

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, November 11, 2011*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the Hon. Dr. Rupert Griffith, Member of Parliament for Toco/Sangre Grande and Minister of Tourism, who is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period November 02, 2011 to November 12, 2011. I have also received communication from Dr. Amery Browne, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central, who is also currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

CONDOLENCES**(MRS. EULALIE JAMES)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, as you all are aware, a former Member of this honourable House recently passed away. I refer to the former Member of Parliament for Laventille West, Mrs. Eulalie James. At this time I call on Members to pay tribute to this former long-standing Member of this honourable House.

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to join members of the national community and Members of the Parliament in paying tribute to the late Eulalie James who passed away a few weeks ago, October 21, 2011, after a period of illness.

Mrs. James, a mother, a community worker, an activist in the local government fraternity and later member of the legislature, worked in several capacities and indeed, served her community to the best of her ability and served in the national Parliament and in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Mrs. James began her career, indeed, in local government and at the level of the community. In 1994 Mrs. James was elected to the Parliament in a by-election and served from 1994 to 2007, and would have been elected several times over that period.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who knew Mrs. James during the period of her parliamentary life, I can attest to Mrs. James being a very meek, humble and soft-spoken representative who was always very polite and collaborative. In those days

Condolences

[HON. DR. R. MOONILAL]

some of us on this side had also the privilege of sitting opposite and would have worked with several Members of the then government led by the Member for San Fernando East. Whilst several Members of that government were more outspoken and, indeed, rougher in dealing with Members of the Opposition, Mrs. James always maintained a very wonderful relationship with Members of the Opposition and was also very, very kind and supportive.

I also had the opportunity to serve with Mrs. James on several committees of the Parliament and can attest to her contributions and her collaborative spirit that saw her playing a very effective role in the Parliament and at the constituency level. Like many of us, in her career she would have served in both Government and Opposition and served with distinction. After the 2007 period, in that period, after demitting office, Mrs. James also worked for a while at the CEPEP Company Limited and continued serving the people of Trinidad and Tobago until her death.

So on behalf of the Members of the Government, we would like to extend our condolences to the family, friends and indeed former constituents of Mrs. James and may her soul rest in peace.

I thank you.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to join the Leader of the House in paying tribute to one of the pioneers of community service and political activity in Trinidad and Tobago.

Speaking as Leader of the PNM, in our system of party politics, one would have had to observe the politics to understand the contribution of Mrs. James. For it is normal and easy to understand and believe that our administration begins and ends with parliamentarians, Ministers and political parties on election day. But outside of that, outside of the high-profile visibility of parliamentarians, ministerial office and the hype of election, the real hard work of our political management and our political systems take place in between these events, where the political organizations need to be managed to ensure that they survive to serve the people at election time and in the Parliament.

It is in that context that one needs to see the service of Mrs. James, who came out of the bosom of the greater Laventillian community, as my colleague from Oropouche West said, a humble person, a gentle person, a polite person, but aggressive in her desire to serve her community. She started off in the political organization at our basic level, the party group, constituency level; she served on the level of general council of the political party, central executive and she was

very, very active in the women's league as she always maintained an interest in the particular needs and aspirations of women in the party and the country.

Mr. Speaker, when Morris Marshall, the stalwart, passed away in 1994, Mrs. James stepped into his shoes, large shoes they were to be filled, but Mrs. James' small feet did not disappoint us in the party, in the hills or in the country, and she served in the Cabinet—she served in the Government and then on losing the election Mrs. James served in the Opposition, continuing to provide that yeoman service in ensuring that the party is ready and able to serve again. Mrs. James stunned us all when she lost her leg and she eventually was fitted with a prosthesis and she would do what most normal people could not have done, which was to continue with the same pace and the same vigour to serve the people of Laventille, the people in the PNM and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

We of the PNM honour her. We appreciate the service she has given to country and she would be sorely missed in the organization. As a parliamentarian who served with her in this Parliament, in Government and in Opposition, I extend my personal condolences to the family, and on behalf of my Members on this side and all of us in this House, we acknowledge her service and recognize her as a stalwart in the politics and nation-building in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It would be remiss of me if I allow this opportunity to pass without making a contribution, so I rise in support of the position already ably adopted by my distinguished leader, the Member for Diego Martin West, to pay tribute to Mrs. Eulalie James, a stalwart of the People's National Movement, a stalwart of this Parliament and a very active worker in her community.

Much is known about the representative for Laventille West, Mr. Morris Marshall, the contribution he made, the service he provided to this community. What is not as well-known is the fact that much of the success of Morris Marshall was as a result of a very significant contribution from Eulalie James. So when in 1994 he passed away, and the PNM was called upon to identify a candidate to contest the by-election that followed, we had no difficulty whatsoever in selecting Mrs. James. Already, she had come from the local government system. She had made a significant contribution at that level and had already made a name for herself in the community in which she operated as somebody who put service before self and who saw politics, not as an opportunity for self-aggrandizement or the pursuit of fame, power and fortune, but as an opportunity to serve those who elected her to office.

So, she continued in the Parliament. She won the election handsomely in the by-election and continued in the Parliament with the record of service for which she had then become well-known and which remains as an unblemished record in the annals of the history of the democracy of this country.

Mr. Speaker, when in 2001 the PNM came back into government and a government was to be formed, the people of Laventille West made representation to the then Prime Minister to seek to have Mrs. Eulalie James appointed as a Minister rather than in any other capacity, and it was largely as a result of the representations from her constituents, who thought a lot of her abilities in what she had already done for them and what she could do, she was appointed a Minister of State in one of the Government Ministries, I think it was the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs.

So, today, as we pay tribute to Eulalie James and as we honour the memory of that most significant lady from Laventille, we recognize that in Trinidad and Tobago there are opportunities for upward mobility at all levels based on the democracy for which the country has become well known.

1.45 p.m.

Eulalie James stands as an example of somebody who came from very humble beginnings, but who, by dint of hard work was able not only to make a name for herself in the political field but was also able to make a significant contribution to the development of her constituents, many of whom hold her in very high esteem to this very day.

So, I would just like to join the very distinguished Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to Eulalie James and in thanking her constituents for making her available to the people of Trinidad and Tobago at the level of Parliament, and I would like to express the wish that her soul finds rest in the arms of Almighty God.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to join with the sentiments already expressed in paying tribute to the late Eulalie James who passed away on October 21, 2011 after a brief illness.

Mrs. Eulalie James was born on April 5, 1939 and went on to become a mother of six. Tired of being a stay-at-home mother, Eulalie James sought and obtained employment in her neighbourhood in Laventille, eventually becoming an accounts clerk. Her interactions with people in the community in this capacity led

to her involvement in community work, and later beginning her career in the public service as a councillor and then Deputy Mayor of Port of Spain.

Service to community and helping people played a big role in the life of Eulalie James, and her election to this House in 1994 was a reflection of that desire to serve others. She first won the Laventille West seat in a by-election following the passing of the late Morris Marshall, and would retain the seat a total of five times, between 1994 and 2007 when she demitted office.

During her tenure in the House, she developed a reputation for being committed to her parliamentary duties, as a result of which was her excellent attendance record. Parliamentary records reveal that during her period of service, of all her peers, she attended the highest number of sittings of the House, as well as committee meetings. In fact, it was only when she had to undergo surgery that she would miss a significant number of House sittings and committee meetings. With her usual quiet resolve she would eventually return to the Chamber to resume duties.

Hon. Members, during her 13-year parliamentary career, Eulalie James would serve both in the Opposition and the Government. She was appointed a Minister of State in the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs in December 2001. She also had a passion for issues related to the development of young people, gender, culture and social development.

I am sure you would agree that 13 years of service in the Parliament is a noteworthy record. The passing of Eulalie James on October 21, 2011 provides us with an opportunity to highlight and promote her many contributions to this honourable House, to her community and to her country.

Hon. Members, I have directed the Clerk to prepare an appropriate letter of condolence to the family of the late Mrs. Eulalie James on behalf of all Members of this honourable House. As a mark of respect, could we all stand to observe a minute's silence to this humble, former Member of Parliament.

The House stood.

Thank you, hon. Members.

SAFETY BRIEFING ON TOWER D

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you would have been e-mailed by this honourable Parliament advising that the safety briefing on Tower D for Members of this honourable House will be held during the tea break at today's sitting. As such, we will have a very early tea in order for us to facilitate the safety briefing. So we shall take the brief at 4.00 p.m. It will last for half-an-hour, and thereafter the House will determine the next step in terms of when the sitting would end.

PAPERS LAID

1. National Climate Change Policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for July 2011. [*The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
2. Annual administrative report of the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board (RRCB) for the year ending December 31, 2008. [*The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod)*]
3. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on financial statements of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2002. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran)*]
4. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2003. [*Hon. W. Dookeran*]

Papers Nos. 3 and 4 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Community Centres
(Detailed Breakdown of)**

10. Miss. Marlene McDonald (*Port of Spain South*) asked the hon. Minister of Community Development:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) A detailed breakdown of all the community centres where construction was terminated;
- (b) The reasons for the terminations and the location of these community centres?

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Nizam Baksh): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The former administration commenced a vigorous programme of construction and refurbishment of community centres in 2007. Approval for this programme was received by the former Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs to construct 100 community centres over a period of three years, 2007-2010. By the last year of that cycle, 2009-2010, contracts were awarded for the construction of 42 community centre facilities. By the end of 2010 fiscal year, in order to avoid embarrassment and meet some of the commitments to contractors for works completed, the newly established Ministry

of Community Development sought and obtained approval to utilize unspent allocation in the sum of \$15 million from the Ministry's refurbishment programme towards the Ministry's construction of community centres programme.

The Ministry was allocated the sum of \$60 million in fiscal 2010-2011 under its capital programme to undertake the construction of community centres throughout Trinidad. This sum of money was insufficient to continue with the execution of the undermentioned 21 construction projects and, therefore, these projects were terminated. I will give the name of the centre, the location and the reasons. All the reasons are the same, but I will give them nevertheless.

CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY CENTRES PROGRAMME TERMINATED PROJECTS

No.	NAME OF COMMUNITY CENTRE	LOCATION	REASONS FOR TERMINATION
1.	Pelican Extension Community	Pelican Extension Road, Morvant	Terminated due to insufficient funds
2.	Jerningham Junction	Boodram Street, Jerningham Junction, Cunupia	Terminated due to insufficient funds
3.	San Fernando (North)	St. Vincent Street, San Fernando	Terminated due to insufficient funds
4.	Bagatelle	Bagatelle Road, Diego Martin	Terminated due to insufficient funds
5.	Cocorite	Waterhole, Cocorite	Terminated due to lack of funding, contractors were invited to submit tenders.
6.	Harmony Hall	Corner Mercedes Lane & Malibu Crescent, Harmony Hall, Gasparillo	Terminated due to insufficient funds
7.	Acbar Trace	Roopchand Avenue, Acbar Trace, Avocat, Fyzabad	Terminated due to insufficient funds

8.	Caratal	St. Marie Emmanuel Road, Caratal, Cumuto	Terminated due to insufficient funds
9.	Taroudale Hills (Gardens)	Tarouba Link Road, Taroudale Gardens, San Fernando	Terminated due to insufficient funds
10.	Arima	#3 Anglican Street, Arima	Terminated due to insufficient funds
11.	El Socorro Central	Shakir Trace, El Socorro, San Juan	Terminated due to insufficient funds
12.	Brickfield Village	LP #55 Brickfield Recreation Ground, Brickfield Waterloo	Terminated due to insufficient funds
13.	Quarry Village	Siparia/Erin Main Road, Quarry Village, Siparia	Terminated due to insufficient funds
14.	La Fillette	72mm Paria Main Road, La Fillette	Terminated due to insufficient funds
15.	Bon Air Gardens	Bon Air South, Bon Air	Terminated due to insufficient funds
16.	Basilon Street	Basilon Street, Port of Spain	Terminated due to insufficient funds
17.	Las Lomas No. 2	Caroni South Bank Road, Las Lomas No. 2	Terminated due to insufficient funds
18.	Prizgar Lands	Prizgar Lands Village, Laventille	Terminated due to insufficient funds
19.	Red Hill	Upper St. Barbs Road, Red Hill, Laventille	Terminated due to insufficient funds
20.	Tarouba	New Tarouba Housing Development, Tarouba, San Fernando	Terminated due to insufficient funds
21.	Trincity	Montague Avenue,	Terminated due to

		Beaulieu Trincity	South,	insufficient funds
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All these were terminated for one reason, because of insufficient funding for these programmes. These projects were identified as those with a low percentage of completion. Given the vigorous programme that started under the former administration in 2007, it has become rather difficult to fulfil the mandate and obligations of the construction of community centres programme because of inadequate funding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Community Centres
(Detailed Listing and Status of)**

11. Miss. Marlene McDonald (*Port of Spain South*) asked the hon. Minister of Community Development:

Could the hon. Minister state:

- (a) A detailed listing of all the community centres currently under construction;
- (b) The cost of constructing each centre;
- (c) The location of each centre, as well as the estimated date of completion?

