power of a single individual and family that says do this, and they have all the money with which to invest themselves. It is not the people’s money, it is their personal oil wealth that has created in Dubai the most remarkable example of a success story, built upon the power of a single family. That is not an experience we can share.

You will remember the story, the difference between the coming to power at the same time of Dr. Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore and of Dr. Williams in Trinidad and Tobago. One went back into the East where autocracy is allowed; the other came back to the Caribbean, built upon the cornerstone of democracy that is the British system and where democracy prevails. And Singapore went where it went, and Trinidad comes to the point of where we are at now. That is the difference between the cultures of the two countries.

I thought that perhaps what we ought to be doing is to compare Trinidad and Tobago—if we are to do a comparative—between island states like ourselves. Let us take the three most successful, because we seek to be a developed nation. We seek to compete with the best and so we must benchmark ourselves against the best. See what they did and follow suit from them. Japan is large, but it is an island state, in which there is a culture, a tradition of family values of the adherence to the rule of family. There is a business ethic and ethos within the country. There is a culture of discipline and productivity and there is an appreciation of wealth as only the East knows how. That is Japan.
In Hong Kong, where the Chinese have taken over from the British, the Chinese businessmen, are so successful so that China itself is very loath to control, to take over Hong Kong entirely, because it appreciates the wealth of Hong Kong. There too, what is at the core of its success is that family system, and family values that hold together; a society with a culture for innovation; a society that respects wealth generation and therefore leans towards productivity.

Then of course we talk of Singapore where even today there is that adherence to discipline, to the development of a culture. You will remember Singapore was the trading post; all the gangsters, everybody who was in the drug trade came to Singapore and to Hong Kong. Today that is not so, because of the culture of discipline within the country. In there again—the last time I was there a new President had just come to power. And they had moved from Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew who had instilled the culture of discipline, to the point at which concentration total quality management was so focused in Singapore, that Singaporeans had learnt to stop smiling.

So, President Goo went out with this huge campaign and everywhere you saw billboards, “Smile Singapore, smile”. And so the Singaporeans redeveloped the culture of people friendliness. But that society is family-centred again; family at the core; discipline; culture of business ethics and ethos and a culture that respects the generation and creation of wealth. Those are the three things, the common values that these three island successful states have. And you do a comparison with Trinidad and Tobago and you would see where we need to go if we are to join forces with the developed world.

Those are successful societies. In those societies, what happened here in this House during this debate could not have happened. You would not have leaders who cannot measure the impact of not tying wage hikes to productivity. In this House, across on that Bench, that was the statement; we needed to do that. Raise minimum wages to what? It would not have leaders who could not measure the true value of the Senior Citizens Grant, and see all the inputs the Minister of Social Development spoke to.

The Minister spoke of all of the things that you get: the food card, the CDAP; all of the programmes that are given to old age pensioners and those vulnerable within our society; all of which have a dollar value that the Members opposite have failed categorically to appreciate and demand instead that the dollar itself be given, not the dollar value. Give them the dollar. So what we gave as being $3,000 in value we must give in $3,000 of dollars and add to the inflationary pressures of this country. In a developed society like Japan, Hong Kong or
Singapore, nowhere would one hear of an opposition making such a statement. That is the difference between that House and this House; their Houses and our Houses; that side and this side.

Those are not societies—and I want to point out this—that will build an entire election strategy where speaker after speaker at this final budget debate before an election, hammers in scurrilous points in order to destroy the reputation of a single man, who is not here to defend himself—and I hold no brief for the gentleman. It is unfair to use parliamentary privilege in the manner it has been used in this House; it has been done too often. And those of us who sit in this House who have any degree of conscience cannot sit here quietly and allow what happened in this House to go. Speaker after speaker, having a culture, an attitude that destroys, without a man being present, to defend himself; that must not be done.

Unfortunately, when you look at it, there was the Leader of the Opposition, who did an excellent job as Leader of the Opposition, and opposed for the sake of opposing; found fault with everything because that is her job—that is the job of the Leader of the Opposition—made no concrete proposals as to what else we should do; just said, stop everything, do nothing. That is what you heard from speaker after speaker. The Leader of the Opposition looked extremely pretty as the shadow Prime Minister and I thought that the Prime Minister on this side might have been flattered, that his shadow continues to look as good as him.

Mr. Speaker, all the time you are thinking where is this leading, where is this leading and then you came to the ending. And the Member for Siparia ended in the manner so that it led us from confusion into the veritable wilderness, as she failed to adequately make a clear connection between the Home Mortgage Bank—what is it, the HDC? I cannot remember which one of them it was—the Housing Development Corporation, UdeCott; Waterfront, NIDCO—

**Dr. Rowley:** Internet.

**Hon. D. Suekeran:**—Internet. I am not sure how many agencies were involved and the poor benighted gentleman, whose reputation is at stake all over Trinidad and Tobago, on spurious allegations, in which they failed ever to make the connection. If you are stating something as a fact, get up and state it so that it connects. You do not by allegation and insinuation destroy people under the guise and use parliamentary privilege to do it. I do not care who Mr. Monteil is; he is a citizen like any other and he needs to be defended in this House. Go outside and say it! You want to say it, go outside and say it.

**Dr. Rowley:** The do not have the stones to do that.
Hon. D. Seukeran: Exactly, testicular fortitude is what is required and none of it is present on the Opposition Benches. So, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say that. When you listened to the Member for Princes Town; when you listened just now to the Member for Fyzabad, whose contribution is always chaotic; when you listened to the Member for Caroni East and the Member for Nariva, who should know better; all of them; you listened to all the innuendos; all the half-truths; all the outright lies that are spoken in this House, that the poor population outside there listens to and believes, because of the constant repetition of the lie, and you wonder what exactly we were doing here—running the country round in circles built upon rumour, failing ever to link anything together to reality; all lies.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to come back to the issue of competitiveness, there is a general inability in Trinidad and Tobago to analyze a thing carefully. I spoke just now to the issue of the challenges facing the public sector and it is the same in the private sector, in the general public, an inability to analyze and to then contribute meaningfully to debate or to propose alternatives. The fact is—we are speaking of facts and we are speaking of myths—that it is a cultural norm in Trinidad and Tobago, that we are a nation of great armchair critics. That is a skill that we possess. It may not be the right skill, but it is a skill.

But the fact is, that is not, when you analyze Japan, when you analyze Singapore, when you analyze Hong Kong, island states like ourselves, that, those values, that norm, that cultural norm, is not what will take our country successfully into the 21st Century. The fact is, that it dooms our own people to what Dr. Williams so aptly called, “recalcitrant status” upon the world stage. That is what it does and the fact is that we need to develop the human capacity, our own capacity and the culture to see things for what they are, and to therefore analyze what we need to do; specify it, clarify it, state it out clearly and then plan the way forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the culture. It is culture that determines how we see things. Sir you say—how you see the glass, half full, half empty. It is a culture that speaks to how we do our jobs; what is our productive level; our competitive advantages. This is what I mean by culture and it determines that culture, what are the building blocks we use to develop capacity; to develop productivity; to develop the competitive edge.

In this House, quite evidently, we just saw one example of one form of culture from the Member for St. Joseph yesterday. It is the clearest statement of the
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[HON. D. SEUKERAN]

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culture that exists across there and there is an undoubted ability to add one and one and get zero. There is an ability to use the negative approach so that at the end of that analysis, you get a double minus, plus.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Oh Lord.

Hon. D. Seukeran: That is what you get. And to analyze pure water and come up with statement that says the formula is making nitric acid. That is what came out of there and at the end of it, to have the Member for St. Joseph look at the entire budget analysis and presentation and come up with the glass bone dry and somewhat dirty. That is what he found. Then you have at this moment in time, the Member for San Fernando West, myself, on my feet, expressing a culture and an attitude that belongs to this side.

I am a product of PNM education. My scholarship was paid for by Government. I went to a school as the hon. Minister of Education pointed out, that was funded in part by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Naps Girls’. I am a product of the curriculum that the government devised that makes me sit on this side of the bench instead of that side of the House. [Desk thumping] More than that, I come from a very progressive southern productive sector, that southern sector of the economy that is informed by true analysis, one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that your good self comes from, so I am quite sure you know what I am saying is true.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we accept as a fact, that background, training, experience forms one’s cultural attitudes and outlook—and we note that the Member for St. Joseph has a banker’s background, understands facts and figures, and understands most importantly, how to use those facts and figures, so that when a businessman with the best business plan comes up to him, but he does not like him, or he is mandated by his boss to do otherwise, he finds the mechanism not to grant him the loan; finds the mechanism to deny him the overdraft facilities, so that his business shuts down in the morning, that is what the Member for St. Joseph’s background teaches him. On the other side, my background—

Mr. Deputy 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. E. Job-Davis]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. D. Seukeran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and friend for that extension and this House for granting it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us
look at this side of the House, this background that is so similar in so many of my colleagues here. I come from a strong culture, a background of family; background of law and business, of building, politics and social work. Erecting strong buildings, that is my background. My strength is emotional intelligence, that is strength that I possess and in the end moreover, I have had the distinct honour as you yourself has had, of being the President of a very distinguished body of private sector people, leading the South Chamber for three very active sessions.

In that portfolio, analyzing the future, the way forward for this country, using its energy base to position itself in the global economy, out of that, arose the vision for San Fernando; the way forward for the energy city of Trinidad and Tobago, it was a logical result and objective. Sir, for the benefit of the majority of right-thinking citizens in this country, and on this Bench and in the audience, let me explain to you how I see the budget and how I see the measures in it, expressing for them as if it were for me.

I see at long last the distinct possibility, probability, that San Fernandians will at last have their dream of development fulfilled and that was articulated very clearly in the vision for San Fernando. As one of the components of that is the waterfront development and I see the water taxi service in San Fernando as driving the waterfront development. I see the Chancery Lane Complex that will finish this year leading into the waterfront development. I heard the statement by the hon. Minister of Finance as to the establishment of the energy tech park in San Fernando and it is part of the San Fernando vision as, the anchor, the developmental node upon which the energy services sector will grow, upon which the strength and future of San Fernando is founded.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is how I see it. I see and I know that the South Chamber, a very distinguished body—hears the budget speak to the establishment of the energy service industry and you know for a fact that in front of the Standing Committee for business development is the South Chamber’s plan for the development of the industry, that we will one day have sufficient skills, skills we are already exporting—most of our oil men are abroad; we will have enough to develop all the finds that we will find as the Member for Mayaro assured us earlier.

When I combine all of these things, I know that San Fernando’s future, development is directly on the table. It is not in a plan; it is not on a drawing board; it is on the table. I looked at the projects that are happening in San Fernando East, many, many projects being delivered in San Fernando East and I
see that the development of San Fernando has begun because San Fernando East is a part of San Fernando West; it is one city. San Fernando East is very underdeveloped, so I do not see it as one seat being developed and the other not being developed. It is one San Fernando and the half that is most depressed is being developed currently.

I do not see the Prime Minister’s—in fact, I see it in the positive—residence as belonging to Patrick Manning. I see it as belonging to the People—

Mr. Manning: Who is a fool to say so?

Hon. D. Seukeran: There are tons of them. It is a culture, over there, that is how they see it—it belongs to the people of Trinidad and Tobago [Desk thumping] and it is a residence worthy of our Prime Minister; any Prime Minister. Fortunately, from what has been said here today, neither the Member for Siparia, nor the Member for St. Augustine can see themselves as living there, and therefore they say it is “Patrick Manning is own.”

Hon. Member: [Inaudible] or Mr. Partap?

Hon. D. Seukeran: Certainly not the Member for Nariva. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at the Centre for the Performing Arts at the bottom of Todd Street in San Fernando, I see a means for the talent pool that is San Fernando and we are famous for it, finding a place to express itself and at the same time, to grow and nurture the skill sets in San Fernando to be capable of taking part in the industry, that is the film industry and the entertainment industry. So I see San Fernando as being very much a part of that, our people using that talent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see the allocations—and the Member for Fyzabad raised the points—for the Marabella River and for the Cipero River and for Ali’s Creek which contracts have been awarded, as an opportunity for the Minister of Works and Transport, not only to continue to alleviate the flooding problems in San Fernando, but to correct a design flaw that exists on the Cipero River. Sir I do not see that it is not an opportunity; it is an opportunity for the Ministry to do exactly that because that design flaw is a blot on the otherwise excellent reputation of the Ministry of Works in San Fernando. I see the new entrance to Green Acres and Coconut Drive, as a very clear demonstration of what our culture is in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this community, thousands of residents were completely blocked off by the famous symbol of progress of the last government, the Interchange in San Fernando—Sadiq’s own interchange in San Fernando. In the
course of developing that interchange an entire community was locked off for years. The entire building project mashed up their homes; their foundations shook with the pile hammering so there is disrepair to those homes. And they were denied access to those homes. They had to go all the way up, make illegal turns in Gulf City and in the traffic and then come back. With a few thousand dollars; a couple of thousands, dollars, $100,000 an entrance has been created in San Fernando to that community empowering them, alleviating their problem after all these years. This story remains unsung, as a value system of both the media and the Ministry itself that could not measure its value to community, to people by the quantum of money that is spent. That is a sad indictment of where we stand in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I looked particularly at the Ombudsman Report, which does not just form part of the government. The budget speaks to local government and this report is one of the saddest indictments of local government that I have ever seen. It says that in San Fernando there were the greatest numbers of complaints. All of them, roads, bridges, dilapidated infrastructure. Who is it that spoke to the lack of maintenance plans? Well, if you cannot even implement a project, how can you have a maintenance plan? That is the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. So, there is this report, but it is so sad an indictment. Sir you can see with the clarity from this side, both sides, the pluses and the cons. I heard a cellphone ban and I did not see it as banning cellphones only, I thought that the issue of the number of young people dying on the roads of Trinidad and Tobago was on the table; that is what it showed me.

7.15 p.m.

It said to me that the time is moot, that again the Ministry of Works and Transport will analyze correctly and come to the crux of the issue which is to change and update our archaic driving regulations so that we go into defensive driving and we come up with regulations that reflect today's imperatives.

I interpreted the closure of the casino business as logical, since the activity is illegal on the books of Trinidad and Tobago. It indicated to me the concern for the security of the family that this Government has. It emphasized the value of savings, which we do. It says importantly that we emphasize earnings as a product of work. It is productivity related. It cannot be that gambling is your income.

I see the distribution of public housing in San Fernando, to which I can speak, as not at all being biased, as coming from across there. I see it delivered upon a demand ratio. It has nothing to do with ethnicity. San Fernando is equally
ethnically balanced and I get so many letters from Indo-Trinidadian residents of San Fernando saying thank you; so I cannot see what is being said there. No one has ever complained to me in San Fernando that he could not get a form. I am a Member of Parliament that is open to access for all.

More importantly, I looked to the University of Trinidad and Tobago's (UTT) launch of the Academy of Sports as a true statement of the intent of this Government to make sport an industry. [Desk thumping] With it lies the hope of thousands of our talented young Trinidadians and Tobagonians to become sportsmen and women.

We see the development of Irvine Park in San Fernando with which I am so pleased; children in the forefront. I want to thank one of the past mayors, Gerard Ferreira, the Chairman of the Sports Company, for working with me to begin that project.

Mr. Speaker, that is just to show you the immensity of divide that exists on this side and that side. In there is entrenched a culture, attitude and language that does not give them the competitive advantage—we are speaking to competition—and roots them in Opposition. That is where they belong; that is where they will stay with that culture.

To come back to the subject, if we accept for a fact that it is the function of the private sector to build and grow the competitive advantage and that it is successful business, ultimately, that will enhance the quality of life of the citizens in a sustainable way, and lead to security of jobs and higher salaries that are sustainable; if we accept the fact that the role of government is to build effective institutions and to facilitate and enable business via those institutions, and we understand that we both need to join forces so that we can compete successfully in the 21st Century, then we can accept that the greatest constraint to competitiveness, to sustainable development, to sustained growth and actual generation of wealth for this country, lies in our paucity of skills, human resources and human capacity, our cultural attitudes and values.

If we can see that logically, clearly, without fear, as truly independent people and we recognize that we are entering the 46th year of independence, then we must have the strength to look at ourselves; to examine ourselves and say, "Right, this is where we are; this is where we need to go". If we do that, we can accept the fact that we need a cultural revolution in this country. That is exactly what we need in order to go forward. It cannot be the crab in the barrel syndrome. It cannot be that every time somebody tries and fail, you laugh at them. It is to lend them a
hand; pull them up and let them start again. That is the culture of the East. It is the culture of America. It is the culture of Europe. It is the culture that we must seek to emulate; that we must emulate if we are to survive. That cultural revolution has to result in a resourceful people; innovative, creative, unafraid of taking risks, passionate about success.

The budget statement, its measure and the supporting documents acknowledge our failure in cultural values. It is clear, evident, that it leads to our inability to compete and implement. Failure to implement is a fact of life in this country. It has strong cost implications the result of that failure to implement. Failure to implement in a timely manner is even more on the table.

We see that the five pillars upon which the Vision 2020 and its objective of developed nation status are built is evidence of Government's recognition of the necessity to develop our human resource. The hon. Minister of Education spoke so adequately to it. It spoke to revolutionizing our culture, developing our human capacity and attitudes.

Throughout the budget documents you see threaded through each pillar, the measures to stimulate our people in that direction. These documents speak to the breakdown of the silos as we see them; implementation of programmes across ministries; breaking down the silos in Government; delivery across ministries; emphasis on particular programmes and budgetary allocations to the Ministry of Education and Science and Technology, so that in terms of skills development, unlocking the creativity, as we heard, via curriculum development from the early life of the citizen in early childhood centres, waking up that creativity through curriculum design, ensuring that those who fall through the cracks under science and technology, are given another chance at taking part in life successfully.

If all of us heard the hon. Member for Mayaro when he made, perhaps, one of the best analyses of the Scott Ryder report, it is something we have to credit him for; credit a man who has the capacity, skills and the mindset to see it as a snapshot of where we were and where we are and to analyze it so that it motivates us, so that we know there is a promise and a future.

All of us who believe in opportunity and have the capacity and culture to see it, will use it to our advantage to build our own base, develop our own strengths, bring our wealth in this country. I want us to use that Scott Ryder report as a stimulant. For those of who cannot see a hope, who see it simply as a fact, I want us to use it as a stimulant to wake us up, to fill us with the passion, the sense of pride, the sense of self-preservation.
It is that sense of self-preservation and confidence that can unleash in our society and in our people the only enduring quality that will take us successfully through into successful businesses, success for Trinidad and Tobago in the future, the creativity, human capacity and strength of our people.

As you wake the passion, the culture, the attitudes, the values and standards, we must have it within us to say, "We can do it". Do not say we cannot do it alone; we cannot because we are small. We have to do it together: that side, this side, over there, out there; labour, business, Government, everybody joining forces, so that we can survive and excel. The idea is excellence in the 21st Century. That is how we will achieve developed nation status. In the final analysis, it is the only way to achieve what we all hope for, a quality of life that we do not need to go and buy citizenship in the United States or hide like thieves from the immigration authorities from any country in the world. We enjoy life here; that is how we get quality of life.

With that, I commend this budget as one other step in a series of steps, all successfully done to take us to developed nation status. I commend this budget to this House and to the entire citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Fuad Khan (Barataria/San Juan): Mr. Speaker, I listened with rapt attention to the Member for San Fernando West. She is one of my favourite speakers on that side. Do you know why? She fought a marginal seat. I also fought a marginal seat myself. I understand the hardships of fighting marginal seats. I understand how difficult it is to win, as compared to somebody on a safe seat. When the Member for San Fernando West speaks, she speaks as a person who understands the ground. I say the same thing for my friend, the Member for Tunapuna.

When I look at the Back Benches and I see the quality of representation, I ask myself: Why are people who are elected being given such low portfolios in preference for those who were not elected, [Desk thumping] who come to this House and speak as ministerial officers, reading from most of their documentation?

The Member for San Fernando West stood here and eloquently kowtowed to the Member for San Fernando East, hoping to get elected again. [Laughter] I do not blame you. I sit by myself. I hope one day I see an Opposition that could do exactly what I have seen occur here today. Amidst all the negativism that they are going through, they focus on their not going back for election, they may or may not—the Member for Arouca North has made the decision that he is not going back—but there is something about the Back Benches.
You see the turmoil occurring in the constituencies of the PNM, yet they have the ability to put their feelings aside and still show a semblance of unity on that side, even though it is painful for each one of them to sit there. [Laughter] Mayaro, Point Fortin, Port of Spain South, my good friend, I wish him well, Laventille East/Morvant; Tobago is definitely not going back; Tobago East is a very good representative. I was in Tobago recently.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Campaigning?

Dr. F. Khan: Looking for you; but you were in Trinidad. There is also San Fernando West, Tobago West and Tunapuna, and Laventille West says that she is also going. That level of unity amidst what is occurring, I hope one day to see it on the Opposition Benches; put their differences aside and at the end of the day come with a unified force.

No matter what is said in this House, you must take into consideration that the PNM is there as a unified force and the Opposition is here as a fragmented force because of what has been occurring in the Opposition ranks since 2001.

The government of the day in 2001 basically signed across the government to the PNM, and they have made full use of that. I commend them for making full use of it.

The Member for San Fernando West made one significant statement, which I hope she does not mind that I pick up. That statement was that the wage rates should be tied to productivity; that is important. You see the level of expenditure that is going on in this budget. We all know that it is an election year; it is good that the poorer class and the lower level of the triangle and the lower level of the base are getting 15 per cent increases; there is more money to students. I commend the budget for that. But at the end of the day, wage rates being tied to productivity means to say that your expenditure should never be much greater than your income.

It is simple. When you are giving these handouts to CEPEP workers for a job that is basically to the workers who are cutting grass in the road—and there is nothing wrong with that—you have 10 persons cutting the same amount of grass with two holding a piece of tarpaulin and the others standing up looking on and raking up.

7.30 p.m.
Mr. Speaker, I was in Barbados recently and I saw two men doing the same job; cutting the grass, bagging it and putting it together and Barbados was very clean. I
am asking, is the wage rate tied to productivity, or is it just a handout because the level of inflation is expected to rise? Is our expenditure more than our income? Are we really that productive that the 15 per cent across the board is really necessary?

I have nothing against the CEPEP workers. However, why should every CEPEP and URP worker get a 15 per cent rise whether they are productive or unproductive? Why are you not rewarding the productive CEPEP workers as compared to the non-productive ones? Why do we not have a mystery person like mystery shoppers going around and looking at the sites to see which contractor has an able-bodied approach and which worker is going the extra mile and give that worker something else, maybe make him an independent contractor? They are subjected to the 110 contractors who were chosen in 2002 and if you look through the list, the majority is some friend and family of a PNM representative or a PNM person in some form and it is unfair.

We have some very good workers in the programme who are working for minimum wages. So when I see this level of expenditure—and the Member for San Fernando West made a very good point, you must tie wage rate to productivity and that is not being done. I make no bones about it, I am dead set against giving 15 per cent across the board; there must be some other way to do it. I am not against the CEPEP workers; I am saying that the good CEPEP workers should be given positions as independent contractors and move ahead and the others who are not coming to work or coming once in a while, stay at the same salary they get and the same for the URP workers. There are many of them who are good workers and there are many bad workers. So Mr. Deputy Speaker, wage rates are not tied to productivity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the increase in the old age pension is an excellent idea but when you look at the rate of inflation in our country today I think basically—[Interruption]

Ms. Seukeran:[Inaudible]

Dr. F. Khan: They did not say that, they said it is a cut across the board. Member for San Fernando West, you said it and you were very right. You have to tie wage raise to productivity and performance factors. You just cannot get up one day and decide to give them an increase. Look and see exactly what you can do to assist them to bring them out of that dependency syndrome because at the end of the day if somebody goes to work at 6.00 a.m. and leaves at 8.00 a.m. and another goes at 6.00 a.m. and leaves at 12.00 noon or 1.00 p.m., that person is going to get the same salary. So I am saying to look at the productivity level and tie wages to that.
With respect to our retirees we were not taking care of them. These are people who are 59 years and 364 days in their birth year who are excellent workers, the best in some countries, the best productive technological—you name it—especially in the public sector and so-called private sector.

When these people reach the retirement age they are given a shake hand, a card or a watch and they go their merry way. I have nothing against giving old age pensioners more money but that is where it is supposed to tie to inflation; food prices and utility prices, et cetera. But there are many retirees who are still able to contribute much to the society and when I hear the Minister of Education speaking about the early childhood centres, that is good, but what about those children who need special skills and education? Not just those who are deficient in mathematics, English Language or whatever but those who have high levels of intelligence quotients, those who are able to be our gifted children. They should be placed in a gifted stream, in a gifted class and in so doing we will get gifted men and women. We should not just focus on those who cannot do; we must also focus on those who can do better as well as the middle ground because most things work in a bell curve. There is a large number of those who are able to do very well and there is no mention of it.

There are retirees around who have excellent curriculum vitaees who would be glad to do some partial remedial teaching. In doing so, rather than just hand out money to pensioners, why not look at another aspect of employment. The only retirees I see who are being employed are the 101 policemen on the bus route blocking the traffic every morning and causing serious foolishness and charging people because they are on the bus route, whereas the highway is blocked, all roads are blocked and all of them line the bus route flagging down cars. Why not use some of them on the main roads to work out the traffic jams? Why not make the bus route one way up or one way down and get rid of the traffic.

You do not have to build an Interchange to get rid of traffic. Simple measures can be used while the Interchange is being built. The bus route could be made one way, the main road one way and filter the traffic at different times of the day utilizing the same retired people who are blocking traffic on the bus route now and causing a serious problem. They can be used on the inlets and outlets. I am saying we have to do something to increase productivity but just giving handouts and wage increases is not the correct approach.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to read some extracts from the Review of the Economy on page 11.

“Summary of Macroeconomic Performance

Inflation which peaked at 10.0 percent at the end of October 2006, moved steadily downward to 7.3 percent by the end of June 2007 through the combined effects of the Central Bank’s monetary policy and the measures introduced by Government to reduce the price of food and construction materials in particular.”

That is a plus. It goes on:

“Although Trinidad and Tobago’s narrow money supply grew by 12.0 percent between April 2006 and April 2007, this was lower than the increase of 19.0 percent recorded during the comparable 2005/2006 period. The increase in the broad money supply of 13.3 percent in the current period, was approximately half the increase of 26.5 percent attained in the previous comparative period…

…In contrast, the capital account continued to weaken during 2006 declining by 76.9 percent, to register a deficit of US$3,009.0 million, due to increased private sector outflows from commercial banks and other corporate entities…

During the first half of the current fiscal year, this country’s trade surplus with the rest of CARICOM declined by 12.0 percent … due to a fall in petroleum exports.”

This means to say, PetroCaribe kicked in and is doing us damage. I have just read three declines and I will continue from page 12, on the real economy, the gross domestic product.

“Last year’s significant outturn was precipitated by a 21.4 percent boost in Petroleum sector activity, which has since normalized to 4.4 percent in 2007. The Non-Petroleum sector in contrast is projected to expand at a slightly higher rate of 6.7 percent in 2007, compared with an expansion of 6.6 percent in 2006. The continued strong performance…

Exploration and Production, the largest petroleum sub-sector, is expected to lose momentum during 2007 with slight growth of 0.1 percent, following a 16.4 percent jump in 2006.”

That is a decline.

“Refining, the second largest petroleum sub-sector, is projected to expand at a rate of 14.4 percent, down from the 41.0 percent spike in 2006. Technical
difficulties at Atlantic LNG Train IV dampened the growth of this sub-sector during 2007. Future growth is expected to be moderate after production from Train IV levels off when the plant reaches full capacity. Growth is also expected to decelerate in the Petrochemical sub-sector from 13.9 percent in 2006 to 3.2 percent in 2007…”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the real economy.

“The Agriculture sector is forecasted to contract for the fifth consecutive year, declining by 5.9 percent in 2007, as a result of significant contractions in Sugar (35.0 percent) due to the exit of most cane farmers from the industry; and Export Agriculture (25.4 percent) on account of the effects of the severe dry season on cocoa, coffee and citrus production. These declines are expected to outweigh the marginal growth of Domestic Agriculture (0.3 percent).”

It goes on at page 13:

“Future inflation outcomes will depend on factors such as, the level of fiscal injections, the evolution of import prices, production and productivity increases, the structure and levels of wage settlements and the rate of credit expansion.”

So when you give 15 per cent expenditure through the whole economy, credit expansion would definitely rise. When you talk about giving $15,000 for appliance, no down payment, no interest rate, there is nothing wrong with that if we can sustain it. These figures are showing decline.

“Three industries recorded productivity declines, namely Food Processing (12.7 percent) due to a fall in the production of canned vegetables in the July to September 2006 period; Chemicals (6.7 percent) largely due to a fall in the production of industrial gases; and Wood and Related Products (4.0 percent).”

It goes on:

“During the current period, the poultry industry continued to be affected by the threat of the avian influenza and other diseases.”

That is a decline, the figures are here.

“Dairy and Beef

Declines of approximately 20 percent were registered in both dairy and beef production during October 2006 to March 2007. Beef production also fell from 272,244 kilogrammes to 218,826 kilogrammes.

Export Agriculture
The Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited (SMCL) produced 25,341 metric tonnes of raw sugar... This represented a decline of 27.4 percent from the level of 34,910 metric tonnes produced during the similar period of 2006.

Export sales of raw sugar through preferential arrangements with the European Union during the period February to June 2007 declined by 27.1 percent to 25,341 metric tonnes, compared to the corresponding period of 2006. There were no shipments of raw sugar to the United States during the period.

During 2006, sales of refined sugar totaled 47,482 metric tonnes.”

That goes on to say there was a decline to some extent.

“Sales of sugar by the SMCL on the local market decreased by 24.0 percent ... during the October 2006 to June 2007 period, when compared to the corresponding period for the previous year.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am just reading what is in the Review of the Economy. We base ourselves on the energy and extractive industries.

“During October 2006 to May 2007, the total depth drilled increased to 129.0 thousand metres from 110.5 thousand metres for the corresponding period…”

There is an increased drilling, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

7.45 p.m.

“Refinery throughput fell to 38.2 million barrels...from 39.4....production of crude oil and condensates fell to 30.6 million barrels from 36.5. The share of the domestic crude production from marine fields also declined to 81.7 percent...from 84.2 percent.

Natural gas production has increased by 5.8 percent...Petrochemicals:

The major petrochemical industries sustained declines...compared to the similar 2005/2006 period.

Nitrogenous Fertilisers...

...urea production fell by 16.6 percent to 416.6 thousand tonnes. Export sales of urea also declined by 17.2 percent...

Ammonia production contracted by 5.5 percent…”

Mr. Valley: We each have a copy of that.
Dr. F. Khan: Well, yes. I am entitled to read it, you know.

Mr. Valley: Go ahead, for 75 minutes.

Dr. F. Khan: Yes, I would use all. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am reading to the 16,000 people who put me here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I have not made any objection.

Dr. F. Khan: Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central.

What I am trying to show is that we have a high expenditure on this because, as they say, it is an election year, and there are other things I am going into but I need to read this out. Indulge me, Member for Diego Martin Central. I have about 10 pages again. I will be brief:

“Iron and Steel

Production of iron and steel products contracted by 16.6 percent... Production of Direct Reduced Iron fell by 17.2 percent... Mechanical and other difficulties also led to a 21.9 percent...

The methanol production declined by 1.5 per cent. The local sales of steel billets declined by 23.9 per cent. It goes on:

“A contraction of 5.1 percent is forecasted for the third largest industry, Assembly Type and Related Industries, which is a marked reduction from its 10.1 percent expansion in 2006.”

This is important:

“The marginal growth in the Garments and Footwear industry reflects the impact on local garment manufacturers of the importation of low cost Chinese garments.”

Mr. Ramsaran: On a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What is your point of order?

Mr. Ramsaran: Standing Order 8.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, let me just say that we allow Members to go for dinner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am aware of that.
“Under Article 31(2) of the Constitution a quorum of the House and of the Members of a committee of the whole House, shall consist of 10 Members (excluding the person presiding).

(2) If any Member draws the attention of the Speaker in the House, or of the Chairman in Committee of the whole House, to the fact that a quorum is not present, the Speaker or Chairman, as the case may be, shall direct Members to be summoned.”

Hon. Member, the situation is that I can do one of two things. I can either summon the Members now or—and we are coming to dinner so I will then have to adjourn for dinner and we will all go and come back in an hour-and-a-half. Could you please summons the Members?

Mr. Ramsaran: We could have to adjourn the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, I do not propose to do that.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was an agreement with the Whips that we will continue the sitting but Members would go and have their dinner, so, obviously, if we allow for that, then we would, at times, be below the quorum.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, but we will summon them now and then—

Mr. Ramsaran: I am also aware of that.

Members re-enter Chamber.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, to avoid a recurrence, I wish to move Standing Order 90(1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am relying on Standing Order 90(1) to waive the application of Standing Order 8 for the rest of the session.

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. F. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me just express my thanks to Members on the other side for coming back to make the quorum.

As I was saying before the interruption, that:

“The marginal growth in the Garment and Footwear industry reflects the impact on local garment manufacturers of the importation of low cost Chinese garments.”

The importation of low cost Chinese garments has affected our textile industry to such an extent that there has been a decline in the rate of growth of the garment
and footwear industry and I do believe that we will see a decline in the
construction industry and our local workers very soon as a result of the
importation of foreign Chinese, Indian and even Mexican workers into our
country. I read about Tourism:

“In the October to December 2006 period, total air and cruise arrivals
however fell by 4.3 percent…The fall in total arrivals was due to declines in
both air and cruise ship arrivals to Tobago.

Preliminary estimates indicate that following three years of consecutive
growth, total air arrivals to Trinidad and Tobago during calendar 2006
deprecated by 1.2 percent…”

There is a decline in cruise ship arrivals. It states:

“Notwithstanding the increase in overall berths in Trinidad and Tobago, the
number of cruise ship passenger arrivals during the six months to March 2007
deprecated by 8.1 percent when compared with arrivals in the six months to
March 2006. This was due mainly to a 76.7 percent decline in the number of
passenger arrivals to Tobago which fell from 48,040 persons to 11,185
persons. This decline overshadowed the almost doubling in passenger arrivals
to Trinidad from 33,078 persons to…to 63,349…

Yachting Arrivals

The number of yachts which harboured in Trinidad and Tobago during the
first half of fiscal 2006/2007 fell by 36.6 percent to 569 vessels, from 897
vessels…This decline was more noticeable in Tobago where the number of
yachts anchoring on the island fell by 69.4 percent to 96 vessels. In Trinidad,
the decline was less severe…representing a decline of 18.9 percent. Yachting
arrivals to both islands were negatively affected by the US and British Travel
Advisory warnings which served to discourage visits by ‘yachtees’ to this
country.”

As the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre indicated, the travel advisories are still
there, in fact, as much as the 27th of August, indicating our unsafe island, which is
unfortunate because one of the largest chunks of this budget is going to national
security. Why is the largest chunk going to National Security—last year and this
year—yet we have this problem of crime detection and crime prevention? Is it
because the police service sees itself as a public service with no accountability?

We have passed a number of legislative measures to assist—and I congratulate
the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre whom I saw today got her appointment letter from
the Prime Minister in Whitehall, on the Crime Commission. We do hope that once you are there it will make a difference.

**Miss Lucky:** I will take your advice.

**Dr. F. Khan:** There are other parts in this document—and I urge the public to read it. It is called the Review of the Economy, 2006, Vision 2020. I hope, for God’s sake, our Vision 2020 is not to have all these declines. You see, when you look at the level of decline in the energy sector, the financial sector, the amount of outflows of money leaving, the amount of yachtees leaving, you ask yourself: Are we really and truly being honest with what we are doing?

I know this budget is a social budget to determine exactly where do we go from here; which direction is the Government taking us? The only positive thing I have seen in this budget is that the Government has built 26,000 houses.

**8.00 p.m.**

When you have a stage where you have to use specific lawyers for the bank, banks have their own lawyers and their method of approach and you have to do it this way, then people who work very hard in this country and are capable of accessing the lottery system in the Ministry of Housing would end up in a worse off position and become the working poor as to those who are benefitting under CEPEP, URP and the other projects. Once they can show that they will vote for the Government of the day, they would then benefit from housing and other things that are being given out. This budget is an expenditure budget, designed wholly to give the Government a positive action in the next election.

I do not think the Member for Diego Martin West has spoken. I would like him to clear the air. This may not be true. I want him to answer. With respect to Fideles Heights by the law school, there are innuendos that many PNM people—

[Interruption]

**Mr. Hinds:** Are you spreading rumours?

**Dr. F. Khan:**—own many of those apartments and they are handing them out to their children and friends.

Secondly, who is getting the Federation Park houses?

**Dr. Rowley:** If you give way I would answer you.

**Dr. F. Khan:** Also, who has been accessing the Federation Park houses and what is the mechanism for accessing these houses and the Fideles Heights houses?
Dr. Rowley: I am very grateful for the Member giving way. I intervened so that we would not spend a late hour of the night going down that road.

Nobody has gotten any Fideles house at this point in time, so it is impossible to have given what you did not get. That is rumour. It is bad and it is not true so let us kill that.

Secondly, nobody is getting any Federation Park house in the public sector. They are for public use by the State. They are Government quarters. I have said that a number of times. Whatever you were told is not true.

Dr. F. Khan: I am very glad that you are here to answer those questions. I think the population has been—

Mrs. Job-Davis: Spread the news.

Dr. F. Khan: He has spread it. We are on television.

Hon. Hinds: I am hoping that the Member for Barataria/San Juan, when the UNC was in government, attended that level of scrutiny to the distribution of the houses in Savannah Villas, Aranguez.

Dr. F. Khan: As the Member for Laventille East/Morvant will know, I scrutinize everything, that is why I am right here today. I am here in this position to make sure and show a barometer. I say to the general population now, if the UNC Alliance and the CoP do not become the United National Congress of the People, then they have all right to stay here and you all would be there. Do you understand? That is my job here; to at least show that level. Because we cannot—

Mr. Hinds: For how long?

Dr. F. Khan: I would be here as long as you are here, because we would be both leaving.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now that you have had your opportunity to discuss a matter of urgent importance for the election, I would like you to please address me, otherwise we would have to adjourn for me to have dinner. I am trying to progress. Thank you.

Dr. F. Khan: Do I have to look at you to address you? Could I look at the cameras? There is nowhere in the Standing Orders that says that I have to look at you. It is said that I can address you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Address the hon. Member, through me.

Dr. F. Khan: No, I can address the Speaker but not look at him.
Mr. Deputy Speaker: Address the Member, through me.

Dr. F. Khan: Member for Diego Martin West, you may have to join me soon. On a serious note, I am glad the Member for Laventille East/Morvant jumped in because I have been clamouring—I see that he has done it twice. There are children—I am not going to national security. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre really roughed you up when you were not here. I was waiting for your answer on the 100 per cent business.

I would like to, through you, ask the Member for Laventille East/Morvant what are they going to do with the children of incarcerated parents who are under 18 years old, who are in prison and do not have access to see their children except once or twice per year, Mothers' Day or Christmas Day when they are allowed to visit? These children of the incarcerated parents, who are under 18, cannot speak to their parents. They have no contact with them. They have absolutely nothing, except the one or two times that you and the Prison Authority allowed it for special occasions. We are talking about early childhood education and early childhood centres and we are spending a lot of money on these centres, but yet we have a large population of children of incarcerated parents.

People in the prisons do have children outside and they are under the age of 18. Why was there not something in the budget? We have been clamouring for it. We got the cellphones but these children have serious self-esteem and psychosocial problems. They are the ones who sometimes are abused by foster parents and most people. They live in situations where their parents are in jail and they are unable to bond with their family. Why were provisions not made, if we have such an innovative movement, to allow weekly visits in areas that are built and designed for such in the women and male prison, if necessary and have these children go in a specific route, visit their parents and speak to them and nurture that bond that has been broken, as a means of disruption.

Once the security services remove someone from a house or crime scene, they are hand shackled and placed in a car. The next time you have to go to the courthouses to wave, if you can. Some children are not allowed to go in. That bond is broken and they are ripped apart. I am asking the Minister to make an effort. I do not know if you can do it because you may not be here. Tell Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph, he would be here. He is the man who coordinates the PNM marginals. I would like you to send that message for me and see what you can do on a weekly basis because you would decrease the criminal activity, to some extent.
Mr. Hinds: Thank you very kindly for giving way so that I can promptly respond. While we understand and accept the efficacy of children having access to their parents for the noble reason that you have stated, the bulk of what you have seen in the budget is an attempt by the Government to prevent them from being children of inmates in the first place. In other words, the bulk of attention goes to persons who we assume followed the law and are properly socialized and educated. It is only when they end up in the prison we have to deal with that. The idea is to deal with it before it gets to that stage. We focus on the family and all the social things you have heard.

Secondly, yes, as it now stands, in my view there are not adequate facilities and opportunities. This is all part of the development—when I speak later I would amplify these issues—to have greater access of children to their parents.

One more thing—[Interruption] Just now, Member for Oropouche. You are disturbing my trend of thought. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I crave your protection. We are in the process of developing better facilities so that they could have access.

Finally, I was about to say to you, right now upon application to the police commissioner, children are allowed to see their parents routinely, not just on special events. It happens routinely, not to the extent that we would like and we are working towards that, so be comforted.

Dr. F. Khan: You have comforted me. A study was done in San Francisco and New York and I pointed you to it.

Mr. Deputy 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. F. Hinds]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. F. Khan: I am very glad for the intervention of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. This has been something that I have been raising for the last year and one-half. He has responded quite nicely to the initial movement and I very glad that he has taken it on board. There have been studies done in San Francisco and New York and they have shown that by allowing the bonding to take place, it increases self-worth and self-esteem of these children. They have also shown that the parents bond with them and point them in a proper direction. If they do not link with their parents, they
get angry at society and become the psychopaths of later on. The parents get angry with society also because you have disrupted them.

I always remember Mr. Dhanraj Singh. He was incarcerated for three years. His children were below the age of 18. He never saw them and lost touch with them. After three years, he came out a free man. He was stripped of all his human rights for three years, because of our system. I am asking once again, if someone has been charged for an offence and not found guilty, they not be stripped of their rights, until they are found guilty and convicted. Somebody who has been charged for a non-bailable offence is not yet found guilty. In that interim period like the three years for Dhanraj Singh who spent—

There is another lady who came out of jail after two years. I forgot her name. She had an altercation with her husband who was abusing her. They freed her. The first thing that woman said was: “Oh God, I can now see my young children whom I have not seen for two years.” She was stripped of all her rights. I am calling again on the Minister of National Security that is something else he has to look at. People who are in non-bailable offences should be given the rights accrued to them, also their children, if they are under the age of 18.

I want to go another step for national security. I have always been asking—the Member for San Fernando East said that cannot happen—and I have said before, if I am a police officer and I have to apprehend a criminal or part of the criminal element, and I do it between my working hours and I have my firearm during my working hours and I have to lodge my firearm in the station when I leave to go home, which is the rule, what happens to me when I do not have my firearm when these criminals—they do not lodge their firearms anywhere. [Interruption] How many wives? The Member for Diego Martin West has indicated that they would shoot their wives. How many wives? Someone on that side said it. They should do some research—you are a research man. How many wives of policemen have been shot, based on the amount of the total population of police officers over the period of time? That should be a research. You would find that it is a very miniscule per cent, .001. The other 99.009 per cent are paying for that. How do you expect a police officer to go outside there and apprehend a dangerous person, knowing fully well he would be unarmed after a certain time. I am calling for the police officer to get 24-hour firearms.

8.15 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, officers who are on the roads, they should be given a car and made responsible for that vehicle. They should have these cars, and when
they go home with them there will be a police presence around. It sounds stupid, but that is exactly what is being done. [Interruption]

I have never complained about the budget for the Ministry of National Security. What I have complained about is exactly what the Member for San Fernando West has complained about; wages must be equal to productivity. [Desk thumping] So, therefore, if you are expending $8 billion, then give me the productivity for it. How are you going to do this? [Interruption] Of course, it is not a problem for money; it is a problem of attitude.

The police service sees itself as people in the public service. That is how they see themselves. They do not have to be totally accountable, because the system allows it. Now, we have the Special Anti Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT), and the police service regulations which were supposed to be completed five years ago.

I saw an advertisement in the newspaper for the post of Commissioner of Police. We recently passed this in the Parliament, and we may get one from China. [Laughter] We are getting all the workers from China. You will see 500 of them walking every day going to the Prime Minister’s residence around 5.30 a.m or 6.30 a.m. [Interruption] I am not Chinese; I do not have a chance. I am a national.

**Mr. Hinds:** There is one Chinese on the Back Bench, but he is a Trinidadian.

**Dr. F. Khan:** He does not have a chance.

**Miss Lucky:** He is a Trinbagonian.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, are you finished?

**Dr. F. Khan:** No, I did not sit.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You appear to be finished with addressing this honourable House.

**Dr. F. Khan:** Do I?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Dr. F. Khan:** I am very sorry.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You and the Member for Laventille East/Morvant seem to be carrying on a conversation. If that is what you are doing, maybe both of you could go outside and let somebody else speak.
Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be so guided. I have lost my trend of thought. We have been talking a lot about tourism, et cetera. We talked about early childhood education; sporting facilities for football, cricket, et cetera; and the Brian Lara Stadium with all the facilities. When it is finished we may see those things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since this might be my last budget debate—once the UNC/Congress alliance sits there—I am hoping that they both will get together—I know that the PNM will be in office for another term. I know they will be there. I am addressing them as the Government for the next term, because these two parties cannot seem to get their acts together. If they do not get their acts together, I cannot see them winning anything. You may get another Opposition for the next five, 10 or 15 years.

There is nothing proper in this country for young children, not toddlers—let us say from the age of six to 12 and onward—like entertainment facilities. You hear them complaining time and time again. When they have reached a certain age, there is nothing between the lower age, and what they see is Carnival which is rum, alcohol drinking, dancing, wining, et cetera. You hardly see them playing, because they cannot go out because of crime.

I am advocating that they use possibly the north part of the peninsula of the island or south or Tobago, and have a Disney-type park for them. This should be in partnership with corporate citizens as well as the Government. That type of innovation, for that level, will boost our tourism. There should be a heritage park, as the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre has been advocating.

I have to commend the Minister of Tourism, Minister Howard Chin Lee. I could not believe how nice that Tourism Park was. It was simple, but many children were enjoying the simplicity of it. I was thinking, why can we not expand it to be a Disney World or Epcot or something based on the Caribbean and our culture and get the rides and so forth? And the family-type atmosphere will be continuous. It should be like the Tourism Park, and the same way people flock to Disney World and Epcot during the summer and Universal Studios; why can we not have something like that here in our peninsula?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will go a step further. The Foreshore is being taken over by Movie Towne and commercialism. The Member for San Fernando West said that they want the port and the jetty.