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Nizam Baksh): Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. With regard to question 11, at present there are 25 community centres under construction. As requested, I am pleased to give the detailed listing of these centres outlining the cost, location and estimated date of completion. Again, I will give it under the different headings here; the name of the community centre, location, estimated cost and estimated date of completion.

2.00 p.m.

	Name of Community Centre	Location	Estimated Cost	Estimated Date Of Completion
1.	North Eastern/Duranta Gardens	Azela Drive, Sangre Grande	\$6,097,536.50	November 30, 2011
2.	Ortoire	51mm Point Radix Road,	\$4,461,199.09	December 15, 2011

		Mayaro Extention Manzanilla Mayaro Road, Ortoire Village, Mayaro		
3.	Malabar Phase IV	Harry Joseph Circular, Malabar Arima	\$8,896,965.16	October 31, 2011
4.	Palo Seco Settlement	Savannah Road, Palo Seco Settlement Palo Seco	\$6,477,943.00	December 31, 2011
5.	Sister's Road	Nuckcheddy Street, Sisters Road Hardbargain	\$3,107,398.70	December 15, 2011
6.	Upper Malabar	Malabar Main Road, Arima	\$5,489,579.68	November 30, 2011
7.	Palo Seco Los Charros	SS Erin Road, Palo Seco	\$6,582,730.32	December 31, 2011
8.	Samaroo Village	Off Mendez Road and O'mera Road, Arima	\$4,738,864.71	February 28, 2012
9.	North Manzanilla	LP #919 Eastern Main Road Sangre Grande	\$3,876,475.48	February 28, 2012
10.	St. Augustine (South)	Cor. Freeman Road and Mohambo Trace St. Augustine	\$3,368,443.88	December 31, 2011
	St. John's	Lp # 160 M2	\$7,892,212.49	December 31, 2011

11.	Village	Ring Ciperó Road Debe		
12.	Roystonia (Refurbishment)	Roystonia Development Couva	\$5,652,549.00	December 31, 2011
13.	Jerningham Junction	Boodram Street Jerningham Junction	\$6,241,485.85	December 31, 2011
14.	Construction of Mango Rose Community Centre	Piccadilly Street, EDR, Port of Spain	\$2,181,574.63	November 30, 2011
15.	Construction of Mount Hope/Mount Lambert	Community Drive, Mt Hope	\$7,661,622.65	December 31, 2011
16.	Construction of Baratária Community Centre	Lower 6 th Avenue Extension, Baratária	\$5,095,744.68	February 28, 2012
17.	Construction of Vessigny Community Centre	Southern Main Road, Vessigny via La Brea	\$7,447,114.00	June 30, 2012
18.	Construction of Chatam Community Centre	Chatham Main Road, via Point Fortin	\$6,646,021.59	November 30, 2012
19.	Construction of St. Helena, Matelot Community Centre	Matelot Main Road, St. Helena, Matelot	\$7,191,013.25	November 30, 2012
20.	Calvary Hill, Arima	Calvary Village, Arima	\$10,147,021.67	May 31, 2012
21.	Construction of Carapo	Carapo Village, Arima	\$7,489,418.71	December 31, 2012

	Community Centre			
22.	Talparo Community Centre	Todds Station Road Talparo	\$5,433,785.85	December 31, 2012
23.	Gasparillo (Santa Cruz) Community Centre	La Sagrasse Road, Santa Cruz	\$6,912,740.51	September 30, 2012
24.	L'anse Noir	10 Foster Road Sangre Grande	\$5,240,311.48	September 30, 2012
25.	Point Fortin Civic Centre	George Street, Point Fortin	\$15,436,448.85	December 31, 2012

**Festivals
(Funding for)**

12. Miss. Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) asked the hon. Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism:

Could the Minister state the amount of funding for each year that was allocated to the following festivals for the period May 24, 2010 to September 30, 2011:

- a) Divali;
- b) Eid ul Fitr;
- c) Emancipation;
- d) Phagwa;
- e) Ramleela;
- f) Indian Arrival Day; and
- g) Spiritual Baptist Day

Thank you.

The Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism (Hon. Winston Peters): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, funding was provided for the festivals in question during the period May 24, 2010 to September 30, 2011 as follows:

Divali	\$4,422,150
Eid ul Fitr	\$433,000
Emancipation	\$4,534,150
Phagwa	\$937,000
Ramleela	\$497,500
Indian Arrival Day	\$1,682,225
Spiritual Baptist Day	\$715,331

Thank you.

Prime Minister's Trip to Brazil, April 2011

22. Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon(*Point Fortin*) asked the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications:

Could the Minister state the dates, times and places of all official duties conducted by the hon. Prime Minister on her recent trip to Brazil in April 2011?

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister conducted the following official duties in Brazil in April of 2011. On Monday April 25, 2011, the Prime Minister and her delegation arrived in Brasilia at 10.30 p.m.. Tuesday April 26, 2011, at 10.30 a.m., a ceremony was held to unveil a plaque at the Embassy lands for the construction of the Chancery of the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago in Brazil. These were lands donated 38 years ago, and which for the very first time were going to be used for the purpose for which they were donated by the Brazilian Government. At 12.30 p.m., the Prime Minister—as she does on all her missions overseas—visited and consulted with the staff of the Embassy and on that day she visited the Chancery of the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy and met with Embassy staff, both as a group and on an individual basis. At 1.30 p.m., a luncheon was hosted for the Embassy staff and the official delegation.

Mr. Speaker, on that same day at 3.00 p.m., the Prime Minister and her delegation met with EMBRAPA. EMBRAPA of course, is Brazil's premiere agricultural research organization. Mr. Speaker, Brazil as you know has opened an embassy in every Caricom country and has recently donated to Caricom a model farm to be established in a Caricom country. At 5.00 p.m. the Prime Minister met with the Deputy Minister of External Relations of Brazil, Mr. Ruy

Pinto Nogueira, and at 7.30 p.m. a reception at the Ambassador's residence, Ambassador Dr. Hamza Rafeeq, was held and the hon. Prime Minister visited and held informal discussions with several Ambassadors, but particularly with the Caricom Ambassadors.

On Wednesday April 27, at 11.30 a.m., the Prime Minister and her delegation departed Brasilia for Rio de Janeiro. At 4.00 p.m. she registered and began participating at the World Economic Forum, and that was at the Intercontinental Hotel. At 7.00 p.m., a meeting was held with Mr. Jan De Nul, an OAS Construtora and at 8.00 p.m. a dinner was hosted by Jan De Nul an OAS Construtora.

On Thursday April 28, 2011, the Prime Minister at 9.00 a.m. began to participate in a round table on education. The title of this discussion was "The Education Challenge: Bridging the Talent Gap—what changes will deliver significant improvements in the region's education system to bridge the talent gap?" And the following dimensions were addressed: Quality of education; Successful models in basic and secondary education; Technical and professional training; Promoting understanding among government, schools and businesses.

And for the benefit of the Member for San Fernando East, she did not go when she went there to any spa and spent her time in the spa rather than in the meeting. [*Desk thumping*] She was at the meeting.

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, 36(4) imputing improper motives, "What you know about spa?" [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, I want to advise Members, when we are responding to a question, even though we may be provoked—

Miss Cox: Nobody provoked him!

Mr. Speaker: Well, I am saying even if you may be provoked, I would ask you not to engage in these barbs across the floor, please. So you may continue but please be advised.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, among those participating in this educational challenge were several distinguished persons in the field of education from Latin America and other regions, including the Minister of Education for the Federal Capital City of Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Fundación Paraguaya of Paraguay; Social Entrepreneur on the Global Agenda Council for Education; Jorge Sequeira, Director of the Regional Office for Education in Latin America, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Santiago. This session,

where the Prime Minister spoke and participated, was moderated by Fernando Reimers, the Ford Foundation Professor of International Education and Director of International Education Policy Program of Harvard Graduate School of Education.

At 12.30 p.m. on the same day, the Prime Minister participated in a luncheon meeting on “Women’s Empowerment”: Five Regional Challenges, One Solution, that was the title. “How can empowering girls and women radically impact five acute challenges facing Latin America.” And the following dimensions were addressed: Talent and education; Health and nutrition; Leadership; Employment and business performance; National competitiveness. Simultaneous interpretations were given in all the languages: English, Portuguese and Spanish.

Mr. Speaker, the participants on that panel were the Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica; the member of the board and columnist of the newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo*, Brazil; the Director of the center for International Development, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University; the President of the Americas, Manpower Group, USA, the Regional Director of the World Health Organization, the Americas, Pan American Health Organization, Washington, DC, and the Global Agenda Council and Chronic Diseases and Well-being; and also the head of the group Country Management and External Affairs, Novartis International, Switzerland. The Prime Minister not only participated but gave the opening statement at that particular session. It was moderated by the Secretary General of the Council of Women World Leaders, USA; the Global Agenda Council on Women’s Empowerment.

That same day, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister met with the Minister of External Relations of Brazil, Mr. Antonio Patriota, at 4.00 p.m. and then at 6.15 p.m. on the same afternoon met with officials of British Gas at BG’s office. [*Desk thumping*] At 8.00 p.m., the delegation was hosted at a dinner with British Gas.

On Friday morning at 1.00 p.m. the Prime Minister met with Petrobras. Mr. Speaker, you would be interested to know that Petrobras expressed the view that the meeting with the Prime Minister caused them to restore their faith in doing business with Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And if you believe that these missions overseas do not have their impact, let me announce here today that Petrobras is coming here during the week of November 20, to meet with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs to renew those relationships and to make real the memorandum of understanding that was once signed but never activated by the former administration.

At 2.00 p.m. that same day, the Prime Minister met with officials of AcelorMittal who operate the steel mill in Trinidad and Tobago, and at 4.00 p.m. that day, a meeting was held with Mr. Tony Blair, the former Prime Minister of the UK. It should be noted that the hon. Prime Minister—Mr. Speaker, one of the things that you would know is that when you go to these meetings, you take the opportunity to have bilateral meetings.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members I would like to advise the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications to have the rest of your answer circulated.

Vide end of sitting for written part of the answer.

EXPIRATION OF SPEAKING TIME

Mr. Speaker: Now, Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, under Standing Order 19(6) and (7) respectively, but more so 19(7), you have a choice.

You can have the two remaining answers to your questions—question No. 23 and question No. 24—circulated during the sitting of our House today in writing. Or, if you wish, you can rise and indicate to the House you would like those matters sent to the next sitting of the House of Representatives. What is your choice or desire?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would like question No. 23 and also question No. 24 to be put on the Order Paper for the next sitting, please. Thank you very much.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (Point Fortin):

**Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs Travel
(Ghana)**

23. Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (Point Fortin) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) The purpose of the Minister's Travel undertaken in April 2011 to Ghana;
- (b) The current status of Ghana's Gas Infrastructure Development Project and the involvement of the National Gas Company of

Trinidad and Tobago?

**Joint Venture Partner
(Trinmar)**

24. Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*) asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Could the Minister state:

- (i) Whether the Government sought to find a joint venture partner for Trinmar;
- (ii) If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state what efforts have been made during the past year to find a joint venture partner?

Question time having expired, questions 23 and 24 were not dealt with.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Let us proceed.

**STATEMENT BY MINISTER
Climate Change Policy**

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, consistent with that trip to Brazil, we will have another major announcement on matters of the environment. The People's Partnership Government has placed special emphasis on ensuring the sustainable management of the environment. Climate change is globally recognized as the single environmental issue of the 21st Century that poses unprecedented threats to mankind. The international policy response to climate change has been through the adoption of two legal instruments, namely: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, both to which Trinidad and Tobago is a ratified signatory.

The ultimate objective of the framework convention is the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system, and in a time frame that would allow ecosystems to adapt naturally, will not hamper food production and allow sustainable economic development.