We have Moruga and other places that are depressed. Why do we not have something like wet and wild water parks, et cetera, where children can go and
enjoy themselves? The children can go there and enjoy themselves and slide into
the water and so forth. There is nothing for our children there. Tobago hardly has
anything, except the beaches where they can go and bathe. We need to develop a
tourist-type behaviour and a customer-experience type of system. Once we have
the customer experience, these are some innovative approaches for tourism and so
forth.

With respect to cellphones, I am extremely happy—since I brought this to the
attention of the House—the close association between fatalities; four times the
fatalities on the road and cellphone uses. The New England Journal of Medicine
indicated that they took the cellphone records of those who were in fatal
accidents, and they found that the increase in fatalities was four times that because
they were on cellphones doing something like texting, et cetera—that the
Government has taken it on board, but I would like them to go one step further.

The Member for San Fernando East, through you, mentioned it. We need to
change the structure of the driving licence; G1, G2 and Full G. Some insurance
companies are focusing on defensive driving. If your children do the defensive
driving test you get a percentage discount on your insurance. As a result of that,
many people are sending their children for the defensive driving.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had a misfortune. On the Friday I spoke here about
cellphones, one of my nieces who was only 19 years old, and in the start of her
life, died on the turnoff at the Maritime Plaza. She lost control of the car because
she was going too fast—everything wrong went on—and she died. When I found
out about it, I was not too sure if it was the cellphone. If we had the record we
would have known.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, seat belts save lives; focusing on the road saves lives;
crash barriers save lives. There is a median in the vicinity of Aranguez near the
Uriah Butler Highway. A newborn baby could walk across that median. It is so
small. I urge the Minister of Works and Transport to put something there, because
I am frightened when I am driving there. Soon, when I am not a Member, I will
have to pass there, because I will not be allowed on the bus route. We need proper
crash barriers in that area. We have to protect our drivers from themselves. We
have to do that. Those are innovative approaches with respect to road safety.

The Member for Diego Martin West, the Member for San Fernando West and
the Member for Tobago East have done their MBAs so they would understand that
you cannot make the poor rich by making the rich poor. You cannot do that! So,
when you are focusing only on the base of the triangle for votes, you have to start
focusing on the business class in this country. They are becoming frustrated.
I heard the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill say that they will be distributing the focus, and nothing is wrong with that. At least, do not penalize the business class just to give to the vulnerable class of the society by taking away all their incentives like taxation from their companies and so forth. There are many of them. This happened two or three years ago. They did not get anything much in the budget. We have to start focusing on keeping our business people here and making them happy.

Every two days you would hear Gregory Aboud talking about some mishap in Port of Spain and security and so forth. Because they are the business class and they are supposed to have money; they are supposed to take care of themselves, and that is not right. As a Government—once again, I am addressing the Government who will be there for the next five years if these two sides do not get their acts together—it must take into consideration that there is a business class, there is a manufacturing class and there is technological class. We are putting everything in place to have a population that can subscribe and contribute to manufacturing technology and so forth.

We have free education—everything is free education wise—but we have to give them the subjects to work with when they come out. We cannot just let the Government give them the total subjects. The Government cannot do everything. On that note, I would like to say that we do not look at the total aspect of a country. There should be incentives for the manufacturing and the business classes to set up industries in remote areas and, in so doing, propel the growth in those remote areas, or the Government could start. [Desk thumping] If you want to set up something let us say in Toco, why not put a jetty in Toco? There was supposed to be a jetty in Toco, and then it would be easy to go across to Tobago, and then a double highway.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you see, by doing that, you are going to raise the standard of living for the people living there. You would increase employment and so forth, but nothing like that was said in the budget. The airbridge to Tobago is a disaster. I love Tobago, and I love going to Tobago. At the end of the day, I cannot have my flight bookings three weeks in advance. I go on the spur of the moment, because I am a surgeon. Sometimes I like to go for a weekend, and you cannot get a booking. When you call it is always full, but when you do reach to the airport and you get on the plane it is half-empty. I am calling upon the Minister of Works and Transport to put some penalty in place for persons who book flights and pay for them and do not use them. These persons should be penalized by taking part of their ticket travel.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, one could go to Tobago Express and purchase a ticket, and do not call, and still have the $300 ticket to fly again. As a result, flights show up as being completely booked. After a while when people do not show up, you have others on standby. If you are not going to utilize the ticket and you do not call in and say so, you should be penalized. [Desk thumping] In doing so, you will definitely free-up the airbridge. [Interruption] Member for Tobago East, I will come and visit you, but the way things are looking, I may have to come and campaign for you. [Laughter] I am well loved in Tobago. I have many patients in Tobago who love me, and I can work for you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have tried in my last budget contribution—I hope not—if we are talking about innovation and we are talking about futurism and futuristic societies, we have to make sure that we put these things in place. I mean the PNM, the UNC, the COP and Independents like myself, we see Trinidad and Tobago as a place where we have to live. I do not want to go anywhere else. At the end of the day, I want to live in a safe society. I want my children to grow up in a safe society. I want to see trade coming in here, and rather than having to read about declines I want to read about increases. I am trying to produce these things to making our young children happy, our police happy, our protective services happy, utilizing the limited resources that we have with the best possible movement.

We can talk about Vision 2020 and put it in a documentation form, and when we reach Vision 2020, this might be vision 2007. We want developed status. What do you mean by developed status? Do you mean developed status in 2007 or what the world will be like in developed countries in 2020? You must know what you want. Are we aspiring to be 2007 developed world status or are we trying to be futuristic to 2020; that vision of 2020 of how the world developed status will be?

8.30 p.m.

And I say the same thing for the Member for Tunapuna and I wish you do come back; the Members for Tobago West, San Fernando West, Tobago East, Laventille East/Morvant, Ortoire/Mayaro, Point Fortin—although you said you are not coming.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we gain experience in this place that people do not realize that we have gained. I have seen the Minister of Education, from a person who read and could not take “picong” to one who is giving “picong” today. As a result of that, it just shows the development of the person and we have
here people who could run this country to such an extent that would carry us into a futuristic society. Do not forget the police, they are there for us; protecting with their guns; protecting against the criminals.

I want to thank everybody. It has been a pleasure here since 1995.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Hon. Eudine Job-Davis): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker and I too hope that the Member for Barataria/San Juan would be returning to join us, on the Back Bench of the PNM.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a couple of years ago I had the opportunity to do my Masters Degree at the Institute of Business at the University of the West Indies and I was privileged to have done one of the programmes with a well renowned economist intellectual, Lloyd Best. [Interruption] Well you can laugh but I do not think you are in his calibre; you are not up there as yet; you may get there one of these days. I said Lloyd Best. Lloyd Best said something to us one day, “If you aspire to be leaders in this country, you better know how the country works.” With that he took us on a tour of Point Lisas and we were introduced to the workings of the energy sector.

I am saying that to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this morning when I listened to my colleague, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, I think it was one of his best contributions that I have heard, and I know all Members in this honourable House and those who were listening in the country would have learnt a lot from this brilliant young geologist. And I hope that that intellectual capital does not go to waste; that it would be utilized in the future running of our country.

The Member for Barataria/San Juan spoke about us not returning to Parliament and he was commending Members on this side. He said that—we did not quarrel; we did show any animosity even though we felt that we were not returning to this House. I want to tell the Member that “teeth and tongue does meet and they have to live”—you know where they live. So, it does not make any sense really fighting your battles in public and washing your dirty linen in public; you do that inside. [Desk thumping] Therefore, we on this side demonstrate that level of maturity. We understand two things, one, our navel string is not buried in the Parliament and two, as my mother always said we did not come here to turn rock stone. [Desk thumping] With that we can walk confident into tomorrow because we know who holds tomorrow; it is not you, it is not me, therefore we really do not have a problem.
The Member for Barataria/San Juan also spoke on the issue of tourist arrivals. Normally, I would stay away from the topic of tourism, but this evening I just want to clarify for the Member that the tourism industry is a very fragile one, and by fragile we mean anything could impact it negatively. If you have an outbreak of smallpox visitors would not come. Quite recently, yes there would have been a decline in tourist arrivals and we cannot attribute that to any one factor. It may be because of the advisory, but I do not think so. There has been, recently, an increase in terrorist activities throughout the world and definitely people are concerned for their safety and security. It is one of the more potent issues in tourism. Anytime your safety or security is threatened then, of course you will take remedial action and not travel.

Yes, Tobago probably has an increase in small time criminals; the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre alluded to that yesterday. I want to say and I have said it already in this House and I am not even saying that the Tobagonian is not involved. But in a recent conversation with the police in Tobago, I was told that they grabbed a couple of “fellas” who did some mischief and most of them were from Trinidad. So you see Member, the advent of fast ferry has made Tobago even a bit more attractive for all of us, including the criminals.

I said it before and I am saying it again, generally what happens is that these criminals from Trinidad would go to Tobago, link up with those who have nothing to do and together, one knows the terrain, one knows the activity, so you know that is a lethal combination and that is what would probably cause the spiralling crime. But in no way is that sufficient to impact negatively on the tourist arrivals. There is a multiplicity of factors that would contribute to decline in the arrivals.

**Miss Lucky:** Thank you very much, hon. Member for Tobago East, for whom I have tremendous respect for giving way. There is a question I would like to ask you. Bearing in mind that in Tobago, many of the persons who would be the victims of crime, would not necessarily be residents of Tobago, but would be tourists. Do you think that there would be any benefits in having some kind of specialized court whereby the victims, because remember they would be the witnesses in the case, robberies and so— am asking this not for the purpose of embarrassment, I am asking it because you know that we are trying to hit the ground running with respect to fighting crime; we are way behind. Have a specialized court, so for example if you are robbed today and without exaggeration a court is sitting, even a night court so that we can get the witnesses, at least have the evidence so that when they go abroad—Because let us face it, if
they know their case is going to be called in the next year or two they are not going to come. That is the first question. If you would just allow me to ask the second question; it is unrelated to crime, but it is something that concerned me.

I have been speaking to a few friends who have been visiting Tobago within recent times. I am very embarrassed to say that I have only visited the Buccoo Reef once in my life and that would have been many, many years ago when I would have been deemed to be young. I understand however, that the Buccoo Reef is really, compared to what is was about 20 years or 25 years ago, when I would have gone, to what it is now, been seriously, adversely affected to the extent that even with the fish and the coral. [Interruption] Member for Tobago East, you know that when I ask these questions it is because I am really genuinely interested.

I think Buccoo Reef is something that really has not gotten that level of marketability and marketing that it deserves. Tobago is beautiful, I consider it more beautiful than Barbados, where I spent two years studying. Tobago is my preferred island of choice. I am just asking whether that is true. If it is not true, I am gratified. If it is in fact true, could you say what, if anything, is being done? I thank you.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: I thank the hon. Member for her questions. In answer to your first question with the court. That is already in train, because we know that the visitors are here just for a short while and I know that the Tobago House of Assembly held discussions with the magistrates in Tobago. They would normally sit on a weekend if necessary, or in the evening or public holidays to facilitate the visitors who are unable to return after they have left the country. You see, in the end, because tourism is pivotal to Tobago, one wants to ensure that we treat our customers right, including our own selves. So, that is already in train.

As for Buccoo Reef, I worked in the tourism division in Tobago for 14 years and close to 1990, someone did a film called Cry for Buccoo and yes, there has been some damage to the reef. But as you would appreciate, tourism in Tobago was not a planned development. We had the natural resources, the hotels were built, the planes would come in; and the industry just burgeoned and therefore there were no protective measures. But since I have been in the Assembly I know that there was a plan to demarcate Buccoo Reef—

Mr. Callender: It has been.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: and the Member for Tobago West told me that the plan has been implemented, therefore they are taking action to save the reef. In the
end, the visitors come for what they could not get in the United States, and if we throw the babies out with the bath water, we would have a problem. It is now a protected area.

**Mrs. Beckles:** Thank you very much, my colleague for Tobago East. Let me just share that Cabinet has approved four areas as environmentally protected. So, Buccoo Reef has joined Nariva, Matura and the Aripo Savannah. We have just about completed the survey to officially declare it as environmentally protected. [Desk thumping]

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** Let me thank my colleague and Minister of Public Utilities, who has been doing a wonderful job I must say, and the people of Tobago like her very much, because she has lit up the whole place.

As I was saying, we are working on those issues because we understand the importance of tourism to Tobago. I was listening to the Member for Barataria/San Juan making some really good points and he spoke to the tourism park. I just want to let the Member know that in tourism we speak about developing tourism first for ourselves and then we invite our visitors to share. So, definitely what we do would be for you to enjoy and then we bring them and say, well you know you could enjoy it. Take a piece of paradise, leave no footprints, but you can enjoy it and pay for it too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I go into my contribution, I just want to address a few points made by the Member for Tabaquite in his absence. In his contribution, the Member for Tabaquite said that under the UNC they built several schools in Tobago. There is no truth to that. They may have done the drawings but the schools were built when this regime took office. [Desk thumping] Several schools were built, several high schools: Speyside, Goodwood, Mason Hall and the Mason Hall Government Primary School, Castara, Scarborough Methodist, Scarborough Anglican, but it was not done under the watch of the UNC. So I just wanted to debunk that.

Secondly, the Member spoke about the rainforest in Tobago and that under the UNC they did something—

**Hon. Member:** He built it.

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** Maybe he built it, I do not know. [Crosstalk] The PNM declared it environmentally sensitive. But I just want for the record, to state that the rainforest in Tobago has the distinction of being the oldest preserved rainforest in the Western Hemisphere. [Desk thumping] This has been preserved
since 1776. It was done because one of the Members of Parliament for Cambridge and one of the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantation in Tobago then, was very alarmed at the rate at which the forest was cut down for timber. A scientist by the name of Steven Hales spoke of the detrimental effects of losing too much woodland and the effect that would have on the plantation.

8.45 p.m.

The Member of Parliament, it took him 11 years before they could have enacted a law to protect the rainforest in Tobago. This was done by the then Governor, Sir William Young, who signed the ordinance on April 13, 1776, like I said, making Tobago forest reserve unique in the world as the first created, specifically for ecological reasons to protect the watershed. So that is the second issue I wish to debunk and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of this House will be suspended for 28 minutes. We will return at 9.15 p.m., so we can have some dinner.

8.47 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

9.15 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that we are all very fresh now and ready to go until 3.00 a.m. We will all join the Jouvert Band. Mr. Deputy Speaker, just before we adjourned, I was responding to some of the myths that the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite in his absence spoke to in Parliament yesterday. I spoke about the Main Ridge that he said the UNC had something to do with it. We debunk that.

Hon. Member: They built the Main Ridge.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: They built the Main Ridge. I spoke about the construction of schools which they did not do.

And thirdly, the Member spoke about the training persons for the tourism sector. It bothers me because I was working in the industry at that time when they constructed the Tobago Hilton and they took three years to build that property. You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it was opened, all the senior management staff came from Barbados. All of them. So I want to know where they trained these persons for which industry, maybe to be waiters, waitresses and bellboys, but we have gone past that. So I just wanted to debunk the Member for Tabaquite. I am sorry he is not here to hear the truth as we know it.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to comment on two issues raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Member of Parliament for Siparia. She is not here now, but in her exceptionally protracted contribution, the Member raised several issues and one in particular caught my attention, when she spoke about the implementation deficit in the Government programmes over the years, and she questioned the reasons for so many broken promises. May I read what the Member said? I am quoting the Member for Siparia:

“One of the difficulties that even the best spin doctors will have with this Government is that it has developed a reputation for broken promises and this has resulted in a loss of confidence in the delivery of commitments made by Government. The public remains baffled as to why there are so many broken promises emanating from the annual budget.”

And she goes on.

“Others have suggested that many promises are made with no intention to implement them. Tell us why so many promises are broken? That is the hallmark of the PNM.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, normally I try to focus on the future and to leave the past wherever it is in the past, but in this instance, I could not do that. Therefore, I want to remind the Member of Parliament for Siparia and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, of the period 1995 to 2000, when this country was led by a UNC government and this is what they promised. In their manifesto, they highlighted goals, policies, programmes and so on, and here are these:

- crime prevention and crime suppression;
- enhancing the status of women in the society;
- access to affordable shelter for all our citizens;
- improvement of the physical and natural environment to support sustainable development for current and future generations.

The manifesto also outlined broad areas targeted for attention, including:

- being tough on crime and the causes of crime;
- economic diversification with a focus on agriculture,
- manufacturing, tourism development; and
- development of an industrial policy.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1996 they said:

- Agricultural policies are supposed to convey an inward looking and outward looking perspective whereby production will be organized to meet domestic demand, as well as to secure niche markets overseas for non-traditional agricultural products.
- Special emphasis will be placed also on increasing foreign exchange earnings, providing for social stability and rural development and revitalizing agriculture in Tobago.

That is 1996. Hear them in 1997:

- This Government in its strategy to diversify the economy will focus on the development of the non-oil sectors of the economy, particularly, on those sectors which have the greatest potential to create jobs.
- To further stimulate outputs in the agricultural sectors, we will develop a comprehensive incentive programme for agriculture.
- It is envisaged that the programme will boost the agricultural exports, thereby increasing foreign exchange earning, as well as creating the potential for employment opportunities and forming linkages with the tourism and input supplies sectors.

Hear them in 1998:

- The agriculture sector is deemed to be of strategic importance to the national economy. If we are to optimize this sector potential, more support is required to enhance competitiveness. The mechanisms of the new agricultural incentive programmes are designed to support the agricultural sub-sector.

1999:

- Commuting between Trinidad and Tobago has been challenging for citizens of both Tobago and Trinidad in this fiscal year. In this fiscal year we will ensure that there is adequate sea transport between Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they promised to launch an offence on crime, fast track support unit in the Office of the Prime Minister. Never done.

They promised to address the needs of the secondary schools age population, strengthening tertiary education and all that. Establishment of National Community College. Never done.
They promised emphasis will be placed on the improved water supply through the implementation of the medium rehab programme. Water for all by 2000, the infamous statement. Never done. As a matter of fact I heard the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre commending the hon. Minister of Public Utilities for giving them water in Mayaro.

**Miss Lucky:** That water was given privately.

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** Well, you still got. It is better than before.

**Miss Lucky:** I agree fully and I am hoping for more.

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** They promised a major transmission and distribution network expansion for the electricity supply. Not done. Development of social and economic infrastructure for our sister island, Tobago. Not done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this one: We will construct a national centre for the performing arts which will house a theater and conference centre. An institute of Carnival will also be established in 1998.

**Mr. Hart:** That is UNC complex.

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** This will—[Interruption]

**Mr. Hart:** That is Rienzi Complex, boy.

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** You know—this will offer training in Carnival related skills; a recording studio for used by local artistes will also be part of the institute. Not done.

9.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am just drawing these inferences to simply say that all governments experience implementation deficits in their programmes. Clearly, if there is a common thread of implementation gap in every regime, not just here, but anywhere you go, the answer is not a political one; it is definitely an administrative problem that needs to be addressed.

So when the Member for Siparia comes here, the hon. Leader of the Opposition who plays politics all the time, I just want to tell her that the pot cannot tell the kettle "it bottom black". I just wanted to note to the hon. Member for Siparia that implementation deficits occur primarily because of a system that was not designed for flexibility and responsiveness in a fast paced environment as the one in which we conduct the business of government.

That is one of the reasons why the Government commended the public service reform. I was not around in government at the time, but I was a public servant in
1991 to 1995 under the expert leadership of the now deceased, the former Minister Gordon Draper, who charted the course for public service reform. That reform was designed to change a culture that was unsuitable to the changing needs of the country. Gordon Draper believed that strategic planning was the launching pad in the process of transforming the public service. We know that the public service is the primary implementing agency of the Government.

This Government went out of power in 1995 and the UNC took the reins. They were so busy conducting other activities, that they had no time to continue this process. If there is a good plan, a good ideal, even if it is not yours, you can still continue with it; but they did nothing. They squashed it; they killed everything; they killed the youth camps and all the institutions that were there in the days of the PNM, and were functioning. "If it ent bruk doh fix it"; but they "bruk" down everything. If they had continued the process, it would have made life easier.

It was left to the government when it took office again in 2000 to continue the process. They are doing an excellent job at it. I am certain that when the Minister of Public Administration speaks in the other place, he will let the nation know how much work they are doing to reform the Public Service. It cannot happen overnight, but I am certain that cultural change will take place; transformation will take place, as the country moves on to developed country status.

I want the hon. Leader of the Opposition to understand that if, God forbid, they ever take government again, they will experience the same problem, so she needs to not make it a political issue, but to find ways to address it to ensure efficient service delivery to the people of this country. [Desk thumping]

**Mr. Hinds:** "Well putted."

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** There is a second issue and I am really passionate about this one. The Minister of Education was here this afternoon and she did an excellent job, in presenting the programmes of her Ministry and what they would have undertaken over the past years. But every time the Leader of the Opposition comes to this Parliament, she speaks about education.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition was a former Minister of Education. Hear what the hon. Member for Siparia had to say:

"Under education, a UNC Alliance government will resume the process of transforming the education system by working with all stakeholders to do the following:"
I will just itemize one:

"Construct schools to further develop the objective of universal secondary education. Under no circumstances will any child be left behind."

Mr. Speaker, I want to know if the hon. Leader of the Opposition lives in this country. I want to know if she knows how many children were left behind when in 2000 they implemented universal secondary education without a thought as to the consequences of what they were doing.

If I sound angry, I am, because I am very passionate about this. I understand the value of education and I understand coming from a poor family in Moriah in Tobago, going to school "barefoot", when the PNM took office in 1956 and the Dr. Eric Williams said to all of us that the future of this nation lies in the book bags of the children. My mother always said to us, "If you do not vote PNM, I will throw you out of my house, because if it was not for them, I could not send you children to school." [Desk thumping] I am here to give back what the PNM gave to me.

The hon. Member for Siparia in 2000 placed all these children, regardless of their educational ability or capability, in secondary schools. I remember that I was in the other place when this Bill came before the Parliament. I was doing a brief stint there and I made a brief intervention in the debate. I said then, as I believe now because it has come to pass, “If you do this, you had better build some bigger jails and you had better ensure the teachers of this country get access to psychotherapy services.” I did not have to be rocket scientist to know that the consequences of that action would have been dire. I did not have to be a rocket scientist to foresee that.

There is a gentleman named Peter Schwartz who does futuristic planning. He talks about inevitable surprises. In essence he says that all the answers we are looking for are in the environment. Everything that happens in isolation, if we connect the dots we can foresee what is going to happen down the road.

So when the former Minister of Education decided to put children who could not read and write in secondary school, the consequences were obvious. They would give trouble. [Crosstalk] I have spoken to several teachers. One teacher said to me in frustration, “The children cyar even read English but we teaching them Spanish.” How could you do that? [Laughter]

I am passionate, because I came face to face with this problem when I adopted a young girl. I was about to go and buy her books. She was in First Form in one of the high schools in Tobago, and I was sitting with her and I said, "Read the book
list for me.” I noticed that she was not doing anything. So it took me a little while, because she was about 15 years old. She said, "Auntie Eudine, I cyar read.” I said, "You cannot read, at 15 years old and in high school First Form?” Do you know what was the long and short of that? That child dropped out of school; she said to me, "Aunty Eudine I cyar make it.” The Member for Siparia came here and said, "Put the children there and then give them remedial reading.” It was crazy; in secondary it is absolute madness.

I went to that same high school one afternoon to pick up some children and there was the teacher standing by the door blocking it, and there were about 15 children pushing him down, because they want to go home. The teacher kept them in because he realized that they needed special treatment, so he wanted them to stay in class to do some work. You know what? They did not want to stay, because they could not do the work.

That is just one incident. I am certain that if we really look around this country there are so many more. As the Minister of Education said this afternoon, their research has shown that the problems with the schools started in 2005, that was when Kamla's children came home to roost.

If anybody asks me right now why the children in school behave like that, give me one reason, I am going to lay the blame squarely at the feet of the Member for Siparia, on her shoulders and all her colleagues who are not in the Parliament at this hour, who are running away. Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Joseph said that the hon. Prime Minister should apologize to the country. All of them should apologize to the children of this nation, because they all sat in Cabinet [Desk thumping] and took that diabolical decision to push those children into secondary schools and did nothing about it. [Crosstalk] In an election year!

Dr. Rowley: It was an election gimmick.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: In an election year they are promising to do that again. So what is it? If, in fact, they want to revolutionize education, start with the early childhood programme. That is the foundation; that is the pivot; that is where we build the children; start with them. If she had done that, we would have seen the results now as we are seeing them today.

She did not care. All they wanted was to put children in secondary schools, so she sacrificed our children on the altar of political expediency; the Member for Siparia; Then she brazenly comes to the Parliament and points her finger at this administration, not recognizing that the next four pointing back at her. Like Pontius Pilate she said, “I know not the man; I did not do it; is that Minister of
Education who did not build the early childhood centres.” How much more brazen can they get? “Pot cyar tell kettle he bottom black.”

Mr. Roberts: Give me it in Tobagonian.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: “Me say de pot cyar tell kettle he bottom black.” [Laughter] I really get worked up about this, because I am seeing the evidence of it also in Tobago. It is unfortunate that Tobago took the decision to go along with that foolishness at that time, because they were in a position to say, "We not doing it", but they did not, unfortunately, so we are seeing the fruits of their labour right now throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, enough about that; other speakers I guess will deal with her. I want to turn my attention to the budget of 2007/2008 and the social and economic measures as delivered by the hon. Prime Minister to this honourable House. I am talking about the fiscal measures. I am pleased to note that the budget underscores the global objectives of Government expenditure. That global objective is to improve the quality of life of all our citizens, cognizant of the fact that economic prosperity in today's global environment is based on harnessing and nurturing the creativity, ingenuity and innovativeness of our people.

That is the pivot around which Vision 2020 revolves and it is also the basis for the five developmental pillars enunciated in that document. I am sure almost every speaker on this side would have alluded to that.

9.40 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these pillars inform the programmes and projects undertaken by the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, a ministry I have been privileged to work with since 2004 along with my colleagues, the hon. Member for Tunapuna, Edward Hart and Member for Laventille West, the hon. Eulalie James, and led by that effervescent woman, Joan Yuille-Williams.

I always believe the Ministry of Community Development is very relevant to—[Interruption] If you listen, you will learn. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that that ministry is very pivotal to development in this country. I have always said that, and we continue to touch communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago, we continue to transform lives, we continue to empower people not to be tax eaters, but to become tax earners.

Mr Speaker, we do that through all the various programmes, and the last evening the hon. Eulalie James would have articulated all those programmes we
are doing with our young people and the elderly to bridge the gap, and the hon. Member for San Fernando my friend and colleague is just reminding me that we had an excellent folk fair in San Fernando on Sunday and the Tobagonians came down with their crab and dumpling and their dirt oven and you would not believe that people came from as far as Arima to buy that bread from the dirt oven. So I guess Tobago has a niche market here right now for bread.

**Mr. Sharma:** You all had sahena?

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** No, we did not want any sahena there.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you.

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** Very well. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to refer in particular to the Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programme. It has been very successful and I have been following that programme because it involves elderly people and young children who are at risk at schools. Before the schools were deshifted, in the morning period children had nothing to do so we brought them to the centres, and those in the evening would come across. I have interacted with them and I think they are very beautiful children who just need some love and attention.

In particular, I want to tell this honourable House about an experience I had with a young man named Mark. I went to one of the centres and I saw this chap about 14 years old, high afro, kind of ganster stylin thing. In talking with him I asked him what time he is going to school and he said to me he does not go to school. I said, what do you mean you do not go to school, and I asked him what he wants to do when he grows up. He said he wants to be a pilot. I said, you want to be a pilot and you are not going to school? Do you know what the outcome of that story was? There was a problem in the family and we caught it on time and I am happy to say today that that young man has passed his SEA exam and he is now going to the Malick Comprehensive School and on his way to becoming a pilot. You want to know what we do? That is what we do and that is only one of the stories, I do not have time to highlight the others.

**Mr. Sharma:** I know of someone who wants to be a pilot, what to do?

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** Send them to us. So Mr. Deputy Speaker, we try to catch them and direct them, show them love. This is what the Government is all about. This is what our founding father indicated when he spoke at that Chaguaramas Convention telling us to uplift the poor; this is what we are doing. You want to know what we are doing. That is what we are doing.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also have the Community Development Fund (CDF) that has been very active in the whole poverty alleviation programme and we have been doing work within communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. It is a very successful project and in Tobago I know there are about four successful projects that have been undertaken for this past year and there is a documentary on NCC TV and CNMG. If you watch those stations you can see what we have done with the CDF programme.

We have the non-traditional skills and that programme in particular, to my mind, is the flagship programme of the ministry because it speaks to single women, single mothers’ empowerment and independence. It gives them the opportunity to earn and to take care of their children; and definitely defining masculine excellence, and you know Minister Hart and all of us are very passionate about that programme because it is targeted towards our young men.

It is said that men do not talk and do not cry, so we have men mentoring men and that is important especially in our society where there are so many—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Tobago East has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [Mr. C. Sharma]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank my hon. colleague, the Member for Fyzabad. I do not eat sahena, but I will try it.

We were talking about the defining masculine excellence programme, the men mentoring men and I would like to invite the Member for Fyzabad or maybe Oropouche to take part in the programme.

Hon. Member: They need it.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is the untold story of the museum. We have a young man, who had been the Director/Curator of the museum for a couple years, and very quietly, Mr. Lewis has been doing much work at the museum and I am not sure if Minister Hart is going to address that. I will just touch on the programmes that he has been doing, he started the heritage programme which is one targeting young children and giving them a history of Trinidad and Tobago. It targeted 2,000 children this year and every year that number increases.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, that programme is so successful in giving children a sense of where they came from and where they are going because if you do not know where you come from, you really cannot know where you are going. The museum programme is the untold story, and it is the best kept secret in this country. They also have children heritage workshops and in La Brea I know they were trying to have a museum there and I understand they are going to have museums throughout the country where they can have the children’s heritage workshops during the summer. I am certain that the Member for Tunapuna, who is also in the culture division would say more on the museum programmes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also have the export centres and I listened to the Director, and we speak about the innovativeness of our people and a caring society and these are the things we are doing and certainly, the hon. Member for Laventille referred to the export centre last night, and we listened to the Director telling us about the opportunities that these women have to export.

There is one particular woman who is exporting her candles as far as Rome. She has targeted a niche market, so she is making her candles and is doing very well. People make soap and all sorts of indigenous items that would definitely find a market and they do not only train these women. After training they are introduced to NEDCO, which is the National Entrepreneurship Development Company, for assistance to start their own businesses and, as a matter of fact, the Hon. member said that most of the women are not interested in NEDCO they just want to start their businesses small and develop on their own.

This is a really beautiful country with beautiful people, only 20 per cent, if so much are the miscreants, the other 80 per cent are wonderful people who want to live and enjoy this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the few minutes I have, I must turn my attention to Tobago and my constituency of Tobago East. I know the Member for Tobago West will do justice, but we both speak for Tobago whenever we speak, so it really does not matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the book of Job gives us an account—

Hon. Member: That is your book.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Yes, it is my ancestor and that is why I can stand strong today in the face of all adversity. [Desk thumping] The book of Job gives an account of the trials and tribulations of Job who was deemed God’s servant, and it
tells us that in one of his darkest periods, his wife who was really tired of seeing him suffer told him: “Why don’t you curse God and die.” And his answer to her was: The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had the privilege to represent the constituency of Tobago East for the past six years. [Interruption] I have not yet reached the mountain top but I will get there. I am seeing it, I am seeing the Promised Land, and unlike Moses, I am going to get there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my brief tenure, because I know people would have done 22 years, and like your good self, Mr. Deputy Speaker, maybe 15 and 30-something years and so forth, so I have to say in my very brief tenure as Member of Parliament for Tobago East, I have spoken to the challenges we face because of the institutional problems between the Tobago House of Assembly and the Members of Parliament for Tobago and it is not just this administration, but it has been happening all the time.

I want to thank the hon. Prime Minister for acknowledging that there are challenges and I am hoping that they would be resolved when the new Constitution is finalized, that the issue would be well documented so it would not be at the whims and fancies of any one person to say yea or nay to the work of the Members of Parliament for Tobago in trying to serve their constituents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, most of the people in Trinidad do not have access to our television stations in Tobago. I know for the past year the television station and the local radio have been bombarded with a few very vociferous persons calling in to inform the Tobago public that we—myself and the Member for Tobago West—do not speak for Tobago in Parliament. They say there is no voice for Tobago in the Parliament so they call on the UNC and the COP to rescue them. [Interruption] Every morning they call on the radio station saying we are dumb, we do not speak.

9.55 p.m.

So when you see I say to the hon. Leader of Government Business that I want to speak so that the people of Tobago will hear me speak, he will understand.

**Mr. Sharma:** A little too late.

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** No, it is never too late. I think I have run my race with endurance and I have served them very well. So it is not too late at all, [Interruption] Thank you very much—but for those who endure to the end.
Like Job’s wife, they want me to “cuss” the Government. They want us to “cuss” the Government. I want to know why they want me or the Member for Tobago West to “cuss” the Government!

Ms. Seukeran: Or San Fernando West.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Or San Fernando West! Because this Government continues. [Interruption] The honourable Tobagonian, the Member for Diego Martin West, is saying they want to raise the dead; they want to raise the “corpse”. [Laughter] But this Government continues to discharge its mandate with respect to Tobago.

I just want to read into the record the moneys that were allocated to Tobago over the past five years and I am going to read it slowly so that they could understand.

Mr. Sharma: We have that document.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: You do not have it, or else you would not come and talk nonsense!

I just want to tell you of the development. In 2002/2003, Tobago received $742.9 million; in 2003/2004, Tobago received $900 million; the next year, 2004/2005, $1.23 billion; the next year, 2005/2006, Tobago received $1.34 billion; in 2006/2007, they received $2.0 billion. This year they asked for $2.8 billion and they received $2.2 billion.

Why should I “cuss” the Government? Could somebody tell me?

Mr. Sharma: To please the “corpse”.

Mrs. E. Job-Davis: To please the “corpse”? No! I have absolutely no reason to do that. I will not do that because I am a Christian. I am not that big in necromancy and I am not going to “cuss” the Government because guess what? This Government has been dealing with Tobago as: What Tobago wants, Tobago gets. That is what it is! [Desk thumping]

So I do not understand! This year Tobago is going to receive $417 million just for development! That excludes recurrent. I want to read from the Tobago House of Assembly Public Sector Investment Programme. Everybody should get this book. All of Tobago who are calling in on television should get a copy of this book and read it! [Crosstalk]

The Tobago House of Assembly allocated in its 2007 programme, $23.4 million to deal with the pre-primary and secondary schools. In Health, $17.3
million was put in the health sector to refurbish the health facilities, health centres, and so on. HIV/AIDS, $19.3 million; Housing $54 million to construct houses at Castara, Roxborough and Blenheim. They are under construction. Youth, Sports and Recreation, $23 million and $42.8 million was allocated to support activities aimed at stimulating and promoting business activity in Tobago. Tourism, $12.2 million; Agriculture, $27.4 million; Roads and Bridges, $42.7 million, and Social and Economic Development, $92 million, which includes roads and bridges, and so on. On the roads and bridges, we have completed the L’Anse Fourmi Link Road, which in itself is an achievement and which is going to help the tourism process in the island.

So the THA allocations which is what the Government is supposed to do, is being done! I also want to read into the record some of the other things that have been done. We have a problem with the air bridge.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** What about the hospital?

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** The hon. Minister of Works and Transport has informed me that that problem is going to be resolved by the end of this year and we are holding him to that, because, you see, the other day when we had a problem on the sea bridge, when one ferry was working—and this was the holiday—he said to me: “I can fix that in two days.” And he fixed it. [Desk thumping] So in Tobago we say he is a man to “he” word. He is “man to word”. We are expecting that the hon. Minister will fix the air bridge problem by the end of the year. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Fyzabad, it is late and the hon. Member for Tobago East is making her contribution and it looks as though you are a bit disturbed, so maybe what you could do is to leave until she completes her contribution.

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your protection. I do not need protection from him; he is a toothless bulldog.

Public transport, of course we are having some problems with Tobago East experiencing public transportation and the Minister of Works and Transport said: “Buses are coming and some of those buses will come to Tobago.” Mr. Speaker, we are holding him to that, so we are expecting some buses tomorrow.

**Mr. Imbert:** When you want the buses?

**Hon. E. Job-Davis:** Tomorrow! He wants to know when I want them. Tomorrow!
Mr. Imbert: Just ask and you shall receive.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: What I consider the success story of the year—and, you know, they say it is a little bit too late, but it is done—the acquisition of the two fast ferries for the inter-island transport. [Desk thumping] I want to make a confession, because I was one of the those skeptics who felt that the fast ferries would not have worked, so I opted to agree to a trial: “Try de ting before you put it dey because we ain’t sure if it go wok.” But my skepticism was based on experience. I am sure the hon. Member for Tobago West would have remembered the days of the “vomit comet”. The “vomit comet” was a catamaran that used to take two hours between the islands. I mean, we all know it was owned by some popular people here in Trinidad.

The “vomit comet” used to leave Trinidad and reached Tobago in two hours, but when it got to Tobago, the ambulance had to be on the port to pick up people. [Laughter] So that is why I was very skeptical about that. But I am happy to say that today I am one of the most seasoned travelers; as a matter of fact, I do not even take the plane again; I just jump on the fast ferry and go home and if I feel to put my car on the boat, I just carry it.

So it is good and I am one of the thousands of travellers who use that inter-island ferry.

Mr. Imbert: And we are talking about a third boat.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Yes! The hon. Minister of Works and Transport just said a third boat and if they get that it is going to be filled again. I do not know where we are going to find places to put these people in Tobago, but bring them! Once they are spending money we want them.

Ms. Seukeran: Once they are not criminals.

Mrs. E. Job-Davis: We do not want the criminals; keep them.

There is one problem, though, and that problem has to be addressed very urgently. It is the problem of ticketing to ensure optimization of the facility. Also, the boarding of the boats in Trinidad with the cars, that is a problem, so the Tobago port has an excellent system. [Interruption] We are hearing the Minister saying all those problems are going to be fixed. We are holding him to that.

These things are happening and I am happy to be a part of it; I am happy to represent the people of my constituency and the people of Tobago by and large. [Desk thumping]
Ms. Seukeran: And they get good representation.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: And I can tell you, if I may say so for myself, I am an excellent representative! [Desk thumping] They know it! And that is being very modest.

I just want to reiterate for the umpteenth time that the Tobago House of Assembly, Act 40 of 1996, with all its flaws, gives the Tobago House of Assembly responsibility for Tobago's development. I am sorry I do not have much time to read into the Hansard—

Mr. Sharma: Read it.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: From the THA Act 40, section 25 which states the function of the Assembly and anybody who is listening, especially those from Tobago, I want them to read this. Yes, the document is flawed; yes, there are things to be fixed, but the Tobago House of Assembly has powers to do things in Tobago without interference.

I remember when I took office in 2002, one of the first things the Prime Minister said to us: “Do not interfere in Tobago’s business. Let the Tobago House of Assembly handle its affairs.” That is what has been happening. So even if I am from Tobago and I very much want to be a part of Tobago’s policies and programmes, I respect the institution of the Tobago House of Assembly. It is an institution that we fought for and we are going to maintain! Therefore, not even me or the Member for Tobago West will interfere in the workings of the Tobago House of Assembly, but we just want to be a part of the policymaking in Tobago. We represent the people. That has to happen. [Desk thumping]

I also want to say to all my detractors, there is no need for me to “cuss” the Government. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but now I am a woman I put away childish things. [Desk thumping] I am in Government; I am a part of Government and a Government that understands “if something is bruck, we go fix it.” There is a problem with employees in Tobago in the tourism sector, we call the hon. Minister of National Security. “they go fix it.” The cost of construction is a problem, consumers in Tobago have to understand that they also are responsible for themselves and if it is too expensive, do not buy it. But the cost of construction is really prohibitive. You can build two houses in Trinidad for the price of one in Trinidad in Tobago.

Yes, we have problems with the hospital, but in his presentation the hon. Prime Minister said the hospital will be constructed and we are looking forward to that, because I can tell you there was a time when, in Tobago we used to say...
people do not get sick; they do not use the hospital, but no more. We have an ageing population and we need the hospital, so that must come. We also need all the health facilities on the island to be upgraded so that people can have access to adequate health care.

Very quickly, the cost of real estate is prohibitive. The average Tobagonian cannot own a piece of land in Tobago. If you did not have a piece before, it is hard. One lot of land is selling approximately $300,000 and $400,000. Therefore, we need to build more houses and make them more accessible to the average Tobagonians. Two young people, just married, are going to find it very, very difficult to purchase a house. We need to address that issue.

10.10 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also a vexing problem of the underperformance of Tobago's children. We have to address that in another forum.

Let me wind up very quickly. I do not know how much time I have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Six minutes.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Good. The underperformance of the Tobago children is a problem. When we look at the Minister of Housing and the Member for Tobago West, we know that Tobago used to produce excellent scholars ages, from time immemorial, but now we are having some problems and those problems have to be addressed. The "how" would have to be worked out.

There is no doubt that Tobago has developed. When you are too close to the forest, you cannot see the trees. People who come from aboard would often say: “Oh gosh, we did not know that Tobago has gone this far.” Seen through their eyes, there has been development.

However, there is always room for improvement, always. We cannot bask for too long in the glories of past achievements and we cannot be satisfied with incomplete successes. We must continue to press on and develop in an ever-changing environment that changes even as we slumber. We must not be caught like Rip Van Winkle, who awoke to find out that his slumber lasted 20 years and he was left to play catch-up. Rather, we must continue to frame our policies in a comprehensive way, recognizing the interconnectivity of all the factors of production and the need to address structural weaknesses in a proactive way. Our problems are not beyond our capabilities to solve them. All the conditions are in place for us to do that.
In this era of great abundance, the glue of common interest in our country's development should bind all of us together in this course.

Our country has the resources to reduce the divide between the rich and the poor. We, at this time, have it in our power to pass on to our children a brighter inheritance, a more generous legacy than that bequeath to any other generation previously. We have it now. But, in order to do this, we must act boldly. We must be bold. We must act together and with faith. As we unleash our resources in the service of our people, we will break down the Jericho wall of crime, poverty, illiteracy and disease. We will move mountains.

As I conclude, I want to thank the Parliament. I thank the Speaker and the Government for the support in my tenure as chairperson of the Women's Parliament of the region. I have done that for two years and I have gained tremendous experience. For that I wish to thank the Government, the Parliament and the staff of the Parliament who supported me in hosting the first ever regional conference of the women parliamentarians in the Caribbean, Atlantic and Americas region. It was a tremendous success.

The outcome of that was the establishment of the Regional Women Parliamentarians Committee. Now, the region is on board with the United Nations, as it articulated one of its core principles in the document which highlights the central organizing principle of work, which is that no enduring solution to society's most threatening, social, economic and political problems can be found without the full participation and the full empowerment of the world's women.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I close, let me wish the nation a very Happy 45th Anniversary and may God continue to bless us all. Thank you.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security and Minister of State in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you very much Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to make my brief contribution to this budget debate.

This is the 13th budget debate that I have had the opportunity to participate in before this honourable House. I want to begin very sincerely and properly congratulate the Minister of Finance for what I consider to be a solid, sensible, steady budget, 2008.

Since I am in the mode of congratulations, I want to congratulate my friend from Tobago East, she did a fantastic job. It was a fantastic contribution.
The Minister of Finance's budget statement clearly left the Member for Siparia, Leader of the Opposition and, of course, the Leader of the COP, the Member for St. Augustine, both listless and flatfooted with precious, little serious to say about it. I think I can speak from some experience. As I said, I had been here for many budget debates past and I really found that they were at a loss; nothing useful to add.

Quite honestly, if I were a Member of the Opposition, and God forbid, I too would have been overwhelmed and confused, as they obviously are.

I listened to all the contributions so far, from our friends on the other side—vacuous, nothing useful to say. It was a difficult budget. It was difficult to respond to. I understand your troubles.

More generally, I want to say this because we are in election mode. If I were a member of the UNC or the COP, I too would have been very much afraid of the mighty juggernaut of the PNM. I would have been afraid of this 51-year-old grand party.

I want to begin by highlighting, not for the benefit of Members here, because we all received the documents. But even at this hour, 10.20 p.m. those members of the national community who would be listening to what we are saying in this important place and important debate and who would not have had, at least not just yet, and I urge them to do so access to the documents that we routinely have access to. I want, for their benefit to highlight some facts about the economy of Trinidad and Tobago; facts important in a land where there are those on the other side and their supporters on the outside of this House who use the people's ignorance for their own political short-term benefit.

For the benefit of those who are listening and without access to these documents, I want to highlight some facts. Trinidad and Tobago, as an economy, has been and experiences today its 13th consecutive year of economic growth. The economy is not declining. It is not performing—[Interruption]

Mr. Sharma: It started with the UNC.

Hon. F. Hinds: I do not know where it started. I said 13 years of economic growth. It started in 1994, after 10 years of economic decline it started under the PNM. In fact, it was the third quarter of 1993.

The GDP per capita, the gross domestic product, the entire product and output of the economy, as it is measured. Per capita means when you divide total amount by everyone of the 1.3 million persons who are citizens of this country, yields a per capita of US $16,015 in 2007.
I remember in 1988, travelling on a train in London reading a document produced by the United Nations and seeing Trinidad and Tobago with approximately US $14 per capita at that time, next to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, I remember the pride I felt, steady growth. That is the state today, US $16,015 per capita.

The GDP, as I have just explained, was $51 billion in 2000. It is now $132 billion in 2007. It more than doubled. It is approaching tripling and the citizens of the country ought to know that.

Trinidad and Tobago hosts the largest energy and manufacturing sectors in the English-speaking Caribbean. In terms of the energy sector and the manufacturing sector it is the largest in the Caribbean. Some people say we are entirely dependent on oil and that is becoming more and more so. I want the citizens of this country to take note that we have had a 6.3 per cent growth in the non-energy sector. That is very important.

Our savings, at least part of it, in the Revenue Stabilization Fund; a fund we heard a lot about in the last few days and months. We save in 2007, $2.72 billion. Between 2000 and 2007, our Revenue Stabilization Fund or our savings, grew from TT $415 million to a mighty $11.6 billion. That is savings.

When our friends on the other side speak of squandermania, waste and all of that, it is designed to give those who do not know, the impression that the PNM Government is about squandermania and waste and we cannot manage the economy of the country. That clearly is not the case—massive savings.

In terms of debt stock, what the country owes, in terms of local debt and foreign debt, this amount, as a percentage of GDP, declined from 30.5 per cent in 2006. That is to say in 2006, for every dollar that we produced in the GDP, 30 per cent went in paying debt. It has been reduced to 28.3 in 2007.

All these wonderful things about this strong and growing economy did not come by chance. It came as a consequence of good, steady, solid and prudent fiscal management and other management, over the years of growth. This is why I am very proud and could sincerely congratulate the Minister of Finance, those past and particularly those of the PNM.

I urge the citizens of this country to get access to this document: Government at your Service: Highlights of Achievement, 2008. It is available and they should get access to it for their own edification.