Although a natural phenomenon, building evidence suggests that there is an accelerated rate of climate change as a result of human activity, primarily, the increases in concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere as a result of

fossil fuel combustion, industrial processes and waste management.

Mr. Speaker, the most recent science suggests that the prospect of limiting the global temperature increase to 2°C above pre-industrial times, as agreed in Copenhagen in 2009 and Cancun in 2010, is getting bleaker with carbon dioxide emissions reaching a record high in 2010 according to the International Energy Agency's, *World Energy Outlook*, and this continues to rise.

Projected impacts of climate change include the likely increase in the frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts, floods and hurricanes. The need for disaster preparedness, prevention, management, post-disaster recovery poses significant challenges to island states in terms of financial, human, technical and technological capacity given the global financial outlook.

Mr. Speaker, we in Trinidad and Tobago are already experiencing these impacts and challenges. Climate change projections for Trinidad and Tobago include higher temperatures and lower rainfall. The mean annual temperature is projected to increase by 0.7 to 2.6°C by the 2060s and 1.1 to 4.3°C by 2090s. Sea level in this region is projected to rise by between 0.13 and 0.56m by 2100 relative to 1980—1999 period.

Mr. Speaker, as a small island developing state, Trinidad and Tobago is particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. Sectors that are likely to be impacted are agriculture, human health, human settlements, coastal zones and water resources, as well as cross-sectoral socio-economic systems.

Greenhouse gas emissions for the period 1990—2006 indicate that the energy, transportation and industrial sectors account for the bulk of carbon dioxide emissions, accounting for an estimated increase of 278 per cent, 100 per cent and 86.7 per cent respectively. That is just three sectors: energy, transportation and other industrial activity.

Mr. Speaker, although Trinidad and Tobago accounts for less than 1 per cent of absolute global greenhouse gas emissions, the Government recognizes the need to address these emissions in accordance with the decisions under the framework convention. Projected impacts of climate change and recent scientific data dictate that suitable actions be implemented. It is therefore the intention of this Government that climate change occupy a place of high priority.

It is within this context, Mr. Speaker, that I am pleased today to lay before this honourable House, a Climate Change Policy that provides guidelines necessary for the achievement of our manifesto promise to improve the administrative and legislative framework for the sustainable management of the country's

environment and indeed for addressing climate change.

Mr. Speaker, the development of this policy was by no means an easy task. There was wide consultation and discourse with all relevant stakeholders along the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. Comments and concerns were taken on board as is the usual modus operandi of this Government, so that the final product is now one that has the buy-in of all stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, I shall briefly outline the provisions of the Climate Change Policy in light of the above. The Government has identified the following reasons for policy and action on climate change:

1. Integration of adaptation into national planning. Mr. Speaker, impacts of Climate Change are expected to be cross-sectoral, transcending the biophysical and socio-economic systems. Preparedness through adaptation planning is critical to achieving the objective of sustainable low carbon growth towards the development of a green economy in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
2. Co-benefits of mitigation action. Increased use of alternative fuels, renewable energy and cleaner production technology will increase the quality of air and improve the quality of lives of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The conservation of natural carbon sinks such as forest and coastal ecosystems will also ensure continuous provision of food and sustainable livelihoods for our communities.
3. Economic opportunities and cost savings. Mr. Speaker, economic opportunities are available for the development and deployment of climate technologies, participation in the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol as well as to realize core savings in respect of reduced waste management costs through cleaner production technology. Such opportunities will be fully explored across all socio-economic sectors.
4. Enhanced energy security. Mr. Speaker, enhancing the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency will augment power generation and demand and provide greater energy security.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago as a responsible member of the international community is committed to pursuing a low-carbon development path, consistent with the principles of sustainable development through the development and delivery of strategies and actions for maximizing renewable energy resources, clean energy and clean production technology, as well as adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change through integration within all aspects of national development in the infrastructural, human and socio-economic

systems at an acceptable balance of costs and benefits. The implementation of this policy will therefore go a long way in contributing to sustainable development.

The goals of the policy will aim to provide policy guidelines for the development of an appropriate administrative and legislative framework in harmony with other sectoral policies for the pursuit of a low-carbon development path for Trinidad and Tobago through sustainable and relevant strategies and actions to address climate change. The policy will be guided by the following objectives:

- Reducing or avoiding greenhouse gas emissions from all emitting sectors.
- Enhancing carbon sinks;
- Conserving and building resilience of human and natural systems to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change;
- The application of cleaner technologies;
- Protection of the natural environment and human health;
- Enhanced agricultural, production and food security.

Our climate policy shall be guided by the following principles:

Sustainability: Strategies and actions that are environmentally sustainable and compatible with low-carbon economic growth and social development will be pursued.

It will be multipartite. Mr. Speaker, given the inherent nature of climate change and its impacts, meeting the challenge cannot be the sole responsibility of Government. All relevant stakeholders including academia, research institutions, the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, business and industry organizations and the citizenry at large, will be consulted in developing strategies and approaches to addressing climate change and implementing this policy.

Mr. Speaker, we will also be precautionary. In spite of what our detractors say that climate change is not a reality, the Government will not await scientific certainty in order to act. Accordingly, the Government shall develop, through a process of consultation, actions that will redound to the benefit of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago for current and future generations consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, to this end, you will recall that the Minister of Finance in his

budget presentation spoke about the expanding breadth of the Green Fund to undertake funding for education and information in the area of environment. Mr. Speaker, it was just a few weeks ago that Cabinet approved a green policy for the Priority Bus Route. That will become a signature event for the environment in Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that our East-West Corridor will be greened using renewable energy as a source to empower the entire Priority Bus Route and insisting that vehicles using that bus route be powered by CNG as opposed to fossil fuel. [*Desk thumping and interruption*] There is an electric car; we will try to get that for you. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, our approach will also be multi-sectoral. Strategies and actions shall take into account different socio-economic contexts, will be comprehensive, cover all relevant sources and reservoirs of greenhouse gas emissions as we adapt to the demands of climate change.

We are also evidence based. The Government recognizes that climate change is not static and new scientific evidence would need new approaches. The Government intends to revise this policy in light of new scientific findings. Our Government shall implement this policy through the development of a strategy and action plan that will address revising our relevant policies where applicable, and indeed bringing new legislation to the Parliament.

In terms of mitigation, the Government will strive to develop the country via a low greenhouse gas emission economic development pathway across all sectors of the economy. There will no longer be repetitions of various approaches of the past where our development approach will be cautionary and where emissions will be allowed to occur. We will take action in terms of increasing the use of renewable energy—the Priority Bus Route we highlighted.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there are surveillance bays along the highways. There are 13 surveillance bays established as a pilot project. We are happy to announce that this will be completely solar powered. The contracts have been issued. [*Desk thumping*]

We will increase energy efficiency in commercial and residential buildings. To this end, we will embark upon energy audits in several Ministries across the Government, and to set the example, the Ministry of Housing and the Environment will be the first Ministry to which an energy audit will be conducted.

As you know, we will also look at government buildings and buildings—we will put a solar panel on Balisier House if you want, because we understand you are losing some staff.

We will increase the use of alternative fuels and fuel switching in the transportation sector. The buses ordered by PTSC will be buses that are propelled by CNG and may be hybrid to use both fossil fuel and alternative fuel.

We will enhance natural carbon sinks through conserving forests and protecting natural systems that contribute to carbon sequestration. We will maximize the use of the carbon market. We will enhance research and development on renewable energy and clean technology.

In terms of our adaptation measures, we would integrate into the national development agenda the following principles: strengthening existing institutional arrangements for systematic observations, research and climate change modelling; accessing sectoral vulnerability to climate change; technological application; and what is termed “climate proofing”, new developments and retrofitting existing infrastructure. We intend, in the Housing Development Corporation, to explore the possibility of retrofitting our existing housing estates with alternative energy sources. We will be enhancing the resilience of socio-economic and biophysical systems. We will be promoting community-based adaptation through the expanded use of the Green Fund for capacity building and enhancing resilience.

In the area of public education and awareness, this is critical to the success of the implementation of our policy. Accordingly, the Government shall integrate educational programmes on climate change impacts into the school curricula. We shall develop and implement within one year of the adoption of this policy, a communications strategy. We will ensure that national and local stakeholders have equitable access to and benefit from information and knowledge on climate change impacts.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the financing implementation, no policy is effective unless implemented, and implementation requires financial resources. The Government shall provide financial support for the implementation of this policy, which will not be accessed directly through Government. We intend to access project grants from international organizations through the preparation of project proposals and through bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

In this regard, the Government is in negotiations with the Inter-American Development Bank for a policy-based loan for a programme to support the climate change agenda in Trinidad and Tobago. The general objective of the programme is to support the Government in strengthening and modernizing the regulatory, institutional and policy framework to integrate climate change and its impact into the national economic development. The specific objectives of the

programme are to support the mainstreaming of climate change, international policies and institutions; to develop and promote instruments to assess and reduce the vulnerability and risks associated with climate change; and to promote carbon markets and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. All environmental agencies in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will be engaged to pursue this policy.

It was just a couple of days ago that the hon. Prime Minister announced an expanded mandate for the environmental agencies in the Government. Regrettably, the voices and the comments made by Members opposite were not encouraging towards our expanded employment programme, particularly in the Port of Spain/Diego Martin area. It was my intention to engage Members of the Opposition to collaborate with our expanding jobs programme by asking Members opposite to supply the names of their constituents who will benefit from these programmes, but I will not want to add injury to insult. I will not want to further insult Members opposite by asking them to supply names of their constituents, because I understand that they felt insulted by that programme. But those Members who are not insulted can feel free to supply the names of—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Recommend them.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: —recommend the names of their constituents who are in need of this help as we expand our environmental agencies. But, I will not want to add injury to insult by asking them to supply any help. Their constituents, I understand from the *Guardian's* front page today, welcome the massive job programme, but the representatives are not happy. They were not happy. They felt their constituents were being placed in jail. Now they said their constituents are getting work. They are still not happy. We really do not know what would make them happy.

The National Climate Change Policy represents a major achievement in the environmental framework and development paradigm of Trinidad and Tobago. It is the first time that a climate change policy has been developed for Trinidad and Tobago, in spite of climate change being recognized as a threat to humanity more than 30 years ago. For the first time, this country will see an approach to development that would be cognizant with its contribution; not only to the well-being of citizens but to the contribution of the international environmental management community through effective and efficient national actions.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

WAY OF LIFE (INC'N) BILL

Question put and agreed to, That a Bill to provide for the incorporation of the Way of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto, be now read the first time.

Bill accordingly read the first time.

**ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE
(INDICTABLE PROCEEDINGS) BILL, 2011**

Bill to repeal and replace the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Act, Chap. 12: 01 and to provide for a system of pre-trial proceedings relating to indictable offences and other related matters [*The Minister of Justice*]; read the first time.

**SCHOOL BOOKS
(GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO SUPPLY)**

Mrs. Patricia McIntosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has given a commitment to provide all students, from early childhood to the primary and secondary levels, with all core textbooks and workbooks at no cost to parents;

And whereas the Ministry of Education has reneged on this commitment in September 2011, by neglecting to provide sufficient and timely replacements for books lost or damaged, thereby placing an unexpected hardship on parents:

Be it resolved that this Government take all necessary steps to ensure that students are properly equipped with their schoolbooks for a quality education from early childhood to secondary, in accordance with the commitment that has been given since 2004.

Mr. Speaker, on August 30, 1962, the day before Independence, Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago uttered one of his most famous aphorisms: "The future of this nation lies in the school bags of our children." Dr. Williams was, at the time, addressing school children at a rally at the Queen's Park Oval. In this simple, easily remembered way, Dr. Williams was succinctly implying that our nation could only truly progress if its children, if its citizens, developed into well-educated individuals.

Mr. Speaker, it has always been the philosophy of the People's National Movement that if children are holistically educated, they would develop into

strong citizens, capable of making a meaningful contribution to the socio-economic development of our beloved country and probably even playing a significant role on the world stage.

In 1962, under the leadership of Dr. Eric Williams, the beginnings of a concrete foundation in education were being formed when students were offered the opportunity of free secondary education. Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate to be among the first batch of students to pass what was then known as the Common Entrance Examination and to graduate to secondary school under this new system, and I am sure that many of the hon. Members present in this House this afternoon would have benefited from a sound education under the PNM Government.