It is a fact that the PNM built this country. That is a proud fact. We built all the institutions of this country. We were blessed to have been the party that saw us
through independence and republicanism. We are blessed to be a party that has
governed and has overseen all of the wonderful and beautiful things that I have
just told you.

We were blessed to put in place the Constitution of 1962 and 1976.

We established the defence force, the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, which
generates the bulk of income in our country today and much more. The PNM is, as
is well known or ought to be well-known, the chief architect of Trinidad and
Tobago, the master builder of mother Trinidad and Tobago and no one could
dispute that.

10.25 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they feel that if they destroy the PNM they will have their
way, but they have to think again. There are simple things that young persons in
this country take for granted like the Priority Bus Route. Nobody told them that it
was the wisdom of the PNM that had put that there in 1981; introduced maxi-taxis;
revolutionized road transport in 1981 in order to assist the people of Trinidad and
Tobago.

With respect to the Solomon Hochoy Highway, I remember as a child having
to go to Moruga for a vacation and having to use the old road through Couva on
the bus and on the train and, today, San Fernando is 20 minutes away. Many
young persons will not know that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to spend the bulk of my allotment of time dealing
with the prison environment, an area for which I have direct responsibility in the
Ministry of National Security. I propose to spend the remainder of my time
dealing with the constituency that I represent, Laventille East/Morvant and
Laventille generally.

In terms of the prison environment, there are two forces driving the work that
we do in respect of the prison. There was a time when persons saw the prison as a
separate entity but, today, the experts, the academics, the sociologists, the
economists and all those who know, including my friend, the Member for
Barataria/San Juan, understand that what happens or does not happen in the prison
has a direct impact on the whole question of crime, particularly when we talk
about recidivism, a high rate of recidivism which is about 56 per cent from what
the pundits tell us.

There are two forces driving what we are doing in respect of the prison; the
2020 posture we have taken. Simply put, we intend to bring Trinidad and Tobago
up to developed country status; that is to say, the good things, the efficient things, the beautiful things about those societies, we want to inculcate some of them; we want to import some of them; and we want to transpose some of them from those jurisdictions to ours, particularly given our global experience.

The other force that is driving us, in terms of what we are doing in the prison, is the Task Force Report of 2001. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Cabinet had mandated a task force, chaired by Mr. Cipriani Baptiste, to look at the prison environment and everything around it, and to come up with recommendations for its improvement and for a way forward.

I want to demonstrate some of the elements of the task force, and some of the recommendations of the task force. I saw a survey a few days ago in the newspaper dealing with the question of the prison environment, where citizens were asked what they made of the whole programme for rehabilitation and issues about the prison—unfair questions in some cases, because many persons would not have been even aware of the task force, its report and its recommendations. If you were not aware, how could you measure? You really answer these questions on the basis of whim and how you feel, or what was in the environment, particularly when that survey went down shortly after three murder accused escaped from the Golden Grove Prisons. Unfortunately, two are still at large. So, it is in that context this survey was done.

The task force recommended, among other things, that the name of the institution be changed from prisons to correctional facilities, not surprisingly, because the main thrust of the task force report was that we move from the retributive system of justice where punishment was the order of the day; hanging high was the thesis; and it was a matter between the State representing the people and the accused. No one else really got involved.

The task force recommended a restorative justice philosophy which will bring all parties—the criminal, his victims, the society as a whole and the courts—representing the society, the Judiciary—all parties will participate and the objective will not be only punishment. Punishment is an important part of it. It must be so, and I subscribe to that, but beyond punishment, it has to do with healing to bring about some restoration.

We have cases where a man would have committed an offence and would have gone to prison. According to him, he served his term and paid his dues, but when he comes out of prison people are still going to discriminate against him and not employ him; treat him as an outcast. Sometimes, more dangerously, the
family of this victim, not having gone through the healing process; not having embraced their sense of satisfaction, they still want revenge, and we have further murders and so forth taking place as a result. So, there is a lot of healing and learning to take place. That is what the task force is really saying. So, the name change to correctional facilities did not surprise me.

It also recommended that prison industries be set up and made to occupy central space in the revenue-earning capacity of the prison, a recognition that the prisoners should not just sit there and get fat or rot or vegetate or be idle, but rather be put to some productive use. This is quite normal in many institutions around the world; developed world and underdeveloped world. It is happening in Trinidad and Tobago and it has been happening for a long time, but the recommendation is to enhance and improve it.

Another recommendation is that we should put in place a cognitive development programme to encourage offenders to develop the power of thought and analysis. I think that is very important. Very often when you speak to inmates—even the police or friends or family will tell you that when they speak to the young offender, he clearly does not demonstrate the capacity to think, to foresee and to analyse the implications of his conduct. He is impatient, he is uneducated, he is hot-headed; he is stupid; he takes chain-up; and he takes encouragement like a fool, so oftentimes when he gets himself in the hot water he, too, is surprised and cannot explain how he got there. So, a cognitive developmental programme which teaches him to think and to analyse is important. Education is the key.

The task force also recommended that appropriate mechanisms be put in place to encourage inmates to maintain family and community ties, and to avail themselves or rehabilitative activities. These are all in large part for the time being voluntary. If a prisoner does not want to take part in the rehabilitative programmes that are available, he can opt out.

In some jurisdictions, it is mandatory. In some cases, it is imposed on him as an alternative to imprisonment. This touches on the point that the Member for Barataria/San Juan raised when he was making his contribution about contact with family. The task force recognized the worth of keeping the family bonds together, notwithstanding the father or mother would have committed an offence and have been incarcerated. To the extent that you could keep the family together, it would help them as individuals and as a family and, certainly, the society. This is recognition of that.
Of course, there are many other recommendations. I am going to get two or three more. In keeping with the prison transformation thrust, employee behaviour needs to be appropriately shaped through the processes of training, communication and motivation.

You cannot have a proper transformation if the key stakeholder the staff; both the civilian and prison officers who work in the environment do not go through the process of transformation. If they are stuck in the retributive mode, and do not imbibe the restorative philosophy as a main stakeholder, it is destined to fail. Therefore, we recognized that the staff needs to be trained and communication and motivation are both important tools in this respect.

Priority should be given to the introduction or drafting of legislation to provide for the introduction of a parole system. We accepted that and established through Cabinet, a parole introduction committee, headed by a very hard-working Mr. Norton Jack out of the Attorney General’s Department. They spent a considerable amount of time—Master Morrison Alleyne, the Commissioner of Prisons and a number of persons were on that team—about 13 persons—and they came up with a position which has been forwarded to Cabinet. When it comes out of Cabinet, it will most likely go to the Attorney General’s Department for drafting of the legislation. We are on the way to introducing parole as has been recommended by the task force.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you know, parole permits persons who are incarcerated to be released before their due date in accordance with the court’s sentence for incarceration and, in some cases, to be managed outside of the prison walls by the State, sometimes using electronic tags, curfews and all kinds of means, imposing the need for rehabilitation programmes, drug rehabilitation programmes and so forth in lieu of imprisonment. There is recognition that not all persons ought to be incarcerated.

In fact, we believe that prison ought to be reserved for the most dangerous and persistent offenders, and those who are not so categorized can be managed through various means as would be outlined in the parole legislation outside of the prison walls, giving them the benefit of their liberty, contact with the family, and normal development while undergoing a process of rehabilitation. As I said, prison should be reserved for and will certainly be there for the most persistent and the most dangerous offenders.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are some of the recommendations of the task force, and we are pursuing them steadily as we go along. I said that, to cause members
of the national community to become a little more aware as to what was happening. With all this, there is philosophical underpinning, as I said, a movement from the retributive—the old 16th Century retributive system of justice—to a more modern, humane and godly, healing restorative model.

In this task force, the mandate was also to establish a transformation unit, which has been established. All the positions have been filled. At this time, it is led by a director. This unit is situated on Phillip Street in Port of Spain, and there work is going on apace. That transformation unit is responsible for overseeing the transformation process. It is not easy. It has to do with new cultures, new visions, new behaviours, new training methods and a whole lot of things. I am very happy to report that the work is happening.

Through the transformation unit, we have begun to liaise and relate with all the major stakeholders in this whole thing, from the Judiciary to the staff, to the inmates to members of the public, very important stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, like the budget of 2008, the budget that we are now debating, our 2007 to 2008 programme is a continuation or a build-up on our previous work. We are not starting from ground zero. Just like this budget, it is not the first, it is a continuum and a build-up on all that has gone before—a steady building by the master builder, the PNM. What we are doing now in the prison is really a build-up on a lot that was happening before.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me highlight some of this work. Nothing could happen without the human element. The human element is so important. I want to make a quick point.

10.40 p.m.

We have spent millions of dollars to establish around Trinidad and Tobago, a coastal radar system to cover 360 degrees. With that we should be able to see every aircraft or sea craft coming into our space and we should have capacity to intercept—as the Prime Minister has always explained. You know something? The person or persons who are responsible, at any point in time, for monitoring these screens and watching the results of the radar, if they are not loyal to Trinidad and Tobago, if they are not loyal to the police service or the other intelligence agencies, if they are susceptible to bribes and distortion; if they are negligent, just to turn away, could render all of that expenditure valueless.

When you have a prison officer who would make a key or a ladder available to an inmate for his escape, by way of an hypothetical example, then it renders all
the expenditure useless. So, loyalty to the prison service; loyalty to the police service; loyalty to the public service; loyalty to Trinidad and Tobago is critical. These are elements that I have found, from my observation, are waning, diminishing in quantity, and many people are not loyal to anything again. And that is part of the problem with dealing with crime in this country; when people are not loyal to their oath; loyal to their country.

So, that the human element is critical. I heard someone in this debate outlining—I think it was the Members for Siparia and Tabaquite, hapless and unthinking as they are—and talking about a murder here and a murder there; looking at the Prime Minister, Minister Joseph and me, as though we are directly responsible, I know that that is small thinking. You cannot account for the behaviour of a human being—in no circumstance. Very often you are playing catch up; you have to deal with them after the fact. I have to ask my friends on the other side, are you loyal to Trinidad and Tobago? Are you loyal to the people Trinidad and Tobago?

**Dr. Khan:** Where is your tie?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I do not need a tie to demonstrate my loyalty; I am a loyal man. My history in the police service, as an insurance salesman, as a member of the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force, as an attorney-at-law in practice at the Bar and my performance as a Member of Parliament and Minister in the Ministry of National Security is enough to demonstrate my bona fides. [Desk thumping] Nobody must question that.

Success therefore, depends very heavily upon those whose duty it is, public servants, including prison officers who are paid money by taxpayers and demand better working conditions; demand higher salaries; prepared to protest and quarrel over it; success in all that the Government wants to do depends on the work and the effort of those who are paid and sworn to do it.

In talking about human resources, I just want to highlight some of the things we have been doing in terms of the prison environment in relation to human resources; just some of them. Staff training—you see when I am finished here there should be no more ignorance, but there will be, but I want every one to know—all training programmes for staff, induction, developmental and remedial are being undertaken.

Last year, 2006, we spent $1.1 million. Internal courses, $150,000; local external courses and seminars, $776,000 and overseas courses and seminars, $220,000. The Employee Assistance Programme; again this is dealing with employees who
have issues, problems; we expanded the use of the facility and spent quite some money on that as well. Staff health and wellness programmes, spent upwards of $1.9 million in that respect and a further $143,000 recently.

I just went there because you know, very often—and the Member for Barataria/San Juan raised it—many prison officers and many people say: how you want to talk about rehabilitation, you are focusing so much on the inmates, what about the staff. So, I just read that to have some of us know that we are attending to staff training, staff issues, employee assistance programme and that sort of thing.

Staff uniforms, $1.4 million; repairs, maintenance and pest control around the prisons, $540,000; additions to the fleet, we added one pirogue—that is to use down in the Chagaramas area, Carrera—two 50-seater buses; two 30-seater buses; four 15-seater buses, four panel vans; one station wagon; one flatbed truck, six utility vehicles and two ambulances.

I said all of that, because when you see these vehicles pass up and down, people just do not pay attention to them, but all these represent some items of serious expenditure in respect of the prison service and in respect of the Ministry of National Security. So, when our friends on the other side are talking about we spent and we allocated $3 billion to national security and we are not seeing anything for it, they have to understand that a lot of it they cannot see; a lot they would not notice. And when you are talking about training and institutional strengthening, these are intangible expenditures that you cannot see. So it is foolhardy for Members of Parliament or learned people to be talking about we cannot see this and we cannot see that.

I understand fully well what you mean. You want to see suppression in the crimes that are perpetrated against the people of Trinidad and Tobago and we want that too. And in that regard we tell you promptly that there has been a substantial reduction in kidnappings for ransom. One of the most debilitating, threatening and disturbing crimes that we have had to deal with in this country. Substantial reduction and that is because the main players have been put away; they are in prison because of the amendments to the Bail Act and the fact that they would not get any bail. And we had to beg you on occasions to renew the legislation. We had to placate you to protect the people of the country from them. But the evidence would show that since they are on the inside, there has been a substantial reduction in kidnappings for ransom and logic and common sense tells me if they stay there it will continue like this.
I will also tell you, to date we are experiencing a 22 per cent or a 23 per cent reduction in homicides over last year. So the thing is heading south; we are headed in the right direction. All you need to be is a little more patient. Remember, the UNC contributed to some of the crime statistics that you now complain of, but I do not want to go there and if you do not provoke me I would not.

Purchase of office equipment and a host of other things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go through all of them. Infrastructural upgrade, electrical upgrades; you would not see that, but it is expenditure nonetheless; $1.2 million to expand the prison industry in accordance with the recommendation of the Task Force. Furnishings, a brand new administrative complex on the Golden Grove compound; behind prison walls, you would not see that. Built with staff labour; not staff alone, but staff and inmates in keeping with the whole Prison Industry Bill.

I want to tell you that a few months ago we trained about 60 inmates; the same retraining programmes that are available to young people on the outside of the prison, sponsored by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, we put that on inside the prison for the benefit of the inmates. I only say so to demonstrate that the whole rehabilitation project is well on the way. It is happening.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are some of the things that we have been doing in terms of the human element for the staff and even for inmates that people ought to know. Staff concerns, welfare, salaries, terms and conditions are critical issues and they must be adequately addressed. But I say to the prison officers as I say to police officers and to teachers, the prison service, the police service, the teaching service, the nursing service, WASA, T&TEC, is not for the benefit of the employees of those institutions; it is for the benefit of their clients; the users of the service.

**Hon. Member:** Licensing office.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Licensing office too. But some people feel the prison service is for them, so they get hot; most impassioned and they become most emotional, only about their own terms and conditions and on what concern them and little care for those who must benefit from the service. The same with the teaching service and all. This is the reason I was happy to hear the Member for San Fernando West elucidate upon the importance of the question of productivity as it relates to the budget debate, because you can allocate all of the money, which we are blessed with at this time, but if the human element, the conscientiousness, the
focus as a Trinidadian, a citizen, a part of the 580,000 workforce is not there, Trinidad and Tobago wobbles, it suffers.

And as I said so, I just remembered during the period of slavery they were taking the strong able-bodied people out of Africa for about 500 years. That left Africa and its economy very, very, very much in shambles. It took the engine room out of Africa. So, when all other continents of the world were developing naturally, Africa’s growth was thwarted. It was paralyzed because its engine room; its heart blood; its life beat was taken out.

While that was happening to Africa, its power was being sent to Europe, the Caribbean, South America—because there are 150 million Africans down there—Europe and North America. So the economies of these countries, their engine room quadrupled and quintupled while Africa’s growth was stunted. I say so to make the point that when today, 500 years later, the workforce of Trinidad and Tobago goes slack, unproductive, idle, it is imposing on Trinidad and Tobago that which was imposed on Africa involuntarily 500 years ago. [Desk thumping] That is why Bob Marley’s words: “Emancipate yourself from mental slavery” are very relevant.

To get back to the immediate subject before us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the prison is for the inmates and recently, I heard a member of the Prison Service Association almost justify the escape of these inmates and was saddened by it; saying that prison conditions were so bad, he could understand why prisoners would want to escape. When you hear that kind of language coming from an officer of the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service or Police Service, you know something has gone terribly wrong. Because if I were a prisoner I would love to see him by the gate that I was at, because I would feel that he would be of some assistance to me—[Interruption]—because he could understand. I do not see that as justification at all. That brings me back to the question of loyalty to the organization and loyalty to country.

10.55 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the work of the task force and the recommendations are being carried out. We want to see a modern Trinidad and Tobago prison environment; we want to see inmates, people who would have made mistakes when they come into the system; they would have been retrained, retooled, rehabilitated; accept responsibility for their wrong; and go back out on the outside which in most cases happens. It is only in a few cases where persons die in prison, most persons eventually come right back out into the society. So the society has a
vested interest in training them and rehabilitating them and that is the work that we are undertaking in the context of what I said.

So, I want to say to my friend, the Member for Barataria/San Juan again, we understand the importance of the contact with the family and I give him an assurance again, that we are in the process now, getting some architectural drawings to develop a structure because one of the things is, as we move to the modern approaches that we are talking about, we recognize quickly that the existing facilities are inadequate; we need more space. It is on that basis, that we went to Cabinet and Cabinet agreed to make available to the administration of the prisons service, an additional 100 acres of land, former Caroni lands, south of Usine, Ste. Madeline, and in a few days I expect to receive a land-use planning brief in relation to that 100 acres.

So once Cabinet granted that facility to the prison administration, they set about working out a land-use plan, so I expect within a few days to receive this plan which will show what they want to put on that facility. Some of the elements on those facilities will be a female juvenile facility. Today, we have a Youth Training College which hosts young adults, youngsters below the age of 18, but we do not now have an equivalent female facility. So as a result, most of the troublesome or young females who need control or care—and that is decided by the courts, not by the Government—they are made to stay at the St. Jude’s Home. But sometimes at the St. Jude’s Home, they find that the young girls are uncontrollable and too much for them to handle, so they then ask the court to send these extremely difficult youngsters, sometimes, to the female institution where there are adults.

So very unfortunately, because we do not yet have a juvenile female facility, we have had the very unfortunate situation where young girls, although they are kept separate, they are in the wrong place. So as an interim measure, the Commissioner of Prisons and his administration sought and located a house outside of the prison facility which will be used in those cases until this facility for the youngsters is developed on the new lands as I have just described.

Prison industry has to be expanded; we will use some for that. We want in a more humane way,—because I have seen many old men in prison, persons who have been there for 34 years having committed grievous offences including, murder many years ago; past 60, getting old inside of the system and we feel that we should create a low—security dormitory type environment for such persons. So once you get to age 60, 65 and you begin to show signs of—[Interruption]
Ms. Seukeran: Fatigue.

Hon. F. Hinds: Not just fatigue.

Ms. Seukeran: Old age.

Hon. F. Hinds: Yes, once those symptoms of old age begin to set in, we put you in a lower security, more humane kind of environment and those are just two of the elements we want to put there. I will tell you another one.

We want to build a psychiatric hospital and a proper hospital with a psychiatric component on those new lands, so that all prisoners coming into the system will be sent to that facility where they will be clinically assessed for any psychiatric, psychological, or physical issues; they will be dealt with and then sent to the institution that according to the prison administration best suits them. This is all in keeping with the Vision 2020 aspiration and the recommendations of the task force.

Mr. Deputy 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. E. Job-Davis]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I promised—and I keep my promises, just like this Government—that the last few moments in my contribution, I would direct them to my own constituency, of Laventille East/Morvant. And since Laventille is not a place, Laventille is an experience, some of my comments might touch the wider community, but I am sure you will understand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to begin by reading into the record, a letter that I received—and I crave your patience—only two days ago from a young lady and I will call her name, Renee Alves. Like many other children of Laventille and the environs, she attended the Success Laventille Composite School. But Renee Alves was not an ordinary performer, she worked hard; she concentrated on her work and she submitted herself to the discipline of teaching and learning. She made sacrifices and she, along with six others, performed extremely well two years ago in the CXC examination.

It is a school with which both Mrs. James as the representative for Laventille West and I, keep a close relationship because we understand the importance of
that, so we have been working with the school. I myself have been there many, many times doing various things and speaking to the youngsters, so we were absolutely elated when we learnt that these seven children from Success Laventille Composite School performed extremely well in the CXC examinations of that year, performing better than children who went to St. Joseph’s Convent, Fatima College, CIC, SAGHS and Presentation College in some cases. One got seven ones; [Desk thumping] most of the others got six ones and a two; outstanding performances. [Desk thumping]

Mrs. James and I were so moved, we sought the assistance of members of the corporate community and they were quite willing and they made available for the benefit of these seven youngsters, seven laptop computers. When we presented the computers to them, we said to the youngsters, “we do not want you using this to watch no blues movies and going on no dirty website to see no slackness or playing no games; we want you to walk into university two years down the road with your laptop, on your way to stardom and professionalism;” They heeded our call!

I received this letter from Renee Alves and I want read it into the record, if you will permit me.

“Dear Honourable Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds,

Success and onward. That’s what this thank you letter is all about. I am a past pupil of Success Laventille Composite School, class of 2005, to be exact. Have I jogged your memory yet? This is Ms. Renee Alves, one of the seven students who received a Dell Laptop computer for excelling at the 2005 CXC Examinations on your behalf.

I would just like to thank you again on behalf of myself, my fellow students, our parents and the staff of Success Laventille Composite School. In addition, I want to update you on the students’ progress for the past two years including that of myself.

Renee Alves (me), Shekelia Anthony, Jamila Harris and Rene Jackson …”

The daughter of a Major in the Defence Force, I know him well.

“the Bishops girls as we are commonly called, were all successful at our CAPE A’ Level Examinations and are now moving forward to tertiary education. Both Rene Jackson and I were admitted to the University of the West Indies where we will be starting our BSc programmes in Business Studies and Accounting respectfully—”
They deserve an applause and I continue: [Desk thumping]

“Shekelia Anthony will be attending the University of Trinidad and Tobago—”

Established by the PNM, criticized by the UNC and the COP, but established by the PNM, let me continue:

“in the field of civil engineering. Finally, Jamila Harris”

She did the best of them and she, Jamila Harris, won the first place nationwide in all the composite schools around Trinidad and Tobago. And I continue:

“attained a scholarship for the Faculty of Science and Agriculture at the University of the West Indies also. Well that’s the Bishops Girls.”

As they called themselves, having won from that little school in Laventille to Bishop Anstey to do their A’Levels. [Desk thumping]

“Kevon Samuel the only boy of the seven.”

And to see where he lives, at the corner of Stanislaus Street and Eastern Main Road in Laventille, very, very challenging circumstances, but it demonstrates that we can transcend our circumstances, if we think the right thing and do the right thing, and get the right support from our parents and the community. That is how our fore-parents did it. [Desk thumping]

“He also did very well at A’ Level in Presentation College…”

He went to Presentation College in Chaguanas from Laventille.

“and is now moving on to the University of the West Indies in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Akilah Sullivan and Shalisha Campbell attained all passes at A’ Level in St. Francois Girls’ College, but only Akilah Sullivan will be moving on the University of the West Indies. Shalisha Campbell has decided (consciously to do some work) to gain some work experience (before she goes to university next year.)

That’s all of us; we are still together and moving forward together. We say thank you (to you and Mrs. James) from the bottom of our hearts, for your acknowledgements of our successes and we continue to venture on with perseverance and pride coming from Success Laventille to international success. [Desk thumping]

On behalf of our parents and teachers who are also grateful to you for your generosity and concern in our future. They also say thank you.”
I like this line, with a little measure of conceitedness.

“Thank you, Mr. Hinds, (and Mrs. James) and may God continue to bless and enrich your life with joy, prosperity and happiness.” [Desk thumping]

So that you can help others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have observed that there are those who in Laventille wrongly go about saying, with the encouragement of our vicious friends from the other side, some are not here anymore, that PNM did nothing for Laventille.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Laventille and everyone who knows anything about Laventille, will know that what Laventille is today, it was not that 20, 25 and 30 years ago. Where there were ravines, drains and rivers, there are now proper roads. Where there must have been a flat roof, bamboo shed, there is now Despers Pan Theatre. Where there must have been a coconut shed, there is now a Tokyo Pan yard. The very sponsorships of steel bands; it was Dr. Williams in 1971 who went to corporate citizens, WITCO, Carib and other people and asked them to sponsor these steel bands in Laventille; gave them a drum set a well, as trap set as we call it.

There were no houses as they now exist in Dorata Street—housing developments by HDC—housing development in Almond Court; housing development at Ramdial Mahabir; housing development in Troumaque and Coconut Drive. They did not exist 40 years ago. Forty years ago, there were not four major secondary schools in that small block that is Laventille; the Success Laventille Composite School in the west of which I just spoke that these seven children came from. The Malick Secondary School which produced seven of the Soca Warriors players from our national team, they either lived or went to school in Malick.

11.10 p.m.

The Morvant/Laventille Secondary School in the north and, most recently, “Kamla Sec”, which was a box, a warehouse on Sackville Street, was replaced in my constituency, because 80 per cent of the children who she had doomed to go into that warehouse were from my constituency. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, we established another secondary school, the Russell Latapy High School in Morvant Central; so there are four major secondary schools in the neighbourhood.

This was not there 25 years ago, the Laventille Technology and Continuing Education Centre. [Desk thumping] To ensure that those who do not perform like
Jamila Harris, Renee Alves, Renee Jackson, Akila and Kevon Samuel, in academic terms, have an opportunity to go into that technical institution, acquire vocational and technical skills, so they can put a tool bag on their shoulder, put on a hard hat, put on a pair of boots, get their tools together and go anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago, anywhere in the region, anywhere in the world and make good use of their skills and earn a good living.

To make matters better, we have put an institution called Nedco, which they criticized, the National Entrepreneurship Development Company, to ensure that if you had the plan, the dream of starting a small business, and you did not have seed capital, you could go there, make application and get the loan to start your small business; opportunities aplenty.

I know my friend from Fyzabad must be saying, “But Nedco is not situated in Laventille.” He is wrong; there is an office on the Eastern Main Road in Barataria in my constituency.

I spoke of Presentation College, CIC and Bishops, only to not make the point that whatever is available to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago outside of the confines of Laventille is also available to the children of Laventille and Morvant.

**Mr. Sharma:** Good campaign speech; wrong place.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** You could call it campaigning; I call it truth. When truth appears, untruth disappears, for untruth is forever a vanishing thing.

You were telling people for 30 years that nothing had been done in Laventille. We have a few unthinking people in Laventille who are heard to say so as well. I come here tonight to dispel the myth, so that untruth will disappear. [Crosstalk] The real question is: If the PNM did not do anything for Laventille, who did? [Crosstalk] The UNC painted two birds and two tanks. They encouraged drug and gang behaviour in Laventille and ghost gangs. I represented Laventille for my six years in Opposition; $150,000 some men were making in a fortnight. [Crosstalk] They promoted gang warfare in Laventille; that is a fact. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Sharma:** Under the PNM how much were they making, half a million?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That is what you did. They outfitted little proxy armies and individuals with guns and drugs.

**Mr. Sharma:** And you did not go to the police? Shame on you.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The police are tidying it up now; they are doing a great job.
The other myth that I want to deal with very quickly is that Government is about to take "Laventille people land" to give it to Syrians. That is something that has been going around. I saw the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Siparia—according to the old people, "She eh even wash she foot and she jump in." She saw a little protest in Malick. The Housing Development Corporation (HDC) decided that it wanted to ensure that some of the largesse, some of the oil and gas money, trickled down to the little people in my constituency and in East Port of Spain. They went in there with a development plan, not to take anything, but to carry, to bring, to develop houses that were in existence in Malick and my area for the last 40 years; houses that were supposed to be temporary.

I know my friend from Fyzabad must be asking, "If they were temporary, how come people still in there now?" It is not the same persons. Laventille has always been a transient community. The slaves came after emancipation, settled there and as their children evolved, developed and did better, they moved out and other people came in. So that the original owners of the houses would be nowhere there, but new families keep moving on. There are many persons in my constituency who began their lives there and now live outside. I do not live in Laventille, Morvant or Belmont anymore. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Fyzabad, will you please stop disturbing the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. You are carrying on a running commentary.

Hon. F. Hinds: Apart from being shameless, he cannot help it, but I will address you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I saw the Member for Siparia walk into Malick, the people were not understand and she went in to rile up the people, if I may be permitted a colloquialism, to encourage them in acting up in their own disinterest.

I want to make it clear that I have had the benefit of conversation with the Minister of Housing, with the Executive Chairman of the Housing Development Corporation (HDC); I have had the opportunity to read the documents, some of which are before us in this budget debate; I have had an opportunity to speak to and listen to the Prime Minister as he enunciated the plans and policies for the development of East Port of Spain, including the establishment of a sole purpose East Port of Spain Development Company with a mandate to look after every aspect of the community's development, and I am satisfied, as I told a meeting on Sunday in Laventille, that there is no plan to take their lands for any Chinese, Syrian or anybody else for that matter. That is rubbish. It is only about development so that they will be better off. I wanted as well to debunk that myth.
I know time has begun to run; as I approach my conclusion, let me say that my constituency has benefited greatly from good and astute leadership over the last five years. I will be the first to say that much more can be done. I will be the first to say that there are some things I would have liked to see done that are not yet done. I am sufficiently experienced in this to understand again, that it is sometimes a question not of denial or malice, but low productivity, inefficiency in the system and all manner of bureaucracy sometimes.

We cleared the site for the Morvant Health Centre and for the last eight months I have been fighting as MP, representation as important a function as it is, to get this new health centre started on the Lady Young Avenue. It has not yet come to fruition, but I shall continue to fight. [Crosstalk] We began a very important paving work of that whole drain alongside the Beetham from the Morvant Junction to the other junction by the traffic lights, by Citrus Growers Association, the "juice factory" as we call it, and it is not yet complete.

Very frankly, a contract was awarded, the work began, but because of the ill discipline of some persons, impatience on the part of others, the whole thing got bungled. To this day, the project is not yet finished; very sadly.

We have a situation in Laventille, and without pride I must say that many people who want to help Laventille are afraid to go into Laventille; not because of the thousands and the majority of people who are decent, upstanding, law-abiding, cooperative citizens, but because of a few individuals, selfish, ignorant, who threaten and disturb the peace causing mayhem to the point where many of the persons and utilities that want to help, to go in to develop Laventille, are being obstructed by this group of people. So it becomes a national security issue, which we deal with when we have to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, CEPEP has made a major contribution, but you would not think so when you listen to my friend, the Member for Oropouche. I want to quote from the *Hansard* of Friday, May 04, 2007. I went to my constituency earlier this week and I saw the whole area impeccably groomed and clean, as most other parts of the community. CEPEP has been doing an excellent job. If you see the Beetham; David Joseph, Two Js and his team, an excellent job along the Priority Bus Route, all inside. In fact, I think that it is common knowledge that CEPEP has made Trinidad and Tobago a healthier and cleaner place.

I saw a dead dog the other day and I called 800-DART, the Dead Animal Retrieval Programme. [Laughter] They had advertised that within 48 hours they would remove the dog, so I said to the person operating, without identifying
myself, "I expect within two days you should come and move it." She said, "No, Sir, two hours more like it." When I passed back later the morning, the dog was gone.

Mr. Sharma: They are faster than the police!

Hon. F. Hinds: That is a CEPEP outfit. Hear what the Member for Oropouche had to say about CEPEP, as I come to a conclusion. He said and I quote:

"They must work hard and sacrifice. You do not spring them up overnight and tell them to register at a lawyer's office and take a contract and go. That is not the approach and that is a fundamental issue because they were about creating entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, do you know where you can find them..."

Meaning the CEPEP contractors, decent citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, especially from Laventille and Morvant who he never met and does not know, but he has a broad brush:

"Mr. Speaker, do you know where you can find them if you are looking for them? Go to the Magistrates' Court in San Fernando and when they ask: You have bail? They say, "Yes". The bailor has reached. They ask, "What is your job?" "I am a CEPEP contractor." They have been taking bail in the San Fernando Magistrates' Court for charges of possession of firearms and possession of drugs. That is where CEPEP contractors are. They are in the Magistrates' Court taking bail."

You hear that untoward generality. He is associating them with criminals and criminal activity. And he is supposed to be a learned man. He goes on to say:

"So the programme was conceived taxpayers' money to private persons linked to their system who would as a political device to transfer the benefit."

He goes on to say, and this is the most offensive part:

“No, no, no. Mr. Speaker, when you keep corbeaux as pets...”

Referring to the CEPEP contractors, human beings, citizens of this country:

“eventually they will dig out your eye. That is what they did. They kept corbeaux as pets and they dig out their eye and they wonder what happened to crime. Why are people being kidnapped and why is crime taking place?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the genesis of the criminal activity we face.”
He is blaming CEPEP as the genesis of the criminal activities we face.

"They were keeping corbeaux as pets. That is what led them here. If they could have stood firm and said, whether you call yourself a community leader or a pastor, a child or whatever..."

Some rubbish; at the end of the day, he is referring to our brothers and sisters as corbeaux, while we try to give them an opportunity to do business and develop themselves.

I just quoted the Member for the people of Laventille to understand where their interest really lies. When you listen to the Member Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education; when you listen to the Member for Diego Martin East; when you listen to the Member for Arouca North, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources; when you listen to the Member of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, the Minister of Health, talking about C-DAP; when you listen to the Member for St. Ann's East, as he told what he did about social development, and I hope Laventille and Morvant are listening, they will know where barley really grows. If they have any doubts, barley grows on this side, not on that side. All they have for you is to call you corbeaux and castigate and criticize you.

Laventille is a part of Trinidad and Tobago. It will not be left behind in the development; whether it is in community development, education, social services, health, works and transport, Laventille is on the move. I am happy to have represented it for the last five years this term. I am happy to have represented over the duration of the last budget and I look forward to representing for a long time in the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

11.25 p.m.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Hon. Edward Hart): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to take part in this budget debate because I am extremely happy to see the positive transformation that is taking place in the quality of life of the people of Tunapuna and indeed the people of Trinidad and Tobago in general. But the part that touches me most, is the transformation that is taking place with the grass roots, the small man and woman, the single parent, the vulnerable, the specially challenged, and indeed the young people.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know what effect the programmes and projects of this Government have had on the grass roots because they tell me so every day and more importantly, I am a grass root all my life and will remain one.

Let me at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for presenting this love budget. But, Mr. Prime Minister, I wish to add my own take to your statement and that is to say that this is not only a love budget but it is about a party and a Government of love, a caring Government, a party that has covered 50 years and keeps going higher and higher.

We heard some rumblings from the other side, but if they take note of what is happening in this country, the PNM is flying high presently, and as Bob Marley said—it is only a foolish dog that barks at a flying bird.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and distinguished Members of this honourable House, I really embrace this opportunity to contribute to this debate. The budget presented by the hon. Prime Minister is a significant document in the context of national development. It allows Government to share with the national population its policies, programmes and priorities, as well as the resource allocation for its plan of action.

This debate also provides Members of Parliament with an opportunity to highlight issues and concerns related to their constituencies and the nation as a whole. I want to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for presenting a budget which was so comprehensive and incisive that it has stunned many critics into making repetitious and predictable comments which are now very familiar to the ears of the public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my contribution to this debate will therefore be focused on the beneficial results of the mutual relationship between Government and the people which drives the process towards developed country status. Of course, the essence of culture and the representation which I give to my constituency of Tunapuna must be essential elements of my contribution. I would also demonstrate why the word “love” can be aptly associated with this budget and this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I turn to people's participation. The participation of the people and the attention given to their needs have always been a hallmark of a PNM administration. The platform for serving the interest of the people was laid as early as the 1950s and 1960s and it has remained unshakable and firmly entrenched in our history of representation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the strong relationship between this administration and our communities is mainly responsible for the successful implementation of many
community initiatives and social projects. We recognize that as a Government, we cannot function effectively in isolation of the people whom we are elected to serve; hence we encourage the formation and strengthening of community groups and NGOs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these organizations serve as essential vehicles for expressing the needs of communities and for participating in the social service delivery system. Under the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs for example, small grants are provided to assist groups to initiate and manage projects to serve their community for the current fiscal year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Community Development Fund was used to assist with the implementation of 40 community projects ranging from institution strengthening activities such as seminars and training of trainers’ courses to employment generation activities in agriculture and the cottage industry.

The Community Development Division services community organizations of all types throughout the country and promotes leadership training and awareness and sensitization activities to build organizational capacity and to educate and keep members of our communities informed of critical issues relevant to their self-development and that of our nation. In the current fiscal year, 156 leadership management training courses and 336 community-awareness and sensitization courses have been organized so far.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many other programmes in the ministry which contribute to the strengthening of the communication link between Government and the people, and which encourage communities to remain active and to take action to satisfy their needs on their own, or in partnership with Government, the private sector, or other NGOs. The Anaculture Community Concept Programme, the Domestic Violence Drop-in Centres, and the Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programmes are all implemented on the basis of strong community inputs.

Against this background of continuous interaction and partnering between Government and the people, the national consultation on crime and other similar consultations should not be tainted with improper motives. Instead, these consultations should be placed in their proper perspective as part of the established process of Government conversing with citizens on issues which affect their daily lives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now turn to culture. As a nation aspiring to reach developed country status, we must begin to acknowledge and appreciate effective service and performance on a consistent basis. This way of thinking and behaving
must become part of the culture which will take us into the future. In this respect, I wish to emphasize that culture is much more than singing and dancing, acting and other areas of the arts. In a broad sense, culture incorporates all that we contribute as members of our society to our environment. However, culture is not static, it changes over time but we cannot discard the past since it informs the present and it will be an essential point of reference in the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, according to the old adage: If you do not know where you come from, you will not know where you are going.

As a young developing nation, we must therefore preserve and protect the inheritance which our ancestors have left for us, as well as develop and promote our national culture—and I too want to join my colleague to wish everyone a very happy Independence—45 years and still going strong. This nation is blooming right now, despite the fact that a goodly gentleman keeps clamouring to make this country ungovernable, but I want to say that there is an old saying, you cannot keep cork under water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the lead Government agency in the field of culture, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs has initiated appropriate action to safeguard, develop, and promote our national culture inclusive of the contribution of all the ethnic groups which comprise our population.

We at the ministry on a yearly basis give out funding and here are some of the organizations that benefited from the 2006—2007 period: Divali, this is the festival of lights in which we all partake and which I enjoy. On Divali night I like to drive around the countryside and see the deyas blooming, and within recent times, there are so many innovations to see the bamboos with the arches and wheels et cetera if you go to Patna, you will see what I am speaking about.

Divali is really a wonderful festival. It is the time where light triumphs over darkness and where we go to our inner selves and cleanse ourselves and look forward to the New Year. The grant for 2006 was $1,035,000.

**Ms. Seukeran:** I thought they say they did not get anything.

**Hon. E. Hart:** The Chaguaramas Military Historical and Aerospace Museum, subvention 2007, $300,000; the National Dance Association in 2007, $130,000; the National Parang Association, $120,000; National Drama of Trinidad and Tobago, $100,000; Trinidad Theatre Workshop, $30,000; Santa Rosa Carib Community; $30,000; Secondary School Drama Association, $30,000; Secondary
School Sanskritik Sangram Incorporation, $40,000; Trinidad and Tobago Unified Calypsonian Association, $50,000; Trinidad Arts Society, $20,000; Conventional Steelbands Panorama 2007, $1,780,000; Single Pan Steel Pan, $656,000; National Carnival Development Foundation, $150,000; Phagwa, another festival in which I take part. That celebration is held on the grounds across by me and I go over in old clothes now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because when dey spray yuh down with de abeer an ting, it not easy. Last year, I was with the President, Prof. Maxwell Richards and we had a bath. So Phagwa is another one of the festivals, $496,500; Shouter Baptist Liberation Day; $803,000; Indian Arrival Day; $987,000 bearing in mind that my grandfather came from India, yes, the father of my mother. Sorry she is not around now—[Interruption] Yes, she would have been proud, I would have been proud also. This little girl, Calpatia whose name was changed to Thelma Hart who, was an inmate of the St. Mary’s Children Home and had it very tough, but I do not want to elaborate on that. However, yes, I am very proud to be the only dougla in Parliament, one day we might get a holiday, who knows?

11.40 p.m.

Emancipation, another day I look forward to, with my colleague from Laventille East/Morvant; the Member of Parliament for Arima; we are always bedecked in our African garbs going up to the Savannah; it is nice—$795,000. Individual grants, $1,624,161.58, giving you a grand total of $9,176,661.58.

The Member for Fyzabad wanted to know about—

Hon. Member: Where is he?

Hon. E. Hart: I have not seen him. He wanted to know about Ramleela.

I now turn to Museums and Heritage Activities:

In recent years, and in particular over the last year, there continues to be an upsurge of interest by the general population in the area of heritage. I am sorry the Member for Tabaquite is not here. This has been fuelled by the intensified programmes of both the National Museum and the National Trust.

The National Museum has mounted no fewer than 15 temporary exhibitions ranging in themes from the “Story of Divali” to “Local Jewelry”, “Art in Cricket” and “The Slave Trade”. Four of these have been international exhibitions mounted as part of this country’s cultural cooperation with various countries. In addition, the Museum has mounted two overseas exhibits in London and Toronto. I hope the Members on the opposite side could all bring their families to the museum to enjoy these exhibitions.
As a complement to the exhibitions programme, the museum has published five art catalogues that have added to the dearth of materials on local art and artists. In fact, since the development of its publications programme some four years ago, the museum has produced a total of 17 publications that have been distributed to schools and libraries throughout the country. Some of these have also been made available to the general public. Among the publications are two books on the life and work of two of our master artists, Dr. Ralph Baney and Mr. LeRoy Clarke.

Additionally, the museum has been able to satisfy a long wish of the artistic community when it commissioned a reconstruction of the masterwork of visual arts icon Carlisle Chang—a 1962 mural called “The Inherent Nobility of Man”. I had the distinct honour of unveiling that, Mr. Speaker. The work is currently on exhibit at the National Museum and plans are to take it to various locations around the country.

Another important recent acquisition of the museum was a collection of water colours done by the famous 19th Century Trinidad painter Michel Jean Cazabon and his student Margaret Mann. The collection which was repatriated from the United Kingdom is one of the best known collections of paintings of Trinidad and Tobago landscape in the mid-1800s. The collection is currently undergoing conservation treatment and further study in preparation for public presentation later this year.

The National Museum also continues to seek to broaden museum service throughout the country through the provision of both technical and financial support for independent or community museums, such as the Military History Museum, the Indian Caribbean Museum and the Toco Folk Museum. Together with these establishments and the branch museums in the city, the National Museum has mounted a successful community heritage programme where thousands of young persons have given tours, lectures and multi-media presentations of various aspects of our heritage and the importance of preserving that heritage.

This programme was extended to the wider community through the monthly heritage tours of the National Trust. The Trust has been leading the efforts for greater awareness on the part of the general population for the preservation of our built and natural heritage and has already compiled an inventory of over 250 monuments and sites throughout the country. A monthly lecture series and a quarterly newsletter have also been instituted to bolster public awareness.

In addition, the Trust is either directly involved or providing guidance in the restoration of many of our architectural monuments on which the Trust has
developed a travelling exhibition that is currently touring shopping malls in Trinidad and in Tobago.

I am very pleased with the allocation of $269 million in the 2008 Public Sector Investment Programme for conditioned construction and upgrade of cultural facilities. The National Carnival Entertainment Centre (NCEC) has been allocated $50 million for construction. A provision of $190 million under the Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF) has been allocated for the continued construction of the two academies for the performing arts, one in Port of Spain on the Princes Building Grounds and the other at the corner of Todd and Kirton Rienzi Streets in San Fernando.

Another $4.3 million and $5 million will be given for the upgrade to Queen’s Hall in St. Ann’s and Naparima Bowl in San Fernando, respectively. Mr. Speaker, $1 million will be spent on the conversion of the Little Carib Theatre in Woodbrook, into a Black Box Theater, with seating capacity for 250 persons for the hosting of theatrical events. I am sorry Miss Beryl Mc Burnie is not around to see this transformation.

The completion of Pan Trinbago’s headquarters and the establishment and outfitting of a Pan Chroming Factory on the Churchill Roosevelt Highway have been allocated $10 million. For a long time now that was a very unsightly building there and we have already started work to complete the building for the pan men.

Several museums and cultural venues around the country will benefit from $7.1 million in 2008. These museums include: the upgrading of the Sugar Museum; Museum City of San Fernando and community museum projects; the extension of the Royal Victoria Institute that houses the National Museum; the refurbishment of the Military Museum; the establishment of the Virtual Museum; the Steel Pan Museum and the Carnival Museum of the Americas, as well as the establishment of a National Heritage site at Nelson Island. Work has already begun. Also, a transformation of Naipaul House for Mr. Biswas into a museum and an international study library are all in the cultural plan.

I now turn to the performing arts. We continue to excel in the performing arts, both locally and internationally. Within the past month the Youth Quake Cultural Group of Tobago emerged as the overall champion in Dance at an international competition held in Los Angeles, California. So I want to congratulate my colleagues from Tobago.
Additionally, two young artistes have just returned from South Korea after performing with distinction at an international youth festival. What is striking about these performers is that they are all products of the Prime Minister’s Best Village Trophy Competition. Many of our outstanding local artistes have achieved stardom because of their early grounding in this competition, the value of which is not fully appreciated by some members of our society. Could you imagine what would have been the fate of the hundreds of young people who participate in the Best Village Competition if they were not given the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution in the expression of their culture? Drawing from the wisdom of our ancestors, the devil would have found work to occupy their underutilized minds and free time.

The Best Village Competition illustrates the all-embracing nature of culture. It is not only a festival of folk dance, folk songs and folk literature, as many people believe, it promotes positive values and attitudes to our surroundings through the Environmental Sanitation Competition; it facilitates language development through competition in poetry and short stories as well as conversation and community dialogue on topical issues through the Village Chat, involving a gender balance group of five persons representing the youth, the middle aged and the aged.

The Best Village Competition also promotes community solidarity and social cohesion, as was evidenced by the presence of a wide cross-section of our society in large numbers at the Food and Folk Fair at Skinner’s Park, San Fernando last Sunday. Both myself and the representative for Tobago East, also a Minister in the Ministry, were present and we had a wonderful time. It was a pleasure and a great delight to see citizens of different ethnic origins, different classes, different age groups and from different geographical regions, assembled together, conversing and sharing one another’s company as they savored a wide range of local cuisine and enjoyed our rich and diverse folk culture. We had the crab and dumpling from Tobago—

**Mrs. Job-Davis:** Yes, and the oven bread.

**Hon. E. Hart:** Yes, we had the oven bread; we had wines. I even bought a bottle of “pommerac” wine; there was “five fingers” wine; a lady from Penal had a nice mauby; we had roti and choka; we had curried duck. It was wonderful—a blessed land. But we must never forget the UNC, when they were in government, killed and cremated the Best Village. When we returned to office, we had to take the ashes and, like the proverbial phoenix, under the leadership of Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams, the Best Village has risen again. You will be amazed to see the professionalism; the things that take place there.
I have no doubt that our folk festivals and our popular national festivals contribute immensely to the stability and unity which exist in our nation in the midst of our diversity. It is for this reason that Government will continue to expand and increase its resource support to festivals and celebrations, such as Eid ul Fitr, Emancipation, Divali, Indian Arrival Day, Shouter Baptist Liberation Day, and so on. With this Government, no one is left behind. It is really true love. We cater for one and all; everyone. I am sorry the Member for Fyzabad is not around, who always talks about discrimination and alienation.