Under a PNM administration over 30 early childhood centres were constructed and commissioned and a department was established within the Ministry of Education to equip teachers with the requisite skills and competencies to effectively and efficiently deliver the curriculum to preschoolers.

In the recent past, the People's National Movement achieved even greater heights in education, providing the people of this nation with free tertiary education. The PNM's "nursery to tertiary" concept of education has given to the citizens of this country a free and seamless transition from early childhood to tertiary education, as we like to say in the PNM, from "ABC to PHD".

The People's National Movement has always invested heavily in education, placing particular emphasis on the development of our nation's youth and instituting a variety of educational and developmental programmes that would cater to our students' multiple intelligences and special needs, thereby ensuring that no child is left behind and that every child has a chance.

Mr. Speaker, as early as the 1990s, the People's National Movement appreciated the fact that the oil and gas industry possessed a limited shelf life and needed to be eventually phased out in favour of the development of our nation's human resource potential. But to achieve this goal, certain strategies had to be implemented. When the People's National Movement returned to power in 2001, it continued the UNC's policy of universal secondary education for all SEA students, but it went several steps further by placing particular emphasis on student learning difficulties and student special needs.

A Student Support Services Department and a Special Education Unit were established in the Ministry of Education. Teacher training in remedial instruction, namely numeracy and literacy was instituted. Furthermore, the junior secondary

school system was replaced by the regular all-day school system. A financial literacy programme was implemented in primary and secondary schools, teaching our youth the importance of saving their money and becoming financially productive citizens.

A National Library System, which we know as NALIS, was commissioned and technically upgraded and mobile libraries were introduced in rural areas. As a consequence of all these educational initiatives under a PNM administration, secondary education success rates have increased steadily over the past six years and today Trinidad and Tobago remains the highest performing jurisdiction in the Caribbean. [*Desk thumping*]

2.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, under a PNM administration more avenues or options were created for students to access tertiary education. Apart from the traditional A Levels, students are now able to access various pathways to tertiary education. For example, some of them go on to ACCA, or they attend Roytec, or NIHERST or SBCS, SAM, Institute of Tertiary Education, et cetera. This was made possible through the PNM's GATE programme which replaced the dollar for dollar system initiated under the UNC Government, and which provides all students irrespective of colour, class, creed, race, social standing or political affiliation, with the enviable advantage of accessing tertiary education free of charge. In addition, the HELP or Higher Education Loan Programme, assists the students to pay for accommodation, books and transportation where necessary.

Mr. Speaker, in 1998 only 8 per cent of the student population had progressed to tertiary education, but because of the PNM's GATE and HELP initiatives, tertiary level participation has increased over the years from that mere 8 per cent to 22 per cent in 2003, and by 2009, 42 per cent of our student population had advanced to tertiary education. The People's National Movement was steadily moving towards improving that figure to 60 per cent, one of the success indicators of developed nation status. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the MuST, HYPE and YES programmes were also instituted to give our young people the opportunity to learn a vocational trade, while earning a stipend, and at the same time contributing to the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, the curriculum offerings at NIHERST, COSTAATT, the John Donaldson and San Fernando Technical Institutes were expanded and the facilities upgraded; and a greater financial investment was made in the on-the-job training programme.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the University of Trinidad and Tobago was established to give citizens the opportunity to pursue different subject areas that would aid in the thrust of global industrialization. Subjects like civil engineering for the construction industry and other areas, for example, the fashion and music industries. Moreover support systems were instituted to ensure that students were able to optimize all these educational opportunities with which they were provided under a PNM administration.

Mr. Speaker, since 1979, the PNM Government under the late Dr Eric Eustace Williams, appreciating the relationship between cognitive development and nutrition, instituted the school's dietary service programme then known as the School Nutrition Programme. At this time, 63,000 lunches were served to students on a daily basis. By 2009 the food dietary services programme had greatly expanded making available to our school children on a daily basis approximately 98,000 lunches and 57,000 breakfasts. And at the same time creating opportunities for entrepreneurs in the food and catering business.

In Germany—a country which I visited a few years ago, a highly developed First World country—students are afforded meals under a school nutrition system, but they must still pay a contribution, a sizeable contribution. In Trinidad and Tobago, we have a school nutrition system which is absolutely free, thanks to a PNM administration. [*Desk thumping*]

In addition, Mr. Speaker, free bus passes were issued to needy students to assist them to get to and from school, any student who wanted a bus pass received one. Several months ago this current Government claimed to have instituted a free bus service for school children. I was really baffled, and I failed to understand this, because I know for a fact that there had already existed under the People's National Movement, a fully functional free bus service to transport students to and from school. [*Desk thumping*] At least 15 years ago, in my capacity as an education administrator, it was one of my responsibilities to ensure that all students in need of free transportation received the bus passes which were issued to the school on a monthly basis. So I do not know where this new bus pass system has come from, it was always there under the PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in 2004 under a PNM administration the textbook rental programme was introduced, and was yet another strategy which was implemented to facilitate the development of our nation's human resource potential. The modernization of our education system to meet the growing demands of the global job market, witnessed several developments in the education system, among which was the introduction of the National Certificate of Secondary Education in which English, Mathematics, Spanish, Social Science, Visual and Performing

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[MRS. MCINTOSH]

Arts, Physical Education and Information and Communication Technology became mandatory subjects in the secondary curriculum. National testing in these subject areas at the end of Form 3 allowed educators to evaluate their students' performance and implement appropriate remedial strategies where necessary, to bring students in line with acceptable standards of performance.

Similar testing, Mr. Speaker, on a national level was also instituted in primary schools at the Standard 3 level. As a consequence, trends in student performance could be monitored and assessed at national and school levels and appropriate interventions undertaken to effect improvement if and where necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the textbook programme was born out of the necessity to support delivery of the enhanced primary and secondary school curriculum, by providing the essential text for all students thereby ensuring that they possessed the basic tools for learning and would, therefore, be able to optimize the educational opportunities presented to them. This provision of free textbooks would also ensure that no child would be left behind, and that every child would have a chance. An offshoot of this textbook initiative was the creation of a high quality textbook writing industry, where practitioners in the field, and highly qualified retired teachers began to produce textbooks of a very high standard. A textbook industry developed which grew in demand locally, as well as throughout the Caribbean catering to students in primary as well as secondary schools.

Mr. Speaker, since 2004 under a PNM administration students in secondary schools were provided with textbooks in eight areas in respect of students in Forms 1, 2 and 3; and 14 areas in respect of those students in Forms 4 and 5; and CAPE students received one text per subject. At primary school level students were provided with textbooks in all four core areas: English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. In addition, primary as well as secondary schools students received dictionaries and atlases. At infant level students also received all their textbooks.

Each year these books are handed down from one level to the other. However, due to stolen or misplaced texts, or tattered or damaged texts, the Ministry of Education would provide top-ups or replacement books at all levels as requested by the respective principals. Each year at the Infant 1 level and the Infant 2 level, brand new workbooks would be provided, and you could understand that.

Mr. Speaker, since 2004 under the textbook rental programme, every year books are delivered to schools in a timely fashion for the commencement of the new school year, so that little or no learning time is compromised; but this academic year, this has not been the case. Historically, principals are required to

select books from a list of texts evaluated by the Evaluation Committee of the Ministry of Education.

This year, however, the principals were informed by a circular memorandum which I have here, Mr. Speaker, dated of June 16, 2011, and signed by the permanent secretary, that they would be given a free hand in the selection of textbooks for the academic year 2011 and 2012. I would like to read this circular memorandum: hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, it comes from the permanent secretary and it goes to all principals, primary and secondary and to supervisors, I, II and III. The subject is:

“Selection of textbooks for academic year 2011/2012” and I want to read from my paper, [*Displays documents*] because the print is small here:

“Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education, has instructed that principals, primary and secondary, can select textbooks that they deem most suitable for their students at the different levels, primary and secondary.

These texts will be supplied by the Ministry of Education. The selected text in each subject area must be used for the academic years 2011/2012; 2012/2013 and 2013/2014. Principles are asked to consult with teachers or departments before completing the requisition forms.”

And here, Mr. Speaker, the principals got attached requisition forms [*Displays documents*] so they could put all the books which they wanted to select. And as I said the principals were very happy, they were very pleased with the Ministry’s directive and complied accordingly. After all, texts are constantly being revised and upgraded to meet the demands of an ever evolving information era. And teachers always like to upgrade their resources so that their students would be au courant with current information and trends.

So, Mr. Speaker, principals and teachers were only too happy to comply with this latest request from the Ministry of Education and, therefore, completed and submitted as instructed the requisition forms which were attracted to the circular memorandum.

Mr. Speaker, when at the end of the last academic year, schools compiled their booklists for parents—as schools do at the end of the academic year, in preparation for the new academic year—they, of course, did not include in that list those texts which they had recommended on the requisition form for purchase by the Ministry; because the Ministry informed them that these will be supplied by the Ministry, because they anticipated that those texts would be delivered in time for the commencement of the new academic year. But what they did include

on the parents' booklist were the complimentary workbooks, since these are not supplied by the Ministry at primary and secondary levels. So if there were books with workbooks, they asked the parents to buy the workbooks.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, administrators and staff went ahead, as has happened in schools—in good schools and well-organized schools—and planned and organized the appropriate schemes of work in the various subject areas to ensure the smooth, effective and efficient delivery of the curriculum for the imminent academic year 2011/2012. Mr. Speaker, we are dealing here with teaching children. Schools must be proactive and well prepared to receive their learners when they arrive at the commencement of the new academic year so that learning time is optimized.

So, Mr. Speaker, administrators, teachers and parents and, indeed, students, all assumed that all systems were on go for the commencement of the new academic year. Mr. Speaker, it was only about one week after the reopening of schools that principals realized that no textbooks, new or top-ups, would be forthcoming from the Ministry of Education. As a matter of fact, principals were only informed long after the fact, that their students would not receive textbooks and that they must make do with what they have.

Miss Hospedales: Shame on them!

Mr. De Coteau: You are going to hear shame just now!

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, September 07, 2011, during the debate in Parliament on the increase in the country's debt ceiling for fiscal year 2010/2011, I broached this issue of non-delivery of textbooks under the Textbook Rental Programme. The hon. Minister of Education responded to my query by stating that there was a surplus of textbooks in a warehouse, and that the situation would be rectified the following week.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister's response made absolutely no sense to me at all, since most, if not all of the texts in the warehouse would have been dated, old editions, somewhat irrelevant to the current curriculum. I say this because continuing research produces new information, which results in evolving curriculum and, as a consequence, a relentless demand is imposed on authors to constantly revise and update their texts. As a consequence, publishers are continuously printing new editions. So, Mr. Speaker, sometimes entire chapters are changed and sometimes there are completely new editions with a host of new information. I am sure that we could appreciate that we exist in an information era

and that information is dynamic and evolving. Mr. Speaker, it is now 10 weeks since school has begun and almost 10 weeks since the hon. Minister promised that the textbooks would be delivered to the children.

In an article—look I have it here, Mr. Speaker, it is almost turning yellow—in the *Daily Express* dated Wednesday, October 28, 2011—the article is entitled “Gopeesingh assures parents school books in two weeks”. The hon. Minister went on to tell the parents that they would certainly get the books in two weeks. He lamented that parents bought books, but parents had to buy books, because students did not have books. No books were delivered. Mr. Speaker, to date, no school, primary or secondary, has received a single textbook.

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame!

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, while he is talking about parents, I would like to refer to this letter in the *Daily Express* dated Monday, October 24, 2011. It is the “Letter of the day” by one Miss Ryan who is a parent.

“The late Dr. Eric Williams said that the future of our country is in the bookbags of our children. Then could someone explain to me why my son, who is a Form Two pupil at a government secondary school in the west, has not received a single rental textbook for this term to date (October 21)?

What is vexing me is the fact that I can afford to buy my son’s school books. At the end of September I made calls to the school, and to the Ministry of Education’s Port of Spain and Environs office.

Someone who was very cooperative directed me to enquire at a senior official’s office which I did and got some kind of explanation that I think only served to confuse the whole matter.

So I proceeded to ask if I could be furnished with a booklist to buy my son’s books and was told that books in the rental programme are not available in bookstores.”

That is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that is a fact.

“Shortly thereafter I saw an article in the daily newspaper assuring parents that the matter would be sorted out in two weeks, and we (the parents) were advised against purchasing books.

Hello! End-of-term exams begin in November!

When parents were responsible for buying all their children’s textbooks, and a child went to school without them, the parent was usually held accountable. Since this responsibility has been taken away from the parent, who is to be held accountable for the empty bookbags?”