There is also an urgent demand for increased support for our Carnival industry in light of the transformation which is now taking place. This year we had a very wonderful Carnival, despite the bad advisories. Myself, my ministerial colleague from Tobago East, the Member for Diego Martin West, the Members for Laventille East/Morvant and Arima, we were all in the same band, Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars, chipping on the streets of Port of Spain. We had a wonderful time. The Carnival was incident-free. We had over 50,000 arrivals coming to the Mecca for the greatest show on earth, despite people trying to "bad mouth" this country.

I want to give praise to the protective services, the police and army for the wonderful job that they did during the Carnival celebrations. [Desk thumping] It was an unforgettable one.

11.55 p.m.

For the first time, in many, many years the bands did not parade in the Queen's Park Savannah. We were on the periphery. As Kitchener said: "De road make to walk on Carnival Day". There were no bottlenecks. People were able to parade the streets freely. We really had a wonderful time. More importantly, the band leaders, many of them got away from the beads that we got accustomed to. We saw the traditional costumes. It was a great celebration—Carnival.

More importantly, there was the resurgence of regional carnival. There were 52 such carnivals in different parts of the country. It was launched at Valencia. Valencia was pulsating that day, with the beat of the drums, the steel pan and the long time characters such as the “Moko Jumbie”, the Red Indians, the White Indians, the “Jab Jab”, the “Midnight Robbers” and the “Dame Lorraine”. Everyone was in their splendour. We had the resurgence of the long time traditional characters. Thanks to the Regional Carnival Committee led by Mr. Lennox Toussaint.

With respect to the Panorama, for the first time the finals were held at Skinner Park, San Fernando. It was a magnificent afternoon. The Member for Oropouche said he was there. I always see him at the different cultural shows. He is always
there. He supports. The Panorama was held down there for the first time and it was wonderful and keenly contested as usual. When the dust was settled, the winners were the Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars—the $1 million band. I have given them 45 years out of 70 years. They are still going strong. We had a wonderful Panorama.

After the Panorama there was the calypso. Again, the semi-finals were held at Skinner Park and the finals at the Jean Pierre Complex. This year they experimented with one tune. “Cro Cro” emerged as the champion. That was another nice affair.

We have a Carnival Institute. I know the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre is always very interested in what is happening in culture. She mentioned the Carnival Institute and I would give her a description of the institute under Dr. Pat Bishop:

“Carnival is a vital part of the shared heritage of Trinidad and Tobago. It reflects and predicts how the society sees itself and wishes to be perceived. In this post-colonial period of our history, matters of identity loom increasingly large on the national agenda and culture is at the heart of this enquiry.

The Carnival Institute of Trinidad and Tobago is a division of the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago. Its primary function is to collect and conserve all forms of information in response to some of the crucial questions that are relevant to the many festivals which occur in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Carnival Institute of Trinidad and Tobago aims to:

- Interpret all forms of visual or aural data that affects and/or influences the festivals within Trinidad and Tobago.
- Provide an opportunity for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to have a clearer understanding of the society's cultural richness and its complexities.
- To respond to the public's request for information on all kinds of traditional media as well as contemporary technology.
- To install travelling and fixed exhibitions, seminars and discussions on areas within the spectrum of Carnival, and all other forms of secular and sacred festival which are indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago.

The collection includes:

Oral histories

Music and information about music makers
Musical instruments

Costumes (traditional and contemporary)

Database of costume designers and costume makers

Other forms of cultural and festival arts processes.”

Dr. Pat Bishop and her staff are doing a wonderful job there.

We have the National Steel Symphony Orchestra, which is coming on stream. Auditions have already been held and they are procuring the instruments. I would talk about that later.

There is the Parang, with the headquarters at Arima. What is nice about the Parang now is that there are many school bands. Both secondary and primary schools have taken up this art form. At Christmas, there is always joyous and happy music. Parang is one of the festivals where there are no incidents.

There is the tassa. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. On the other side we hear a lot of talk that we are against the tassa and all sorts of thing.

The Best Village Competition, which was concluded, was won by Dragon Boys of Barrackpore and next month, they would be leaving these shores.

Last year the Boodoosingh Tassa Drummers won and we sent them to the United Kingdom.

Last Saturday there was heavy rainfall in the East/West Corridor and I journeyed to Aranguez, despite the rainfall. I waded through the mud to enjoy the pulsating rhythm of the tassa drums but I did not see anyone from that side. The one from Fyzabad who talks so much does not go anywhere. I do not see him. I am being honest.

In the Chutney art form, Mr. George Singh held the finals at Skinner Park and we paid all the prize money of $200,000 on Saturday night. That was the National Tassa Islandwide Competition. There is nothing about discrimination with us. We really see about all. No one is left behind.

I now turn to Vision 2020 Developmental Pillar—Developing Innovative People. In the operational plan of Vision 2020, culture has been categorized under the developmental pillar of developing innovative people. This categorization truly expresses the natural potential of our people. There is no doubt that the people of this country are potentially creative and innovative. Through Vision 2020, the Government is therefore providing the developmental framework for
fertilizing, enhancing and facilitating the continuous development of the creative essence of members of our population, irrespective of age, ethnicity, social class, gender or race.

Mr. Speaker, the steel pan, calypso and chutney are all products of the creative energy of members of our population. Everyone is now very proud of our world famous steel pan. My friend from Pointe-a-Pierre expressed how sad she was that the logo of the steel pan has been removed from the Caribbean Airlines plane. She spoke about it and I know how she feels about it. She is really a supporter of the art form.

This instrument was created by simple people from the communities who had to withstand negative stereotyping and treatment as outcasts in order to keep the steelband music alive. I remember the Mighty Sparrow singing a calypso in those days. I think I could quote two lines from it. The Mighty Sparrow sang: “If yuh sister talk to ah steelband man, de family want tu break she han, put she out, break up every teeth in she mouth. Pass yuh outcast.”

Mr. Valley: That is the chorus. Quote two lines before the chorus.

Hon. E. Hart: That is the chorus.

Mr. Valley: I want you to quote two lines from the song itself rather than the chorus.

Hon. E. Hart: Not the song, the verse. “Calypsonians really ketch hell for ah long time.”

Mr. Valley: Next one.

Hon. E. Hart: Mr. Speaker, do you know on the law books of Trinidad and Tobago, the steel pan was classified as a noisy instrument? Now these same simple people perform to deafening applause at the major concert halls all over the world.

Steelband music is also so well accepted and played internationally that others are now claiming ownership of the product of our creativity. There are steelbands in Japan, Sweden, Switzerland and South Africa. They are catching like wildfire all over the place.

Happily, with the direct intervention of the hon. Prime Minister and the combined work of Professors Copeland and Imbert and their team, we have now taken the steel pan to a new level of innovation, with the creation of a new family of steel pan, which is called the G pan, which would be patented and given our
official stamp of ownership. We will therefore be able to present to the world, our National Symphony Steel Orchestra playing instruments which cannot be challenged by anyone.

In addition to the creating and developing of the steel pan, we will continue to train our artistes and citizens in general to reach the highest levels of excellence in the various art forms.

In 2004, the Division of Culture of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs organized and implemented the Open School for the Arts Programme, which provided an opportunity for young talented and artistic members of the society to explore and develop their creative abilities.

In 2006, the programme evolved into a new cultural training programme, the Community Cultural Training Programme, which catered for a wide cross section of participants reaching into the communities and embracing its members of ages ranging from 18 to 35 years.

Presently, the training programme has trained more than 3,000 participants. Besides providing opportunities for training and development in all areas of the arts, we have provided opportunities for comparing and measuring our standards with that of other countries.

During the past two months, we have hosted cultural groups from the People's Republic of China and South Korea. Our artistes also performed with distinction at functions, organized in honour of the President of Uganda, who visited our country during the Emancipation celebrations.

At the level of policy and regional relationship, we hosted the meeting of the 15th Forum of Ministers of Culture and Officials in charge of Cultural Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean. We have also completed the draft of our National Culture Policy which will follow the normal trail of consultations with the approval of Cabinet.

In the area of physical infrastructure, we are ensuring that world class facilities are provided for our artistes to explore the full extent of their creative and innovative potential.

In this regard, we have completed Phase II of the refurbishment of Queen's Hall. The work completed included the improvement of the parking facilities and the security system, the completion of the construction of a box office and VIP reception centre, the landscaping of the compound and the launch of a computer website.
Upscale facilities for training and development activities are also being provided.

Two academies for the performing arts are currently being constructed, one in Port of Spain and the other in San Fernando. When completed, both academies will have state-of-the-art equipment and facilities to allow our artistes to be exposed to training under conditions, which will be comparable to developed world countries.

Think about when we have these academies and the National Symphony Orchestra and the big bands get there, unlike at the Jean Pierre Complex. This place would be built with nice acoustics for music. We hardly talk music in this House, so permit me to give a few quotes here.

12.10 a.m

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you had bands performing tunes like the Fourth Movement of the Fifth Symphony, The Finale by Tchaikovsky; Carnival Romain by Berlioz; and The Moldau by Smethana. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these classical tunes tell a story, and this song is about a river flowing through Europe and all the cans coming down. One could actually hear it during the course of the tune. There was the Battered Bride and Capriccio Italian, another Tchaikovsky tune.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. E. Hart: Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for extending my time. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot help but mention our local composers like Len Boogsie Sharpe who composed In the Rain Forest and Dance of the Douens. We also have a humble gentleman, Dr. Jit Samaroo from Lopinot; composer, player, and arranger who wrote the beautiful song, the Song of Lopinot. As we know, Ray Holman is the first to really write music for the steel pan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the steel pan is a big industry, and I am going to touch on it a little. The steel pan industry has the potential for probably the highest growth outside of the energy sector. People are talking about the number of years we have remaining for gas and oil, but they should have no fear because we have other things that we could count on. With the steel pan, the industry’s advantage
is that it is labour intensive in comparison to all others, a foreign exchange earner and all inputs: raw materials, basic ingredients, technology and expertise are available locally.

We had some cultural contingents that went out on trade missions led by the very distinguished Minister of Trade and Industry. My information is that the Desperados Steel Orchestra had people eating out of their hands in China and Korea. [Desk thumping] The Member could attest to that. [Desk thumping]

At this point, I want to talk about the beautiful constituency of Tunapuna which I represent and which is multiracial, multiethnic and multireligious. Tunapana celebrated as a town over a hundred years ago, and it is bursting at its seams now. On any given day, if one drives through Tunapuna, one can hardly see room on the Eastern Main Road for any business. There are business places galore. There are prestige schools, churches, the mandirs and mosques. We are really poised for borough status. Under the watchful eyes of the People’s National Movement, we have seen considerable growth in Tunapuna.

We have been hearing many things in this House about CEPEP, and I must touch a little on this programme that is so maligned at times in this House. CEPEP must be commended, especially when you consider that it involves taking people who otherwise would be languishing as the forgotten; the ones who fell through the social cracks—the human beings who would be regarded merely as statistics—and you engage them in an activity that serves not only to beautify and enhance the environment but, at the same time, provide them with a sense of self-worth, then what you have done is to create a platform for them to soar upwards and attain heights that they probably never dreamed they could have attained before.

I can tell you without any fear of being contradicted that many of the CEPEP workers in Tunapuna have, indeed, soared and have certainly done so on their own by seeking out their own avenues and opportunities for training, investing in their own development and even by setting aside portions of their minimum wage.

From the onset, the CEPEP programme was described as make-work, painting stones and work that is not sustainable. I wish to take issue with this view. How can people be so critical of a programme geared to clean up, beautify and enhance the environment? This is a country in which people litter almost as a matter of course. We dump garbage everywhere in the rivers, at the street corners, over the wall into the empty lot of land next door. When our pets die we no longer bury them in our backyards, but instead we put the carcasses in bags and dump them
anywhere as long as we are not seen. After people hold their “big-shot” lavish parties at home, they dump the shells of the jumbo-shrimps off the highways. Similarly, there is evidence of the poultry industry, guts and feathers all over the countryside. In such a context, is cleaning make-work? Is a clean environment not a necessity for a healthy nation?

The very people who hold the nonsense position that cleaning and beautifying is make-work are the very ones who will go on vacation to London and have pictures of themselves taken smiling happily outside Buckingham Palace among the flower-beds without realizing that the gardeners there do exactly the same thing that the CEPEP workers are doing here. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Dr. Ralph Henry who in 2004 undertook a study commissioned by the Inter-American Development Bank entitled “Trinidad and Tobago Poverty Reduction and Social Development” cited the CEPEP programme as a key factor in poverty alleviation in Trinidad and Tobago, suggesting that the programme provides employment opportunities for persons who are unable to find work elsewhere due to the lack of skills and qualifications, and that it contributed to the environmental sanitation including the improvement of beaches, beautification of public thoroughfares and infrastructural maintenance. It is not a make-work scheme. Most of all, Dr. Henry complimented the CEPEP programme for the fact that the selected contractors are obliged to work in the communities in which they live and to employ persons from the very communities. I meet with my contractors on a regular basis, and we hold meetings and plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to refer to the Agronomics Inc. They operate up in the fertile Caura Valley. I just want to give you a report on the introduction of Agronomics Inc. led by Dr. Shango A. Alamu who has a PhD in agriculture. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that you are fond of agriculture, so I am going to leave you with a little quote on agriculture.

“Agriculture is the noblest of all alchemy for it turns earth and even manure into gold conferring upon its cultivator, the additional reward of health.”

That was Paul Chatfield, but hear what Cicero had to say:

“For of all gainful professions nothing is better, nothing more pleasing, nothing more delightful, nothing better becomes a well-bread man than agriculture.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say this to let you know that in Caura we have the Agronomics Inc people performing.
The community-based environmental enhancement concept was welcomed by the residents of the Caura Valley and is probably one of the few remaining river basin communities that are relatively unspoilt ecologically. Thus, we saw this initiative as an opportunity to secure employment with some degree of permanence and to maintain and even enhance our ecological stability.

The major economic activity in the valley is agriculture and thus naturally CEPEP provided a window for taking agricultural production to a higher level also embracing the environmental stability concept. The Caura Valley Farmers Association was already exploring the possibility of pursuing an Ecological Crop Management Approach, the focus of which is the production of agricultural commodities utilizing limited amounts of pesticides and mineral fertilizers towards the production of safe food. Thus in collaboration with a number of other GO and NGO an appropriate research programme was developed.

Thus with the advent of CEPEP, providing labour and funding, a genuine community based integrated development programme was initiated in the Caura Valley.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here are the programme components: agriculture, plant propagation; crop production, compost manufacture, farmer field school/ecological crop management, mountain trail development and maintenance, eco-park development, river guardianship, road maintenance and enhancement, voluntary environmental maintenance initiatives and empowerment programme. These are the things the workers are doing up in the Caura Valley. Time will not permit me to say in detail what is happening, but a tremendous amount of work is going on up in Caura Valley.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is another CEPEP contractor, Effective Environmental Systems Company Limited and their programmes are set out. The employees at Effective Environmental Systems Company Limited have been receiving training in a number of relevant areas such as safety and health, landscape management, small engine repair, supervisory management, human resource management and personal development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they started in 2003; not last week or last month. These are some of the certificates that they have received: Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, Extension Training and Information Services Division, Farmers’ Training Centre, Introduction to Landscape Management; Introduction to Landscaping.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a young lady, Jocelyn Earl, who was a successful participant of a personal development training course in 2005 at the School of Social Work, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada. So, when people are talking about a training component in CEPEP and so forth, this has been happening a long time in Tunapuna. I am extremely proud of them and I wish them well. I know that they will continue to go from strength to strength.

The CEPEP programme is here to stay. This programme has been doing tremendous work in terms of keeping this country so beautiful. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you travel to the north coast, you are going to see evidence of work going on. If you go to Point Fortin you are going to see the beautiful landscaping and so forth. On the Priority Bus Route near to Beetham there is glaring evidence of the work being carried out there.

I want to publicly commend the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment for the programmes that have been going on in Tunapuna. The first programme that comes to mind is the Street Lighting Programme. All the streets in Tunapuna are well lit. There is hardly a dark spot. Before Carnival, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment ensured that every pan yard was lit in this country. More importantly, other than lighting up the streets, they have decided to light up recreation grounds. As we speak, if you drive past Aranguez or the Eddie Hart Ground, you are going to see a number of young persons participating out there in small goals and playing wind ball cricket and so forth. This is not just about lighting up grounds, but it is much more than that.

The programme is about developing people. The programme does not only provide opportunities for entertainment and recreation, but this programme is a very critical aspect of the promotion of wellness and good health. We want people to live long lives. There is where the love is.

12.25 a.m.

We have reduced the expenditure with respect to people who cannot afford to go to a gym. On mornings people come out there to exercise, they socialize and they make friends. Today, browsing through the Express, I saw two articles that attracted me. One was the Minister of Social Development, where we quoted some statistics that women are living longer than men; the male, 78 years and the women, 81 years. Well we have decided with the jogging track there, that people get out there and they exercise. The other article on page 41 of the Express ties in with that. It says:

“Americans fatter than ever; obesity rate is up.”
Appropriation Bill (Budget)

Tuesday, August 28, 2007

[HON. E. HART]

Poor nutrition and physical inactivity are robbing America of our health and productivity.”

A serious statement. So said Jeff Levi of Non-profit Trust. So, we have people collapsing in their twenties, thirties, heart attacks and so on. So we have to put the emphasis on getting out there and exercising, keeping yourself fit, slim, trim and nice. So, I really want to commend the Minister of Public Utilities for lighting up the facilities.

We also hear a lot of talk, the Member for Caroni Central who was a former Minister of Health; they keep knocking the CDAP. The people in the Tunapuna constituency welcome the programme. They are very happy, because this is a programme that takes care of about 11 ailments: hypertension, diabetes where people have to take insulin, high cholesterol and so on. It is a wonderful programme. The drugs that are being served—you hear them talk about generic—are of international standards. Not because something is free means it is not good. The drugs are internationally recognized and registered. So we in Tunapuna are very happy with the CDAP, a wonderful programme.

The people in Tunapuna are also happy with the senior citizens grant; the increase as a national insurance and so on. This is really a budget of love and caring for the people. A key tool in the transformation process is education. We heard the Minister here not so long ago and we are happy that we are getting a pre-school. Presently, on the Tacarigua Community Centre grounds, a wonderful preschool there.

This pre-school is different to long ago when we had to go to school early in a garage or in a gallery as the case may be. I mean it served us in good stead, but now it is a far different cry. This is a modern facility catering for 50 students. This pre-school would cater for the physically challenged and consist of a computer area, a kitchen, a sick bay, office accommodation, television area with DVD for teaching and an area for art. This is really, really progress that is taking place in the constituency.

Last Wednesday we turned the sod for, well we call it—not community centres anymore—a regional complex. It is unlike what was built 20 years ago, where a little building that was hot and stuffy, with a little toilet, as the case may be. Now it is a nice two-storey building there, where you have an elevator, where the physically challenged could use it. You have meeting rooms and computer rooms, where 15 people at a time could sit there. It is really, really wonderful. So we are happy for the community centre.
Roads, I want to say thanks to the Minister of Works because so many roads have been paved and as we speak now, they are at work at Mountain View. So we are very happy with that also. [Interuption] Well he might come by you a little later. The upgrading of the water supply, that is another thing. Residents of Bassanta Trace, St. John Road, Mohammed Trace, Henry Pierre Terrace, Noel Trace Extension, all have benefited. As a matter of fact, over 8,000 people, all are benefitting from a supply of pipe borne water since I have been representing the constituency. So, again we are very happy about that.

Then housing in Tunapuna. We have Goya Road, where we gave out the keys a couple weeks ago where 160 families have received their keys. As a matter of fact, I want to thank the Minister for inviting me to some of the keys ceremonies. I went to Ibis Gardens, somewhere in Central, then I went to Oropune. When you actually see the recipients walking up to receive their keys, you see the emotion, coupled with the joy, to know for the first time that you have the keys to your own home. Sometimes they might have been living in a little run down place, cramped surroundings and thing. The houses that we are building, if anyone wants they could take a drive; just drive up Goya Road, La Gloria and you will feel like you are in Miami; the layout is so beautiful.

As I speak, we are getting ready to deliver the keys, then lower down, Fidelis Heights, opposite the Hugh Wooding Law School. So, work is in progress and this programme that we have here is the envy of many. It is the best housing programme in the Caribbean. I say that without fear of conviction. Even Latin America or Central America would really like to be part and parcel of a programme like that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many minutes do I have again, if I can ask?

**Mr. Valley:** Two minutes. [Laughter]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Eight minutes.

**Hon. E. Hart:** That is not true, that is not true. Eight minutes. All right, all right, I would not take the whole eight minutes. What I want to say, I feel very good with the support that I got in the House with my colleagues here and out the House with the constituents in Tunapuna. Tunapuna is a place that has produced people like Winifred Atwell, Learie Constantine, CLR James, people of the calibre.

**Mrs. Job-Davis:** And Eddie Hart.
Hon. E. Hart: And Eddie Hart, yes. [Laughter] And we are working religiously to continue to produce other people—we must not forget the deceased Lloyd Best, Tunapuna.

Right now, as I said, the whole landscape of Tunapuna is changing and we are happy about that. We have other things to do and right now the police station is 90 per cent complete. When we look up St. John’s Road, a multi-purpose court, by next month we are going to open it. It has a nice pavilion, changing rooms for males and females and all this sort of thing.

Anywhere you turn in Tunapuna something is happening. So, I want to say thanks to all the different Ministers who visited Tunapuna and assisted me with my pleas and cries, to ensure that Tunapuna benefits from all that we have to offer.

In conclusion, all I want to say to the Members—none of them are here. Again, blatant disrespect because a budget debate is a serious thing and I thought at least a couple of them could have stayed. But other than that, they are thinking about the election. I think the COP went to Chinapoo tonight to say what, I do not know. That is a place they would lose bad, bad, bad with thousands of voters; they gone there. The UNC is in disarray.

The Independent, my partner, Dr. Khan, stayed here tonight. His main thing was to see if he could get them to join back and all kind of foolishness. Why you have to join back? The PNM is 50 years and we stand alone; we win alone; we lose alone. We are the only party that has produced a candidate in every constituency, every time. We do not have to join with anybody. So this stupidness about UNC Alliance; both of them are the same; same khaki pants but different loops. So, whether they join back or not, the results are going to be the same. All who are talking across there about farewell and this and that.

Let me tell you something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this farewell thing they are talking about. Whoever go and whoever stay, the PNM would definitely beat them bad, bad, bad. And my grandmother always told me that plenty cocks crow early on a morning, but everybody does not wake up at the same time. Many of “dem fellas” dreaming; talking about when they get into government. They are going to be over there for a long time. They are so irresponsible; a budget debate going on. Last year, they messed up things so they could not speak. Now this year, they are just walking out—it is a waste of time.

Anyway, having said that, all I could say at this point in time, the budget is a wonderful budget. We in Tunapuna really appreciate what is on the table. The
Tunapunians have always supported People’s National Movement and they will continue to support the People’s National Movement.

All I want to say in conclusion, as the representative, to let my constituents know that divine love comes through giving and in no other way. I will close by just saying to my constituents, if loving you is wrong, I do not want to be right.