Friday, November 11, 2011

School Books

[MRS. MCINTOSH]

She is asking, Mr. Speaker, who now is to be held accountable for the empty bookbags She continues:

“I do not have a PhD in anything but I do know that copybooks, notebooks, sketchpads, pens, pencils etc are less-than-adequate resources for any schoolchild. I do not care who started this textbook rental thing. If we do not have proper resources to handle this thing properly, move on to plan B, whatever that is.

Please give me back my responsibility to purchase all my child’s textbooks! Don’t make me have to beg for bread to feed my child when I am capable and willing to go get my own bread, because when I look into his bookbag (and I do look) I don’t like how the future looks.”

When she looks into the schoolbag, she does not like how the future looks. Dr. Eric Williams told us that the future of our nation lies in the schoolbags of our children. Mr. Speaker, she does not like how the future looks. We are in trouble! Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is 10 weeks now that the school term has commenced.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that only Friday, November 04, 2011 suppliers received book orders from the Ministry of Education. It is also my understanding that it is most highly unlikely that those books would be delivered to schools before the end of the school term. Mr. Speaker, why is this so? Texts have to be printed. They are not standing there with the suppliers, they have to be printed. They have to be bound, some locally and some abroad. Mr. Speaker, this process takes time. It is not an easy fix.

In addition, the books coming from abroad—and some do come from abroad—have to be shipped due to the heavy weight of the texts. Textbooks weigh a lot. Mr. Speaker, shipping takes a long time and airfreighting the heavy load does not seem to be a viable option since the cost is prohibitive. Furthermore, to date, suppliers still have not received a distribution and delivery schedule, which advises them as to how many books they should deliver and to which schools.

Mr. Speaker, an entire school term—I stand here and I say it, and it pains me as an educator. I have been there. I know what it is. It pains me as an educator. They should be ashamed of themselves—will elapse without the critical tools for the successful delivery of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools, and that is shameful.

Mr. Speaker, this is the most important term of the academic year, a term when teachers try to optimize teaching and learning time. Mr. Speaker, I am

afraid that this unfortunate aberration has had a negative impact on the effective and efficient delivery of the curriculum in most of our nation's schools. Mr. Speaker, principals, teachers and parents are most concerned about the negative student outcomes that would inevitably result from this terrible fiasco.

I would like the hon. Minister of Education to tell the parents and students why this debacle has occurred. The hon. Minister must explain to the parents and the students, the circumstances surrounding the compromise of the delivery of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago, because if this Government professes to love children so very much, then there must be very good reasons—and we did not hear them—why this atrocity was visited upon our nation's children.

Mr. Speaker, a possible reason for this delay in the delivery of textbooks to schools was brought to my attention, and it is in this vein that I ask the question. Is there a plan—I am only asking—to get rid of some of the current authors and suppliers and replace them with new persons who are friends of the Government? [*Crosstalk*] In addition, the hon. Minister had jumped the gun when he issued a circular memorandum to principals without carefully thinking through all the implications. They love to do that! They love to jump the gun and implement without thinking through the process.

Mr. Speaker, the move to select new authors, publishers and suppliers began to backfire. This is what I understand. The current authors and suppliers who had been doing an excellent job objected strenuously to being replaced, and some of the new candidates started to squabble over who should receive the biggest share of the pie. In any event, it is my understanding that the enormity of the expenditure involved in the purchase of entirely new books was becoming unwieldy, so the programme was halted until the situation could be adequately resolved. While the programme was halted, all of this is in total disregard to the fact that principals, parents and most of the students were anticipating the delivery of textbooks in time for the new academic year.

In any case, if it is the cost of providing a brand new set of textbooks for our nation's children—why should that be a problem? Why should the cost of supplying these new textbooks be a problem? It was never a problem under the PNM administration. Besides, Mr. Speaker, did the Ministry of Education not receive a very sizeable portion of the 2010/2011 budget allocation, actually the highest, \$8 billion?

Mr. Speaker, we are speaking here about school books for the beloved children of our nation; books to support curriculum delivery; books to assist our

School Books

[MRS. MCINTOSH]

children to learn so that they could become well-educated citizens who could make a meaningful contribution to our society and so evade a life of crime and escape becoming a menace to our society. This Government said it is fighting crime, but is this the route it has taken in respect of our children's education and the delivery of our children's education?

Mr. Speaker, we are talking here about investment into the development of the nation's human resource potential. The Prime Minister says that she is emulating the Singaporean model. Well, in Singapore, dear Prime Minister, no stone is left unturned. I visited that country and I spent three weeks there, courtesy the PNM administration. No stone is left unturned when it comes to education and the development of the human resource potential; no stone. You see, this is what the People's National Movement had set about to do and the PNM had, indeed, established a very sound foundation in education, and left a fine legacy that this Government ought to be making every effort to emulate and build upon and not destroy, Mr. Speaker.

When we think of education, we should think of investment into the future of our nation as Dr. Eric Williams, the "Father of our Nation" advised. Instead we seem to be investing heavily in gambling, expanding Play Whe. We now have three draws: one at ten o'clock, one at midday and one at six o'clock. [*Crosstalk*] I understand two more draws are coming. Very proudly, the Member for Chaguanas West is telling me two more are coming. Thereupon, I would like to pose the question, is it that this Government prefers to invest in nurturing a society of gamblers than one of learners? Mr. Speaker, I rest my case and, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

3.15 p.m.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion and I reserve the right to speak.

Question proposed.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you. Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members of this distinguished House. We are grateful to the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West for raising this issue. Of course, we are going to give the response that is required of a government and the Ministry of Education for the nation at large, and for the quarter of a million children in our schools. But I am truly amazed and really I am in shock, and I am in bewilderment and consternation having listened to the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West as the Member stood there for

more than half an hour in what I would call exuberant sanctimonious hypocrisy—*[Desk thumping]*—and cultured pretence about caring for the nation’s students not getting their textbooks.

Mr. Speaker, it is complete mischief with unmitigated falsified veracity; it is wicked and vicious; it is a vicious political propaganda—their trademarks and hallmarks. It is in their DNA. Mr. Speaker, I believe that that PNM team must patent their trademarks and their hallmarks—false, wicked, putrid, political propaganda, spewing malodorous untruths, half-truths and deliberately crafted sinister innuendos. *[Desk thumping]* If you are seeking to identify culprits for the resultant decadent education system which you have caused, and for the suffering of our children and the poor failing of our students, you must look to your left down to this end and you must look to a few seats down to your right as well. That is your administration and your PNM successive administrations that have caused this resultant, widespread gang and criminal activity amongst the thousands of our youths. *[Crosstalk]* You have failed them miserably. Thousands have been left out of the system. They have lost self-respect; they have lost self-esteem; they have lost their self-worth, and you come here to criticize the Ministry of Education today now there for 17 months.

Miss Cox: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: What is your point? “What you get up for?”

Miss Cox: —a point of the order, 36(5).

Hon. Member: “What number? What is it?” Nonsense!

Miss Cox: “You name Mr. Speaker? Why you doh shut up?”

Hon. Members: “Oh my gosh!”

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, just now I will deal with that. *[Crosstalk]* Please, please, Member for Port of Spain South, Member for Fyzabad. I think hon. Member for Caroni East and Minister of Education, Members are of the view that the language that you used a short while ago attributed motives to them that they find objectionable. That is not only an opinion. I would ask you not to go there and observe Standing Order 36(5) because—Member for Fyzabad, you are disturbing the Speaker—so I would ask the Member for Caroni East, observe 36(5) and do not impute improper motives to the Members on the other side of this honourable House. So I would ask you to be guided accordingly. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I am always guided by your distinguished presence in the Chair. I meant no disrespect but what I am stating are facts. Anyway, they have been there for 37 out of 49 years

since Independence—that is a fact. Is there anything wrong in making that statement? Since Independence what have you achieved in the education system?

You have created a vicious youth population with almost 4,000 students leaving the secondary school system on a yearly basis and in gang and criminal activity, and you have failed these students. Mr. Speaker, for about 30 years their PNM administrations did not give the primary school students a place in secondary school, for 7,000 to 10,000 students in primary schools did not get a place in secondary school, so we have almost 250,000 citizens in Trinidad and Tobago who did not have a secondary education because of the PNM's education process. And out of that 250,000 people this is where the criminal activity takes place because the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Crosstalk*]

Miss Cox: Mr. Speaker, I stand again on 36(5) where he is imputing improper motives and saying that the PNM is responsible for criminal and gang activity. Okay, Mr. Speaker, that is what he is saying.

Mr. Speaker: I have already advised the Member and in this particular instance I overrule that point of order. Continue. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I spoke about an administration; I spoke about 30 years of their administrations which have given rise to this problem. Mr. Speaker, I am coming to the issue now.

The textbook industry from 2003—2010 under your two previous Ministers of Education was plagued with massive corruption and widespread nepotism and gross misappropriation of state funds. Mr. Speaker, \$726 million in the textbook rental programme and the textbook loan programme, a multimillion-dollar industry in six years they spent—and how did they spend it? Nearly 5.6 million textbooks were purchased for primary and secondary schools.

Publishers, authors, booksellers and printers were urgently seeking meetings with the Minister in the Ministry of Education and myself from the day we came in—Mr. Speaker, that is the truth—to meet with us and tell us about the corrupt, irregular, inefficient state of the textbook rental programme, with flagrant nepotism. Hundreds of authors who had put their hard work and time in producing books, in authoring books, could not get their books evaluated in their textbook rental programme. For years they felt disenfranchised, and today you have the audacity to come to say that authors were struggling to get the books on the list. “Is you prevented them from getting the books on the list because—[*Interruption*]—I will tell you why you prevented them from getting it.”

Hon. Member: Apologize!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, you have to apologize! Mr. Speaker, they had been unable to get—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West and the Member for Point Fortin—listen—when the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was delivering her presentation I sought to ensure that there was order and if there was disorder somebody could have risen on a point of order, nobody did. What I am saying is that the hon. Minister of Education is on his legs, it does not matter how you feel about his contribution once he is not violating the Standing Orders—and only I have the authority to determine that along with you when you rise—let the Member speak in silence. Observe Standing Order 40(b) and (c) respectively. Hon. Minister of Education, you may continue.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, thank you for your protection. Mr. Speaker, these hundreds of authors had been unable to get their books evaluated by the Ministry of Education for almost 8 to 9 years—you could imagine the pain and the suffering they felt. They put their hard-earned time to publish, to author these books and the Ministry turned a blind eye to them and they could not get their books evaluated to be put on the textbook loan rental programme, and \$726 million spent by their administration in nine years. More than 24 publishers submitted their books for evaluation and those books were left in the cupboards and put there and nothing was done to them. Four large printers in Trinidad and Tobago came in complaining, longing for jobs to print the textbooks in Trinidad and Tobago while the old publishers continued to send their books to India and China, printing their books overseas while these four large printers in Trinidad and Tobago suffering and thousands of jobs which we could have given to people in the printing industry could not have been given because all those publishers in the \$726 million were sending their books to be printed abroad.

There was an intervention by our Minister of Trade and Industry and the printers went to see him and they said to him: "Minister, what has happened to us? What have we done wrong? For 9—10 years we cannot get the printing industry for the printing of textbooks when these textbooks could be printed right here and we will create hundreds and thousands of jobs for us in Trinidad and Tobago." They did not bother with that. They did not even take that into consideration at all, so the printing and the publishing of these books went on outside of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, when we came in, Minister De Coteau and myself felt it was intolerable and we decided that we would bring back some decency and order and transparency and accountability into the system which can withstand any probity. The Ministry of Education had two years of giving the laptops; the first year cost \$83 million and the second year cost \$50 million, not a person across there can accuse this Government of anything, of lack of transparency and accountability. [*Desk thumping*] They spent \$726—but wait!

Mr. Speaker, it is our responsibility and we are characteristically compelled to return equity and fair play and honesty and justice to the system, and that is the eternal hallmark and the sacred watchwords and purpose of our People's Partnership Government: equity, honesty, fair play, social justice, transparency, accountability and probity. And this is why within the first 30 days of coming into Government, the hon. Prime Minister kept her promise and introduced in Parliament the Motion to ensure transparency and accountability in all procurements. She promised that and she delivered!

Mr. Speaker, let us go into more details on the textbook industry. One publisher in 2007 received contracts for \$30 million in primary schools and \$30 million in secondary schools. One publisher got \$60 million worth in the textbook industry in publications, as a publisher.