**The Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stanford Callender):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At this time, early in the morning, on Wednesday, August 29, it is not my intention to keep you unduly long, neither the staff of this Parliament.

I am happy to make my contribution in this budget debate on the Bill entitled an Act to provide for the Service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September, 2008. I also at this stage want to take the opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the staff of the Ministry of Finance, for a job well done.

I listened to my colleague, the Member for Tobago East, as she spoke with passion, and she did say that both of us speak on behalf of the people of Tobago and that is well said and well accepted. As we come almost to the close of this morning’s proceedings, hoping to start a little later for the conclusion of this debate; it is with mixed feelings I stand this morning. It is a feeling of joy and optimism, that this PNM administration is poised to take us to our vision of developed country status by 2020, if not before. While at same time, being proud to be part of this administration that has contributed to the development momentum for the people of Tobago over the past six years, and that is the joy I feel.

There is a feeling of sadness when you listened to most of the contributions of Members on the opposite side. But more so disappointed by the contribution of two leaders: the Leader of the Opposition, Member for Siparia, as a leader of this country in waiting that spent over three hours in a budget debate, with respect to the future of Trinidad and Tobago and could not find a paragraph to speak on behalf of the people of Tobago. And that is why the Members of Tobago East and West are here to speak on behalf of the people of Tobago. [Desk thumping]

I am equally disappointed—not because his time was shorter—by the Leader of the Congress of the People, who had 75 minutes and the only comment he made about Tobago is that with a new Tobago House of Assembly they would have control over the police.
Now you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a few weeks ago in this very House, we debated the Amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act to extend the life of the municipal corporations by one year. And the Member for St. Augustine, the Leader of the COP, joined the debate and used the opportunity to talk about a situation in Tobago, which prompted me to intervene because I could not see the relevance of Tobago in municipal corporations, bearing in mind that Tobago is not a local government body.

And it leaves me to wonder whether or not any of the leaders in waiting on the other side has any interest in the welfare of the people of Tobago.

**12.40 a.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when my colleague, the Member for Tobago East made her contribution, she talked about some of the developments in Tobago that we are currently enjoying, and my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin East made the comment, “Thank God, for the PNM” or “You should thank the PNM”, and I do not know if he understands the significance of that comment.

**Mr. Imbert:** Of course.

**Hon. S. Calendar:** I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the significant strides made by Tobago over the past six years have come about because of the mutually respected, beneficial relationship between the PNM Tobago House of Assembly and the PNM Central Government and that is what most of our detractors, those recycled politicians in Tobago, cannot deal with. With the advent of the PNM in Tobago—prior to 2000, the last time the PNM won a seat in the Parliament of this country in Tobago was due to the “no vote” campaign in 1971. Therefore, in the 2000 election it was the first time that the PNM was able to make any inroads in the general election in Tobago.

By 2001, we captured both seats and I knew then, that the only way Tobago’s development could advance, was to make sure we have in this country, a PNM administration in Tobago and a PNM Central Government in Trinidad and Tobago.

**[Desk thumping]**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I recall after the general election in 2000, in an interview with a local media house, that I said that the time will come when the role of the parliamentary representatives of Tobago will have to be reviewed, and my colleague, the Member for Tobago East spoke about it. You see, I have been involved in politics for some time. I was a Member of the last Tobago County Council between 1977 and 1980, a Member of the Tobago House of Assembly
between 1980 and 1984, and therefore, I understood the struggle and the aspirations of the people of Tobago with the move for internal self-government which ended with the creation and the establishment of that institution, called the Tobago House of Assembly.

Those who were the advocates of that struggle, did so, and did so in the interest of the people of Tobago, because it was felt that Tobago was being deprived, and therefore, the people of Tobago must be given greater authority in terms of the day-to-day activity for people of Tobago. So it was like a wave. But, what you find happening today, is that while those who were advocating that change, none of them took time off to recognize that when you created that institution called the Tobago House of Assembly with that authority, without looking at the role of Members of Parliament in that scenario, you would be in trouble.

Therefore, the Member for Tobago East said, we all now look forward to the whole question of constitutional reform and the changes in the Constitution that will give some meaningful effect. After the 2000 general election I spent a few months on that side before the general election of 2001—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: [Inaudible]

Hon. S. Callender: When I came on this side—and I knew after the 2000 general election that my role as MP for Tobago West would have been challenging, unless I was able to convinced the people of Tobago, to change the status quo, we must have a PNM Tobago House of Assembly and a PNM in the government of this country, and therefore, I share some of the concerns that she shares. But I think my experience in the politics has served me in good stead because I knew from early, that the only way you can be effective as a Member of Parliament in Tobago today, given the status of the Tobago House of Assembly, that institution that we created, was to establish a good working relationship with the Tobago House of Assembly. While it was possible with a PNM controlled Tobago House of Assembly, I had nightmares, figuring out how to treat with Tobago House of Assembly that was opposed to the P.N.M.

So to understand where we are today, we just have to cast our minds back to Tobago before 2001, and that is after 20 years when all types of political permutations were attempted involving Tobago. Many of those on the other side who pretend to be friends of Tobago, and for those recycled politicians in Tobago, a few loud voices in Tobago that are seeking to do what they never did when they
had an opportunity to do it, you understand the pressures that they will attempt to put on my colleague and me, in terms of representation in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

But I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that all those loud voices when they sat in the Parliament of this country, sat in the Parliament of this country as Opposition MPs. [Desk thumping] If you trace their performance and the records, when they had one opportunity to fix everything in this country, they did absolutely nothing because among the different political permutations, we had the likes of the DAC; the ACDC/DLP; we had the NAR in Trinidad with an NAR in Tobago; we had an NAR Central Government in Trinidad and Tobago and an NAR Tobago House of Assembly; and we all remember 33/3. This country will never, ever, see that kind of arithmetic in an election result—not 33/3.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Not again.

Hon. S. Callender: Therefore, those who are advocating some special type of constitution for Tobago in the arrangement with Trinidad and Tobago had an opportunity to do so. They had the constitutional majority, and they had the status, but they did absolutely nothing. Then we had a situation when the two Tobago seats gave an opportunity in 1995 for the UNC to enter the corridors of governance in this country. What did the people of Tobago benefited?

Hon. Member: Nothing!

Hon. S. Callender: Pain and suffering.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Oh, yes.

Hon. S. Callender: Pain and suffering. So therefore, when this present combination of a PNM Government and a PNM Tobago House of Assembly came into office in 2001, what did we meet? We met a Tobago with all that I have said before, with a—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: Ring bang.

Hon. S. Callender: Besides Ring Bang, and a Ring Bang statue—we met a Tobago with an unemployment rate in excess of 13 per cent.

Mr. Imbert: Wow!

Hon. S. Callender: The Member for Tabaquite is noted for saying how tourism is in crisis, and he is right because when we came into office, we met a tourism in Tobago that was in crisis, with an occupancy rate of below 17 per cent.
There was absolutely no business sector because businessmen were very cautious and pessimistic. The climate was bad and unpredictable. We met a physical infrastructure that was almost in shambles. We met dilapidated primary schools and inadequate secondary school places in Tobago. There was a general feeling of desperation and anger.

When we came into office, it was a time when to travel between Trinidad and Tobago on the coastal steamer took about seven hours, in dehumanizing condition. We met an air bridge that was struggling and was taking at that time approximately 300,000 passengers a year. It was a time when the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago was at its lowest ebb and it was happening at a time as I said, when the two Tobago seats at that time contributed to the governance of this country.

When the PNM came into office, working in conjunction with a PNM central government, we started to change things around. Every primary school in Tobago and secondary schools were refurbished. During this six-year period, we saw the establishment and opening of four secondary schools in Tobago: three government secondary schools and one government-assisted secondary school. My colleague named the schools: Mason Hall, Goodwood, Speyside High, and the Pentecostal Light and Life. She spoke about the construction of new primary schools. We refurbished almost every community centre in Tobago and built new ones. We re-established the T&TEC Trade School, now at Signal Hill, with the assistance of the Minister of Public Utilities.

We reintroduced training at the Roxborough and Bon Accord Trade Centre. We built a number of hard courts in Tobago, and of course, we improved the sea bridge and the air bridge in Tobago. We dealt with a number of infrastructural developments. My colleague spoke about the Roxborough-Charlotteville link road, with the total rehabilitation and the resurfacing of the Northside Road from Parlatuvier; Des Vignes Road; the Windward Road from Betsy’s Hope to Speyside, Store Bay local road, Sherwood Park, Caledonia Road; Fort Granby; Top Hill, Pembroke, Buccoo Main Road, the road between Black Rock and Plymouth, the Northside Road from Rockly Vale to Harmony Hall, among other infrastructural developments.

My colleague from Tobago East spoke about this administration’s improved budgetary allocations over the six years while in governance, and during that time, it is important to note as we reached the stage of fiscal 2007/2008, the Tobago House of Assembly House is scheduled to receive budgetary allocations in the order of $2,238,000 comprising an allocation of $1,398,000 for recurrent
expenses; $362 million for development programme expenditure and a further $47,8 million to provide for heads of capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure for and on behalf of the people of Tobago.

Notwithstanding the Tobago House of Assembly’s allocation is somewhere within 5.3 per cent of the national budget, there is a group of chorus singers in Tobago called the DRC Chorus Group, that is the Dispute Resolution Commission, who looks to examine every budgetary allocation in Tobago, to make sure that it falls within the range of something that is called the DRC. But under this administration, we do not place emphasis on the DRC, we place emphasis on Tobago’s development and place the resources where they should lie. Therefore, this year’s allocation for those chorus singers from the DRC, falls well within the recommendation of the Dispute Resolution Commission. In addition to which, the Central Administration Office in Tobago where I operate from, there is an allocation in excess of $18.5 million for recurrent services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the DRC Chorus Group is not saying and will not say—therefore it is important for me to say—is that we have benefited as a people from numerous development programmes through a meaningful and mutually beneficial relationship between the Central Government and the Tobago House of Assembly.

12.55 a.m.

So when for example, negotiations for the purchase of Pigeon Point was completed, the Central Government provided the funds for the purchase. That has nothing to do with the DRC but when we speak—and my colleague the Member for Tobago East made the point that as representatives from Tobago in this Parliament, with this present administration, we do not have to shout. You are hearing no shouting from Tobago because all it requires is a telephone call and that is the level of cooperation and understanding we have. That is the love, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [Desk thumping]

When the Tobago House of Assembly moved to purchase Courland Estate, they talked about sell out, when you talk to a Minister they say you are selling out because in their narrow mindedness they did not recognize that what we were doing was working in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago. So when the Tobago House of Assembly moved to purchase Courland Estate, it was the Government that provided the funds to do so. When the Tobago House of Assembly recommended to the Central Government that the fast ferry was the way to go, the Government acceded to that request and recommendation and, as my colleague
said before purchase, went into a lease arrangement and today we are proud owners of two fast ferries plying the route between Trinidad and Tobago.

My colleague spoke about the inability of the average Tobagonian to buy land in Tobago. Therefore, the Tobago House of Assembly with the purchase of Courland Estate has already begun negotiations and made the necessary down payment for the purchase of Friendship Estate. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would have heard within recent times about the attempt to auction the Bird of Paradise Island; the intervention of the Tobago House of Assembly, supported by the Government, will make sure that piece of history remains with the people of Tobago.

So Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment comes to Tobago and meets with the Chief Secretary or myself or the Member for Tobago East, we talk about programmes within the NSDP street lights, water distribution to communities without water. You know that this year’s dry season is going down in history as the driest dry season, but the people of Tobago were not affected adversely because of the intervention of the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment through dialogue. [Desk thumping] The establishment of over four wells support the water supply, particularly in southwest Tobago where the power of the tourism industry lies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, three years ago, I used to receive calls all hour in the night from hotels and guest houses in the constituency. I did not get a single call this year. So this relationship and recognition of Tobago’s development is amplified in this year’s budgetary allocation and we all should recall it is now public knowledge that prior to this year’s budget, Cabinet held a meeting in Tobago where the Chief Secretary was invited to discuss far-reaching decisions which relate to Tobago’s development.

Some of the projects that were discussed and agreed upon at that meeting were the Crown Point Airport Development Programme where works have already started, the completion of the Scarborough Hospital. You know, the Scarborough Hospital has become a whipping horse for Members on the other side; not for the reason that they are concerned about the health and welfare of the people of Tobago you know, but they want to keep a piece of comess and bacchanal alive in this country as we get into an election mode. You know, I was shocked when I listened to the Member for Fyzabad in his attempt to treat with the Scarborough Hospital Project. He said that the children and women of Tobago are suffering for health care. I do not know where these people get their information.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we all in Tobago look forward to the completion of the new Scarborough Hospital, we are also very much aware that this Government took a decision years ago to build it, construction began and we all know that problems arose and we know what the situation is. I want to tell the Member for Fyzabad that the Tobago Regional Health Authority is doing a good job.

Mr. Sharma: [Inaudible]

Hon. S. Callender: One minus, because you came back to Trinidad.

One of the challenges managing any health care industry is understanding the physical structure of a hospital and a health centre, and the physical structure does not constitute health care; similarly, equipment by itself does not result in improved health care. The combination of appropriate and physical environment, the availability of modern technology, sound and proper trained personnel, equipment and staff in the various areas are prerequisites to delivery of quality health care and sustainability of the health service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is against that background I want to indicate that during the past few years, we have done a number of things in Tobago. We refurbished and reopened the Roxborough Health Centre. We opened the Bloody Bay Health Centre after 10 years, and just go back to who was in office during that time. We did extensive refurbishment of the medical wards, the operating theatre, the kitchen, and the paediatric ward at the Scarborough Regional Hospital. The establishment of a biomedical department was done and over $8 million was spent in upgrading the laboratory, improving the operating theatre, and the maternity ward. We put things in place for the purchase of new elevators, increased the staff: doctors, nurses, dietitians, psychiatrists and pharmacists; we reduced the waiting time in the Accident and Emergency Department; we expanded the pharmacy hours from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays and 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. on Saturdays and public holidays.

We introduced during that time dialysis service at the Scarborough Hospital where a number of patients who would normally have to come to Trinidad for that are now being treated in Tobago. We are doing much more surgical procedures in Tobago now. We have increased outpatient services, health reform service centres are being established and the list goes on. Only to make the point that while we all look forward to the construction of a new hospital we did not stand still.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budgetary allocation for the Tobago House of Assembly has been demonstrated as the Government continues to be impressed
with the management of the affairs of Tobago by the PNM Tobago House of Assembly. Since 2001, fiscal prudence and responsibility has been the hallmark of the management of the affairs of the people of Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Tobago has made significant economic expansion over the six years that we have been in office, due to, as I said prudent, economic management. All available social and economic data are pointing to the fact that Tobago is doing extremely well economically and that is without the help of the UNC.

Data on the labour force also illustrates clearly the economic strides Tobago has made over the past six years. Indeed, the unemployment rate fell by almost 13 per cent in 2001 to approximately 3 per cent in the first quarter of this year. [Desk thumping]

With respect to poverty, the survey on living conditions has placed the poverty rate in Tobago at 17 per cent in 2006 down from 26 per cent in 1997. With respect to GDP growth, conservative estimates by the Policy Research and Development Institute in Tobago has pointed to the fact that since 2001, the Tobago economy has been growing at an annual rate of 4 per cent. Beyond the macroeconomic indicators, evidence in Tobago economic expansion is all over.

For instance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the area of tourism, while Tobago has not had any branded hotel in recent years, the record shows that approximately 400 rooms are added to the room stock each year in the Small Hotel Guest House, Bread and Breakfast Sector. Two years ago, an inventory from the room stock revealed that there were 3,600 rooms on the island. The latest inventory taken earlier this year indicated that there were in excess of 5,000 available rooms on the island.

1.10 a.m.

This phenomenal growth in the domestic tourism has made the expansion of the small property sector feasible. One has to just drive around the island to observe the number of small 10 to 20-room properties that are being constructed on the island. Tobago has come, under the UNC, from a six-month a year tourism destination to one that sustains a 70 per cent occupancy rate year round. Needless to say, when the Crown Point International Airport expansion and modernization is completed within the next two years, there will be further growth in the tourism sector in Tobago.
With respect to the cruise ship industry, as was indicated earlier, it should be noted that while expansion on the cruise ship jetty was taking place in Scarborough, the number of visits in 2006 decreased significantly against the 2005 level. Some 22 calls were recorded in 2006, but during the 2007/2008 season, 42 ships are expected to call in Tobago.

The Tobago House of Assembly is now a full member, a platinum member of the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association and, as such, it is expected that the coming season will provide sustainable growth in the sector. Tobago continues to improve its visibility on the international marketplace and it did not happen by guess, notwithstanding the fact the Member for Tabaquite wanted to claim the Main Ridge. But our Main Ridge forest is well known all over the world. Tobago has won the world’s leading eco-tourism destination for four consecutive years.

Mr. Sharma: What years?


The famous Tobago Plymouth Jazz Festival is now rated by Forbes 100 as one of the 10 best music festivals in the world. [Desk thumping] Enquiries are coming from all parts of the world. Seeking information about next year's jazz festival is all ready to meet accommodation demands for 2008. The Carnival Destiny is a large cruise line that is scheduled to use its accommodation facility as a floating hotel in Scarborough to meet the increased room demand for the 2008 festival. Our cultural artistes, as was mentioned by my colleague, the Member for Tunapuna, are acclaimed wherever and whenever they perform. This newly found visibility has been a direct result of the level of marketing undertaken by the Tobago House of Assembly.

Within recent time we have made headway in the Turkish market. It is proposed to recover the ground lost in the Italian market since the 1970s and the 1980s. Plans are afoot to seek entry into the French market in 2008. In November this year, over 2,00 members of the North America Black Scuba Divers will visit the island of Tobago, having chosen Tobago over several competing countries worldwide. We are developing and working on the birding niche. It is receiving the attention of the Tourism Division of the Tobago House of Assembly.

There are some strategic initiatives proposed to boost international tourism on the island while domestic tourism is consolidated and expanded. It has been said numerous times for the night that the advent of the fast ferry accelerated growth in
domestic tourism almost four-fold in the last two years. In 2006, over 800,000 passengers travelled between both islands, and by the end of 2007, it is expected that in excess of 1.2 million will travel between both islands.

Mr. Hart: Yes, man! That is the love!

Hon. S. Callender: We have also seen tremendous increase with respect to cargo movement between both islands.

Ms. Seukeran: Business booming.

Hon. S. Callender: Yes, it is. While all these things are happening, it does not eliminate some of the problems we have. My colleague from Tobago East spoke about the cost of living in Tobago. I need to spend a minute or so to treat with certain aspects.

Although significant strides with respect to the cost of living difference between Tobago and Trinidad have been made, still more needs to be done. A recent survey by the Fiscal Policy Research Unit set up in the office of the Secretary of Finance in the Tobago House of Assembly, Enterprises Development, has revealed several interesting findings with respect to the cost of living differential between the two islands. Indeed, the study found that with respect to basic food and grocery items, the price differential between Trinidad and Tobago narrowed significantly to roughly 5 per cent and that is purely because of the advent of the fast ferry and the improvement in cargo vessels and so on.

This has been attributed, as I said, to the improvement within the transport and cargoes. However, with respect to fresh produce and perishables, the differential was as high as 29 per cent. Similarly, with respect to building materials that my colleague spoke about, prices in Tobago were on an average of about 24 per cent higher than Trinidad, and that was from a survey done earlier this year.

While these findings all point to the fact that although improvements have been made in the cost of living differential, there still remain some challenges. In this regard, the move by the Tobago House of Assembly to improve agricultural production on the island is welcome. Therefore, steps have been taken—because we recognize there is no doubt that the Tobago House of Assembly’s agricultural division has taken this mission and its tasks seriously. An agriculture revitalization initiative was launched in January 2007. It called for the cultivation of 30 hectares of mixed vegetables in four designated areas in Tobago; 20 hectares of tree crops and 12 hectares of root crops, and to the Indian Walk Estate, 20 hectares of bananas, plantains, et cetera, in the lands from the Charlotteville area. A two-year timeframe for the development of this is anticipated.
To achieve these objectives, it is recognized that a complete plan must be advanced for the implementation of food crop development in Tobago. To accomplish this, the areas to the plan are:

- the use of science and technology to boost agricultural production and planting material;
- the establishment of planting material repository to produce root crop planting material;
- the establishment of a food security unit targeting high volume of bananas, plaintains and other root crops;
- the upgrade of the Louis d’or nursery to provide the necessary seeding food plants that will drive the expansion of the cultivation;
- upgrade of the tractor pool service in Tobago to meet the increased demand for land preparation;
- selection and training of a motivated group of district extension officers to provide professional extension service to the farming community.

It is expected that by 2008, the public will see tangible evidence in the success for Tobago to produce and possibly lower the prices we have in the marketplace.

One must, however, be mindful of the fact that this production cycle of agriculture varies considerably. I believe that the Tobago House of Assembly is on the right road. It is estimated, as I said, by 2008, Tobago will once again be producing a substantial amount of food to consume and by doing so, reversing some 50 years of decline in the basic food crop commodity.

Agriculture must, of necessity, play a substantial role in our development. Tobago accepts this challenge and we are committed to lead the charge. In addition, the move to establish the Tobago sponsored commercial fishing fleet and the establishment of a Caricom jetty at Scarborough Fish Port, are all strategies designed to deal with the high prices of food on the island of Tobago.

I indicated that I would not really put you through much stress and pain. [Desk thumping]

**Ms. Seukeran:** It is an insightful and informative contribution.

**Hon. S. Callender:** I will try to come to a conclusion, because, you see, as I do that, the most significant impact upon the relationship is seen in the quality of life of the people of Tobago. It is seen in every community. Tobagonians have seen the benefits and the improvements as they are convinced—
Mr. Deputy 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. J. Narine]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. S. Callender: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give you the assurance you will not be here for 30 minutes.

In trying to conclude my contribution, I want to say that those who refuse to acknowledge the progress Tobago is making should stop and rethink their rhetoric. Tobago is changing around them, but they remain in a state of perpetual denial. That is what is happening to our detractors in Tobago. This administration has changed the lives and circumstances for the better at all levels in Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago as a whole, at the community level, at the household level and at the personal level.

Tobago is building on a momentum that we have generated over the past six years. And as Tobagonians share in the wider benefits of fiscal policies of 2008, as all Tobagonians, in addition to the specific projects identified for Tobago, enjoy the benefits of the CDAP; increase in old age pensions; increase in the NIS pensions; the increase in salary for CEPEP and URP workers, with particular interest is that expansion in the CDAP, dealing with the diabetics, because given the lifestyle of the people in Tobago, diabetes is a chronic problem; as we continue to enjoy all these other benefits, the record and the evidence of our achievements are found in Tobago, with the PNM Tobago House of Assembly and a PNM Central Government. It is a demonstration that this administration is satisfied with the performance criteria set by the people, while simultaneously nurturing an environment for the optimum development of an autonomous Tobago.

1.25 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to translate the vision of 2020 into a living, practical reality, this budget is determined to reach that goal. Indeed, the time has come to take those steps, that even though painful and necessary to begin the process of a fundamental long-lasting, positive change for this nation, while being careful to retain those aspects of our rich heritage that can help to secure a better future to which we all aspire. To get to that place, there is only one vehicle equipped to take us there and that vehicle, of course, is the People's National Movement. [Desk thumping]
Therefore, it is with that confidence that I support wholeheartedly, this budget of love, this budget that has a vision to take us to that place. Therefore, it is with those few words that I support these measures. I thank you.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, this is a fitting time to move the adjournment of the House.

I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to 10.00 a.m. later today, August 29, 2007, when we would, of course, bring this debate to an end.

I beg to move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 1.27 a.m.*