3.30 p.m.

Why? There was widespread nepotism, let me just say. So you could understand the outcry of discrimination, and the fraud and nepotism in the system by the publishers. The 24 publishers, all the authors, all the principals and the booksellers were crying out, and they came to Minister De Couteau, the Permanent Secretaries in the Ministry and myself. We have been told that one senior officer of a particular department in the Ministry of Education at that time had a palatial mansion built by that publisher—had a palatial mansion built by that publisher.

In light of this, the Minister in the Ministry of Education and the Minister of Education are in the process of initiating a forensic audit into this multibillion-dollar textbook scam. Let me assure this honourable House that anyone found responsible for wrongdoing in this matter, no matter how high up that person is in the Ministry during this period, he will have to answer to the law. The full arm of the law will be ensured and exacted on the filthy perpetrators of this heinous crime committed against our nation's children. And you come today pretending to care for the parents and students.

Mrs. McIntosh: I come pretending to be caring? He is speaking to me. Mr. Speaker, I am caring; let him please take it back.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You come here today to say that you care for the parents and students. [*Crosstalk*] This is a situation of a sham. The 3 Canal group spoke of a “mocking pretender”. Let us see whether we could sing that tune in Parliament today, the “Mocking Pretender”. [*Crosstalk*]

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, no way; Standing Order 36(5)! You have been insulting us enough, Member for Caroni East!

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no!

Miss McDonald: You are calling us—

Mr. Speaker: Member, Member, Member, Member for Port of Spain South, Member for Port of Spain South, Members; listen. You can rise—[*Crosstalk*]—please, Members, the temperature. Member for Port of Spain South, cool it! [*Laughter*] If you want to rise on a point of order, rise under Standing Order 35(1), submit your point and I will rule. You are not to rise and make statements at the same time. No Member is supposed to do that.

If you feel offended—hon. Member for Caroni East and Minister of Education, I ask you once again, do not impute improper motives to any Member of this honourable House. Members on the Opposition Bench who have made their contribution, do not imply, do not impute, improper motives, especially to the mover of the Motion. The mover of the Motion is an hon. Member, if you want to move any motion challenging her integrity, do it under Standing Order 36(10), but not during an ordinary contribution, please. So make your contribution without imputing improper motives to the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, or collectively to the Members of the Opposition. Please, continue.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I can assuredly tell you that the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West is not a mocking pretender. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] While they speak on the other side, I want to draw to the nation’s attention and this honourable Parliament, that they had no systemic structured implementation to correct the massive inefficiencies in a chaotic education, administration and school system. With prolonged deficiencies and weaknesses in infrastructure, teacher training, school-based management, administrative bungling, weak curriculum department, weak student support services, absent management capabilities, weak technical/vocational educational training programme and a do or die SEA that puts these parents and students in stress for prolonged periods of time, absent intervention in a

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lamentable literacy and numeracy failure, ranking 62—Trinidad and Tobago is ranked 62 out of 82 countries evaluated in the PIRLS study, the Programme for International Reading and Literary Studies, and the TIMMS—not me—and so many other areas.

We have 41 units in the Ministry of Education with 27 departments, all overflowing on themselves. No one knows what the other one is doing. You have three departments: planning, research and evaluation and another one doing the same thing. This is what we inherited. My colleague, Minister De Coteau, would tell you that this is no lie; they were all falling over themselves. No attempt at organizational restructuring nor institutional strengthening. They did planning, and built secondary schools; \$200 million for a secondary school and \$40 million for a primary school. They committed this People's Partnership Government to have to spend \$1.4 billion for eight secondary schools, and another \$360 million for nine primary schools which they started since 2007, and none had been completed by them. When we asked the last administration, "Where are your schools?", you said you were building schools, but not one secondary school was completed, not one primary school was completed by them.

They built 27 early childhood education centres in nine years. We built 23 early childhood education centres in 16 months. [*Desk thumping*] We have completed two secondary schools. We have built six primary schools already at a cost of less than \$4 million each. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and the Member for Tabaquite could testify that two primary schools were built in their constituencies in less than 28 days, costing less than \$4 million, the Member for Couva South as well.

Mr. Manning: Two cow sheds.

Miss Hospedales: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Forty million dollars.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Arouca/Maloney, withdraw that word that you just used. You said something, could you withdraw it, please.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Withdraw what you said, just apologize.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: I want to advise Members, the acoustics are very bad in this Chamber, and your voice travelled. I heard exactly what you said. [*Interruption*] Not you, Member for San Fernando East. I just want to make a final appeal, because it seems to me that whenever I rule on matters there is disrespect and a

disregard for the authority of the Chair. I want to advise Members, I am giving all Members an adequate opportunity to respect the ruling of the Chair, but if I see consistency in disregarding the authority of the Chair I will direct that Member to vacate this Chamber for the rest of the evening. I ask for silence for the third time to allow the hon. Minister of Education to make his point. Members of the Opposition, if you have points that you want to note, take them down. The debate will continue next Private Members' Day, and you will have your chance to speak. Hon. Member for Caroni East, Minister of Education, please continue.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 16 months we built 23 early childhood education centres, and we have another 24 on the drawing board. In the repair and construction programme, within 16 months in two summer vacation periods, we performed over 400 infrastructural repair programmes in the schools in Trinidad and Tobago. We have 476 primary schools, 152 secondary schools and 165 early childhood education centres. Almost every school was touched, almost 400 projects. Repair programmes were conducted in these schools. This is the type of work that this People's Partnership Government is doing.

When we went into the Ministry of Education, particularly in relation to the textbook programme, we met an absent Textbook Management Unit, one person in that unit. There was no Textbook Loan Rental Programme Unit in the Ministry of Education; no Textbook Rental Programme Unit present in the Ministry; no Learning Material Evaluation Committee in place; no Learning Material Evaluation Appeal Committee in place. So if a publisher or author felt aggrieved by a particular situation, there was no committee for that person to appeal to in the Ministry. There was no Textbook Evaluation Committee; no Curriculum Committee for evaluation. This is what we met when Minister De Coteau and myself went into the Ministry of Education.

This is what happened: there were contract officers in those various units. Their contract time had finished, and we were left with no one in these various units. [*Interruption*] This Textbook Evaluation Committee began in 2002 and became defunct in 2008. The Learning Material Evaluation Committee became defunct in 2009. In 2009; who sent them home? Not the People's Partnership Government, not Minister De Coteau nor myself, nor the Permanent Secretary, Miss Kathleen Thomas.

A recommendation had been proposed by your PNM Cabinet for the establishment of a Learning Materials Evaluation Appeals Committee. The appeals committee was put forward by the Learning Material Evaluation

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Committee in recognition of the fact that not all its decisions were met with favour in the centre. It was called LMEC. LMEC underscored that this was necessary to provide some form of redress to publishers and authors of textbooks and other materials, whose submissions were found to be unsuitable for use in schools. Materials were usually found to be unacceptable because they fell short in one or more of the following areas: one, conforming to the curriculum, reflecting inappropriate methodologies for delivery of the curriculum; language and editorial quality and design and presentation. So there was no appeals committee.

Mr. Speaker, LMEC, in its last report of 2009 stated that this area was one of its challenges, and that several publishers and authors were dissatisfied with the evaluation reports they received and demanded some form of redress. What did I say at the beginning? This is what I am repeating here. The committee's proposal, which is the Learning Materials Evaluation Committee, was not approved by their Cabinet.

Mr. Manning: Say again?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It was not approved by your Cabinet, so there was no form of redress by any author, any publisher, who spent their lives writing books. When they found that there was no ability to get redress, there was no appeals committee to deal with it in the first place. Their Cabinet refused to set up an appeals committee. That is democracy for you. That is democracy for them. That is transparency and accountably to the nation.

Another challenge faced by the LMEC involved the refusal by some school principals to utilize the texts selected by LMEC. The principals refused, and the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West would know that there are some aberrant principals who refuse to take orders. They refused to accept the texts provided by the Ministry of Education to their schools. More principals would advise parents to purchase other texts. The principals advised students to purchase other texts. Yes, aberrant principals. [*Interruption*] You were a principal; Minister De Coteau was a principal and a supervisor. Because of the situation the Ministry, upon investigation, discovered several schools where the materials provided were not used by the students.

The Ministry of Education entered a partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation to embark on a project to remove excess textbooks from secondary schools. Books were being sent to the schools; they were not being used by the principals and teachers. The principals were advising the parents and students to purchase other books, and the books sent by the Ministry of Education

were wrapped in cellophane and thrown in a corner. The books removed during this exercise comprised unusable textbooks which were either no longer approved for use in the educational system, because they refused to use them, out of adoption, or were damaged or in excess. A total of 124,628 textbooks and resources were collected, dumped in a corner, thrown in a little place in their schools, wrapped in cellophane still and were not being used. Where was their supervision? Where was their supervision?

3.45 p.m.

At present the unit is in the process of compiling an inventory of the textbooks and resources to be removed at the Form 1 and Form 2 levels. Mr. Speaker, the Permanent Secretary told me just a few days ago that they had to use two three-ton trucks to remove textbooks from one school—two three-ton trucks to remove textbooks from one school that were unused, Mr. Speaker. What a waste of money by them; a deliberate waste of money! Yes!

What we project to be roughly 108,000 textbooks more—and this gives an approximation of you know how many textbooks?—232,000 textbooks thrown into corners in all classrooms and in all schools around the country; 232,000 textbooks.

Mr. Indarsingh: Quantify that in money.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And we expect that the number of books to be collected from the secondary schools to rise as there are several schools that have indicated that they have excess textbooks.

So why did your administration and two previous Ministers from 2001—2010, Mr. Speaker, supervise a situation where you have 232,000 textbooks with hard-earned taxpayers' money dumped into classrooms, into schools in separate corners, and not being used? And all this textbook management evaluation committee and the textbook loan rental programme committee, all defunct; nobody supervising it, nobody dealing with it whatsoever.

Currently our facilities have become inadequate to store the excess textbooks, and we used to warehouse them at TTPost. You know what we have to do now? We have to move it from TTPost warehouse to the Ministry of Education compound at Trade Zone—because it is hundreds and thousands of textbooks—for onward transmission to schools. These are the books now that we are using to give back to the schools because they had not been used, the principals had not used them. The principals did not allow the teachers to use them, Mr. Speaker.

We are replacing the books that had been probably lost, stolen, mutilated and not returned by previous students.

Mr. Speaker, all the schools in Trinidad and Tobago have books at the moment that are supposed to be used for three years. So, it is not that the students went to the schools and did not have any books and they had to buy books, there are books in the system, thousands of books in the primary school system, the secondary school system.

Hon. Member: Ask Hazel.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Lots of materials to be used in the early childhood education centres. The special needs children had materials to work with, Mr. Speaker, all the schools had material.

So what we had to do in effect, just by a simple method, is to just top-up but there was a big outcry by the principals that they were not being allowed to use the books that they wanted to use. And Minister De Coteau will tell you that they called for a meeting of the Ministers and the Ministry, the principals called for a meeting. And we met with them, and they said, “We want to use these books but we are not getting the permission to use these books. These other books that you all are purchasing are dumped on us, and we do not want to use them anymore.” We said, “All right. We will send a form to you”—that is the note—“the letter you wrote about, the correspondence from the permanent secretary. And we asked them to send in their information as to what they would like to use, and we would collate the evidence. They did not do it at first—not all the principals; you know there are so many aberrant principals. So we sent them a second letter—Minister De Coteau—and they responded. Up to now there are some principals who still have not responded and we will deal with that, and so we collected the information.

Now, you remember in our people’s manifesto we said that one of the things we would do is review our school’s curriculum. Well, we immediately went into a People’s Partnership Government. We went straight ahead. We had a two-day workshop in Cascadia to review the primary schools curriculum. Then my Cabinet told me, instructed me, they said, “Minister, you want to do some important things, the change of date of the SEA, the continuous based assessment, which will go towards the SEA, go back out for more consultation”. I was instructed by my Cabinet to go out for more consultation.

Minister De Coteau and myself went across the country, in seven districts in Trinidad and one in Tobago, and we had widespread consultations with parents,

students, teachers, principals, heads of departments, deans, everyone. And wherever we went, hundreds of people were there and they made their determination of how the primary school curriculum should move, and we took their recommendations, we have compiled them, they are on our website.

So, in the midst of a new primary school curriculum, how can we now say that we want, we could use “X” book and “Y” book, when we have not completed the exercise in time for this year? So, therefore, we could not have recommended any more new books for the primary school because the new curriculum which we know has to be done, involves physical education, the visual and performing arts, music, dance, theatre, drama, citizenry development, character development, morals, values, ethics, etiquette—all these things have to be taught—agri-science.

And what has not been examined has not been taught. And what has been happening in the primary school education system up to Standard 3, the subjects are taught to a minor extent, from Standards 4 and 5 they are not taught these valuable pieces of things because they are not examinable. And all of you will know that this is wrong, and this is one of the reasons why our education system has been decaying.

And I like your suggestion of a holistic development in education, and this is what we are in pursuit of, a holistic development. Because when we were asked about what is education; what we want for our children for education; we do not want a child to be just academically gifted alone. We want a child who must be mature and happy, a child who must be socially and culturally integrated into society, a child who must be physically fit and well-nutritioned, a child who must be able to realize his or her own full potential.

This is what we are looking for now in the education system and this is why we are moving to a continuous based assessment programme, so that the one do-or-die examination—the SEA—where you contribute a hundred marks to that one situation, we will, hopefully, by the 2012/2013 academic year, introduce 20 marks in the system where on the continuous based assessment, based on projects et cetera, the students will be able to get 20 per cent of the marks by 2012/2013. And in the next academic year 2013/2014 another 20 per cent, so we will have 40 per cent of the marks of the SEA given to the students before they even reach the SEA.

In that way we are creating the holistic development for the education of our children; children who will realize their own full potential: citizenry development, character development, morals, values, ethics, etiquette. And I am sure there are many Ministers of Education who preceded me; I thank them for their contribution and their hard work and their diligence in trying to carry the education process forward.

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I have taken over the baton, as I have said before, and it our duty, Minister De Coteau and myself, on behalf of the People's Partnership Government, to create a society for social mobility and social transformation. The work that we are doing now, the benefit will not be felt in the immediate now, but will be felt seven to 10 years down the line when the social transformation would have taken place to our students.

Hon. Member: You sound like a professor. Very good.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West spoke about interventions and performance and trends. I have spoken to my Finance and General Purpose Committee and the Cabinet, and we have given them the information and the facts of this but I want to give it out to the Members of this distinguished House and the national community.

For the last 10 to 12 years we have had a birth rate of about 18,000 per year, 17,500/17,000. So every year about 17,000 children write the Common Entrance Examination.

Hon. Member: How many deaths?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Twelve thousand deaths per year. So, the natural increase in the population is between 5,000—6,000 per year, except those who come from abroad by migration and so on. Now, these 17,000 students who write the SEA, what happens to them? By virtue of what our hon. Prime Minister and then Minister of Education in 2000, "ensure that no child will be left behind," we created a system of a universal secondary education, almost all 17,000 children go into secondary schools, with probably about 400 or 500 having to re-write the examination because they are not yet 13, they have not done well and they have another opportunity to write the SEA. Then there are a few who have done very badly, we have to send them to the Servol Life Centre schools where we have to give them some special development.

So, approximately 17,000 move into the secondary education system. And Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, and my distinguished Members on the other side, let us get an idea of what is happening to these 17,000 children.

We had introduced, or your government had introduced or whatever, a test in Standard 1—the National Examination Test in Standard 1. We found that one out of two students in Standard 1 failed to be able get 50 per cent of the marks.

In Standard 3 there is another national test, the same one out of two students failed to get 50 per cent, and in the SEA the same one out of two students failed to get 50 per cent in Standard 5. So what has happened?

Why has that been allowed to continue from Standard 1—one out to two, failure, Standard 3—one of the two, failure; Standard 5 one out of two, failure; the same.

Hon. Member: Fifty per cent.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You spoke about intervention, same 50 per cent. What intervention did you all adopt or approach and what did you institute? You did not implement any major intervention that would have corrected this dismal performance of the students. So what are we left to do now?

Our intervention is taking place at Infant Years 1 and 2 and Standard 1. *[Interruption]* Yes, I am glad you are saying that literacy and numeracy are very important, so that our intervention is taking place in Infant year 1 and 2 and Standard 1 to ensure that the literacy and numeracy come up to scratch from early. We are not bothering to wait until they go into secondary school for remedial teachers to come into place, we are starting at an early level.

In addition to that, we have decided that we are bringing about universal early childhood education. The hon. Prime Minister has instructed both Ministers to ensure that before the end of our term in office, possibly in another two years, that we would bring about universal early childhood education.

And I think you have heard me speak about it: the private sector/public sector partnership. We have about 7,000 students now out of the 34,000 students in a formal education system. We are going to the 200 out of the 700 registered kindergartens and nurseries to pick those 200 that are more closely comfortable with an early childhood education and help them to improve their infrastructure and their teachers' training and so on and bring them on stream. We will take care of another 12,000 children—that is 12,000 and 7,000, 19,000.

And we are going to go into the primary schools—200 primary schools which are 70 per cent underpopulated and ensure that we build some early childhood education centres there where we will take care of another 12,000 children. So, 12,000 and 12,000, 24,000, plus we have 7,000 in the system, 31,000; we will come close the 34,000 possibly in two years.

We have 3,000 early childhood education teachers to train. We have been speaking with the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, University of the Southern Caribbean, UTT, UWI, COSTAATT, and Roytec and the CREDI Institute and Servol to help us train at least 1,000 of these early childhood education teachers for three years. So, by the end of three years we would have trained 3,000 early childhood education teachers, one ECCE teacher to 10 students, so we will take care of our 34, 000 students with schools and with teachers.

Mr. Speaker, let me just go on to speak a little more about interventions. So, 17,000 go into secondary school and they are not prepared, half of them are not prepared. When they reach CSEC—by the time they have to write CSEC only 12,500 of these students write five subjects or more including Maths and English. So, 4,500 have decided that they cannot write five subjects or more, so they are failing through the system already. And out of the 12,500 who write five subjects or more, 6,500 pass.

So, from the 17,000 we are down to 6,500 getting five subjects or more; 10,500 have not gone through the system properly. And out of the 6,500 who pass five subjects or more, 3,500 go to CAPE and 2,100—60 per cent of them—get grades 1 to 3 in three subjects.

So, from 17,000 entering the secondary schools or primary schools, we end up with 2,000 or 2,100 getting three subjects or more at advanced level CAPE. So we have a deficiency of about 15,000.

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is undergoing a scientific approach to determine, and some research, what happens to the other 3,000 students who have passed five subjects or more and have not gone on to CAPE. Most likely they have gone into the other tertiary institutions to do other things or have some have gone into the world of work. So that is the situation.

You have assisted me in bringing out some important information to the national community on performance and trends and interventions.

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. E. McLeod*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Before you continue, hon. Member, I did indicate to Members earlier on that at four o'clock we are going to suspend the sitting. However, based on further discussions with the Leader of the House and the Chief Whip, we have agreed that we will go until 4.30 p.m. We shall suspend at 4.30 p.m. and then the Marshal will then address the entire House. At 4.30 p.m. we will ask the members of the public gallery to vacate the Chamber, retire, as well as the two or three members from the media. What we can tell the visitors who are here with us is that on Tuesday of next week at 4.30 p.m., along with the media, at that same time a briefing will be held for members of the media, as well as visitors in our

public gallery. But for purposes of today at 4.30 p.m. we will ask both visitors and members of the media to retire, so that Members of Parliament can have a discussion on a safety and health briefing that will take place in the absence of the media and members of the public gallery. You may continue, hon. Minister of Education.

4.00 p.m.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me just give some idea about the current procurement situation as has been asked by the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. The situation now with respect to the provision of textbooks for the period 2011/2012 is not any different from what has happened in previous years. There are books in the system, the books are supposed to be in the system for three years. The books are handed down from year to year and those books are presently in the system now; what we have to do is a top-up situation which we are doing.

Now, how do we go about doing the top-up? Before the school year ends the principals are provided with a requisition form to indicate the number of textbooks they require to replace the lost, damaged or stolen ones as well as other materials. On the basis of their request the Ministry provides top-ups to the schools. Materials are traditionally provided and the school textbooks are traditionally provided during the period September to January during the start of the second term in the academic year.

Now, you are accusing this present administration of not having books in the system, and no child has any books. As indicated, there are books that are used in the system for three years and those books are in the system. All those books that have been thrown into corners, we are redistributing them now, the 228,000 textbooks. Mr. Speaker, just let me give you an idea of the start and end date of delivery of textbooks by former Ministry of Education officials from 2004—2012:

- 2004/2005 academic year, the delivery start date was July 2004, it ended in December 2004—those were only dictionaries and atlases that were given;
- in 2005/2006, the delivery started in July 2005, it finished in December 2005. What month are we in now? November;
- in 2006/2007, it started in July 2006, finished in March 2007—

[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

[*Interruption*]*—*10 months in 2006/2007, the start and end of the delivery of the textbooks;

- in 2007/2008, it started in September 2007, finished in April 2008—this is authenticated documentation given to me by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Miss Kathleen Thomas;
- 2008/2009, the delivery started in September 2008, it finished in April 2009. How many months? Seven months;
- 2009/2010, it started in September 2009, and it finished in April 2010—so we still have January, February, March, April, December; five months to go. [*Interruption*] Yes.
- in 2010/2011—EFCL 2010/2011—we started in July 2010 under our administration and we finished in January 2011. We never finished in March, we never finished in April, we finished in January this year;
- 2011/2012, we started in September 2011 and it is ongoing.

Today I checked with EFCL—as we speak today, publishers are distributing the books in the schools. They have been given the mandate, they have the manifest, they know how many books they have to distribute per school, which schools they have to distribute to and they are moving ahead with it. There are some textbooks which have to be gotten from outside. Most of the books that have been printed are in the country, some have to be retrieved externally and we have indicated it to them, bring these books by air rather than by ship. So, we hope that we will complete the distribution of these textbooks by the latest December, early January.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the context for the year 2011/2012, as different from what the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was trying to give to the national population that there are no books in the schools, we have not been distributing any books, all falsehoods—

Mrs. McIntosh: Hon. Member, I was referring to the fact that you had requested from the principals that they would get new books, so they designed their schemes of work around the new books and that is where everything fell down, because the new books that they were anticipating, expecting to receive, they were not delivered. That is what I was talking about.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I will come to that; I am coming to that now.

Miss Cox: But when?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I have some time, you granted me some time for extension and I would take my time, Member for Laventille West, right?

Hon. Member: Laventille East/Morvant.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So, in the context for the year 2011/2012, the Ministry of Education continues to meet its commitment to provide textbooks and materials to schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago within the first term of the school year.

Arrangements to procure textbooks and other materials for the academic year 2011/2012 began in November last year. However, this was in response to concerns raised by principals with the Ministry of Education and by several publishers/authors about serious irregularities in the selection, distribution and purchase of textbooks and other materials for schools. This included a review of the expenditure to individual publishers which demonstrated—as I said earlier, one publisher receiving orders totalling close to \$60 million.

The Ministry had a right and a responsibility to respond to these concerns and we met with the publishers and authors, 24 publishers, to hear their views on two occasions in order to determine a way forward, since it was evident that as stakeholders they had very little confidence in the current programme, so we had to seek their views as stakeholders in the situation. Faced with the situation in which many inconsistencies were raised and in the absence of the evaluation committee, the Learning Material Evaluation Committee, the Ministry took the decision to allow principals to select suitable texts and other materials for the schools for the period 2011—2014, which is what they requested “eh”, pending the Ministry of Education’s review of the textbook programme and a decision on the way forward for its implementation.

Now, as I said, requests were sent out to schools in June 2010; responses were received in July 2010, however, a compilation of the requests submitted showed a proposed expenditure of \$130 million, even in the face of us not giving the correct book because of the new revised primary school curriculum. So we were going to have to spend \$130 million as opposed to expenditure of about \$30 million to top-up the books. Prudence will dictate that you do not go that route of spending \$135 million, when you are not sure about what books you really want to use for the primary schools. So, a decision was taken with all the stakeholders, [*Interruption*] the publishers, the authors, the printers and the Ministry of Education officials, all the stakeholders decided that it is in the best interest for this academic year to have the same books continue to be used and the top-ups done by the Ministry of Education. EFCL has been requested through a Cabinet Note, as you had done in 2009, and they have begun the purchase and the distribution of the textbooks in the schools.

As I said, there are excess textbooks and the Ministry of Education is presently engaged in an exercise to redistribute most of these books into the schools. We have begun an exercise to replace the lost or damaged textbooks through the procurement by EFCL. So, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, when you say that no school to date has received a single textbook, that is wrong. [*Interruption*] Yes. When you said that we said that we would sort it out in two weeks; we have sorted it out in two weeks. When you said that we do not have a distribution schedule up to date; we have a distribution schedule. EFCL has a manifest of the distribution for all the schools. I checked with them this morning and that manifest is working smoothly, they are distributing books as we speak, at the moment, and are removing—

You made a very strong statement, you said that we are removing current authors and trying to give our friends of the People's Partnership Government—

Mrs. McIntosh: I asked a question!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Okay, well I will answer that question then, if you asked a question. The answer to that question is obviously, no. We are trying to bring a level of transparency, accountability and probity into the system of the multimillion textbook industry and a fiasco over the years, to bring a semblance of decorum, honesty, equity and order into the system.

Therefore, this is why we are addressing the aggrieved authors who have been standing for nine years, waiting for their books to be evaluated so that, if found to be properly published, they can be put on the market for the Ministry of Education to purchase these books.

So, what is our strategic plan? Our strategic plan is placing priority on the best value outcome for our nation's children. Notwithstanding the above, the review of the textbook rental programme is being undertaken in recognition of the public view that there are inconsistencies within the entire process from selection to procurement, and in this regard the Ministry of Education is taking steps to ensure that accountability, equity and transparency are evident in the future implementation of the programme.

We are mindful of the fact that textbooks and other materials are a multimillion industry involving a wide range of stakeholders and public interests. In this regard, it is important that we as a Ministry limit the possibilities of person or persons acting in their own self-interest.

4 15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I have a graph to show the total number of textbooks that were purchased over a period of time. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Do you have permission for that?

[Dr. Gopeesingh holds up the graph]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, in 2007/2008, 200,000 textbooks were purchased. In 2008/2009 about 120,000; 2009/2010 300,000; 2010/2011, under our administration, 210,000 textbooks were provided. You will see here a peak between 2005-2007, when you began, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, where the Government at the time began to provide textbooks for secondary school students for Form 5 and Form 6, and because of the number of subjects in Form 5 and Form 6 your administration decided to give them all the books. We are not going to change that policy. We are not going to change that policy whatsoever.

I want to give you some information in the context of your whole question about finance. You said the Ministry of Education has gotten \$8 billion; well of course we share this between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education; about \$4.2 billion for the Ministry of Education, about \$3.8 for the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. In the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, the Minister has indicated that about \$680 million is on the GATE programme alone. So he is doing a rationalization, because we have found students to be jumping from one programme to another and there are about 32 tertiary institutions that are providing tertiary education for graduates, but it is being abused to some extent. That is his domain and he will speak to the national population on that issue.

Now, where do we spend our \$4.2 billion? Almost \$3 billion is in recurrent expenditure for paying 16,000 teachers; 3,000 public servants and about 800 contract officers. Let me just give you a little understanding as far as the teachers are concerned. We have 8,500 primary school teachers and about 6,500 secondary school teachers. We have 126,000 primary school students, let us say 130,000. In Infant Year 1 and 2, it is one teacher to 20 students. For Standards 1 to 5, it is one teacher for 25 students. Let us say we round it off to one teacher to 20 students. For 130,000 students we require 6,500 teachers. We have 8,500 teachers in the system in the primary school population. We have some schools where there is one teacher to seven students, one teacher to eight students, so we are doing a rationalization and in our workshop coming up on Tuesday, with all primary school principals, we are asking them to bring the information regarding the

number of students in the school, what was proposed, what they have, how many teachers and so on. So we are doing a rationalization.

Look at the secondary school system. It was supposed to be one teacher to 25 students. We have 86,000 students, let us say 90,000. Let us say we have one in 20, because we have degrees of specialization and so on in the secondary school system. So one teacher to 20 students, 90,000 students, so it is 4,500 teachers we need. Secondary schools—we have 6,500 teachers. So we have 2,000, questionably more, in the primary school—2,500 more and 2,000, questionably more, in the secondary school system.

So now, why is it that we as a nation in our education system continue to underperform for the last seven or eight years—we have the graphs to demonstrate it—when we have such a plethora of teachers? What is it? We have not been able to come to grips with the entire situation. And we have looked at all the strategic plans and all the reports and research projects over the last 10 years in the Ministry of Education on the shelves. We asked, what is the value outcome in our education system? None of those research projects told us anything about value outcome; and the value outcome I spoke about is the type of child that you want: a child who must realize his or her own fullest potential and a child who must be fully educated. We have not been able to get that.

I have spoken to a few Ministers of Education before and I would like to speak to more Ministers of Education. I will be very happy if we can put together a team and we bring all the previous Ministers of Education together and let us hear their views and let us move this process forward. I am seriously thinking about it. But nobody has been able to tell us that they had been successful in changing the education system for the holistic development of a child and we are strongly in pursuit of that.

Mr. Speaker, in that situation, the Ministry of Education, both Minister De Coteau, myself and the technocrats within the Ministry of Education, have come up with 16 defined priorities that at the end of our five-year term of office—first five-year term—we would have completed the following priorities: laptop initiatives, we will have 85,000 students receiving laptops in school and 6,000 teachers in secondary schools; universal early childhood education, 34,000 children between the ages of three to five would be adequately housed and adequately taught from that, that we are well on our way; we wanted to change the SEA date. By public consultation more than 75 per cent of the people, respondents and participants, said change it from March to early May, five weeks later; more than 85 per cent of the participants agreed to the change of the SEA method of evaluation and they have agreed and accepted the continuous based assessment programme where 40 per cent of the marks will be given in areas of physical education,

visual and performing arts, music, dance, theatre, drama, agri-science, citizenry development, character development, morals, values, ethics, etiquette. These could be measured very easily by projects; and we have been working with CXC to help us with a system to evaluate that. We are in a pilot project this year, 2011-2012 and hopefully we will introduce in a formal way in 2012-2013.

We are moving to increase more technical/vocational education training in the secondary school. That has been dormant for a long while. We know in the world of work, science and technology are important components for the development and for sustainable development of the country. For too long we have neglected technical/vocational education and so we are moving towards a strong introduction of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ), so that the students will move from Level 1 to Level 2 and to Level 3 and they will be fully certified by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

Teacher training; pretty shortly: in our primary schools we have only 400 teachers who do not have a teacher's training diploma or a bachelor's degree. We have sent in 200, and by the end of three years all the teachers within the primary school education would have a Teacher's diploma and a Bachelor of Education degree. [*Desk thumping*] We are not training them for that alone, but we are doing retraining with specialization in early childhood education, special education, et cetera. And we are going to be retraining our principals, heads of departments, deans and supervisors in management training and mediation skills, et cetera, alternate dispute resolution. Minister De Coteau has been championing that.

All the reports from since 1985 on violence in schools we have pulled together and we have a task force looking at that and working very strongly on the mediation projects and ADR and helping to try and reduce violence in schools. What we are doing will also help to reduce the violence.

I have spoken about infrastructure; I do not need to speak about it, we are going miles ahead. As I said before, we are not going to build primary schools at \$40 million; we are not going to build secondary schools at \$200 million; we can build primary schools at \$5 million that will last at least 50 years. So with \$40 million we could build eight primary schools. Do you know what the research has shown? More than 330 of our primary schools in this country are more than 50 years old. So you could imagine the amount of work we have to do as far as infrastructure in our primary schools. [*Interruption*] Yes, certainly former Prime Minister.

Mr. Manning: Thank you very much, hon. Member for Caroni East. You say that you all are going to be building schools at \$5 million a school as opposed to \$40 million that is your assertion—primary schools and secondary schools at what? How much for secondary schools?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Less than \$200 million.

Mr. Manning: Less than \$200 million. What I would like to know is this, what will be the differences in the design of the school that you intend to build as opposed to the school that was being built that you claim cost \$40 million?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We have been looking at it with designers, project managers and architects and so on. And the previous \$200 million schools were very elaborate and we could have reduced cost significantly. The designs will remain the same. We will be able to have pan in the classrooms, we will be able to have the auditorium, we will have all the rooms for teaching, for agri-science and for the tech-voc education, but it will cost less. When we build one of those for you we will show you. But let me just indicate as well—I have four more minutes. I will talk to you more because I only have four more minutes.

At the moment we have 25,000 vacant school places in the primary education. We have 25,000 spaces, and we have 5,000 places in the secondary education that we have not filled. So we do not necessarily need to build any more primary schools nor secondary schools because we have 5,000 spaces available in secondary schools and 25,000 in primary schools. What we will probably have to do is a redistributive issue.

So I am going on. We are now doing some organizational restructuring and institutional strengthening where we need leaders in the organization. Kotter speaks about leading change, and leading change you must have leaders in the organization. We are working to have 25 leaders in the organization, not Minister De Coteau and Minister of Education are the leaders alone, we are working to have 25 leaders in the organization. All of you know that parenting is an important factor in the education process. We want to bring the parenting issue to the forefront. We are improving literacy and numeracy by our interventions. We want to have career guidance for our students, so that in Form 2 and Form 3 they will be exposed to career guidance, where about 50 of the professions that are available for students to choose from—they do not understand and appreciate the 50 professions, they are only accustomed to law, medicine, engineering, teaching et cetera. So we want to expose that in Form 2 and Form 3 so they can choose their subjects and their careers.

We are doing a pilot testing, a neurodiagnostic testing to determine special needs in this country. We believe that there are about 30 per cent of the students with special needs, some form of autism, dyslexia and so on, neuronal problems, learning difficulties, attention deficit syndrome, et cetera, and we are moving to

have an understanding of doing a neurodiagnostic testing, visual and auditory as well. So that when we know that we will be able to determine what type of schools we build and how we manage that problem.

We are looking forward to improving the academic performances. We are in the process of curriculum development. We are going to have a strong communication strategy to tell the population what we are doing in education as I am trying to do at this moment. We have a strategy for understanding our key stakeholders. We have about 12 major stakeholders—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Member, you have about two minutes.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thus in closing, let me give you an idea of the breakdown of the expenditure. We spent \$1.4 million per day, 190 days in this whole year for school feeding. So we spend about \$236 million for school feeding every year; \$250 million for school security; over \$100 million for janitorial services and we spend now \$50 million for textbooks. Mr. Speaker, we are now doing a restructuring of our expenditure programme in the education process to bring about value for money so that at the end of our first five-year term in office we would have satisfied all the 16 priority areas and we would say that we as Ministers of Education and a People's Partnership Government have delivered to our nation's children.

Thank you very much.

SAFETY BRIEFING ON TOWER D

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, once again we are about to suspend the sitting. Again members of the public gallery, we apologize to you in terms of any inconvenience, but we will have a special briefing session for you next week Tuesday, as well as members of the media; only about two or three members of the media are currently in the Chamber and we want to have the entire parliamentary media core present when that briefing is taking place. So we apologize to the media, the small number that is here, and we will invite you to come here on Tuesday again and we will brief you sometime during the course of Tuesday evening, 4.30 or thereabout. But at this time we will suspend the sitting and we will invite the Marshal to address Members of this honourable House, and we will ask visitors to vacate and retire as well as members of the media and we will see both groups next week Tuesday where you will be briefed accordingly. This sitting is now suspended until we complete our exercise.

4.32 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

4.47 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to November 18, 2011 at 1.30 p.m. I serve notice to hon. Members that it is the intention of the Government to take through all its stages the Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) Bill, 2011.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.48 p.m.

**WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION
Prime Minister's Trip to Brazil, April 2011
(Details of)**

22. Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon asked the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications:

Could the Minister state the dates, times and places of all official duties conducted by the hon. Prime Minister on her recent trip to Brazil in April 2011?

Pursuant to his reply to question 22, earlier in the proceedings, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communication (Hon. Surujrattan Rambachan) caused to be circulated to Members of the House of Representatives the following:

It should be noted that the Honourable Prime Minister was scheduled to meet with the President of Brazil, Her Excellency Dilma Rouseff at 10.00 am on Friday April 29 in Rio De Janeiro where the President was also supposed to address the World Economic Forum in Latin America. However the President cancelled at last minute because of illness.

SATURDAY APRIL 30, 2011

10.00 am Review with team of Meetings and Development of a Plan of Action for follow up.

The Prime Minister and the delegation returned to Trinidad on Sunday May 01, 2011.