The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members: the Hon. Member, Nizam Baksh, Member of Parliament for Naparima is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period June 04, 2012 to June 12, 2012; the hon. Dr. Rupert Griffith, Member of Parliament for Toco/Sangre Grande is also currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period June 04 to June 10, 2012; the hon. Winston Peters, Member of Parliament for Mayaro has also asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period June 04 to June 13, 2012. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Eastern Regional Health Authority for the year ended September 30, 2007. [The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran)]

2. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Eastern Regional Health Authority for the year ended September 30, 2008. [Hon. W. Dookeran]

3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Eastern Regional Health Authority for the year ended September 30, 2009. [Hon. W. Dookeran]

Papers Nos. 1 to 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee

UNREVISED
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

(Presentation)

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report (2011/2012) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2012 Appropriation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that questions Nos. 96 to 100 be deferred for two weeks.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Percentage of Salary Increases
(January 2006 to March 2012)

96. Could the hon. Minister of Finance state what were the percentage increases in basic salary for workers at Petrotrin, TSTT and T&TEC for each year over the period January 2006 to March 2012? [Mr. C. Imbert]

Chief Executive Officer or Equivalent Office)
(Total Compensation Package as of April 12, 2012)

97. Could the hon. Minister of Finance state, without naming the office holders, the total compensation package, inclusive of salary and all allowances, as of April 12, 2012, paid to the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent office in the following State Enterprises/State Companies/Statutory Authorities:

i) First Citizens Bank Limited;
ii) Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited;
iii) Tourism Development Company Limited;
iv) Government Information Services Limited;

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v) Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited;
vi) Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago;
vii) Caribbean Airlines Limited;
viii) Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission;
ix) Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago;
x) Airport Authority of Trinidad and Tobago;
xi) National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago;
xii) Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago;
xiii) National Infrastructure Development Company Limited. [Mr. C. Imbert]

Ministry of Tobago Development
(Details of Amount Expended)

98. A. Could the hon. Minister of Tobago Development state the total amount expended by the Ministry of Tobago Development for expenses of the Minister, family members and staff associated with her, incurred at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Trinidad from June 2010 to the present?

B. Could the Minister provide a breakdown of this sum indicating the total spent on:

i) Accommodation;
ii) Telephone;
iii) Meals; and
iv) Entertainment? [Miss D. Cox]
Permanent Housing Arrangements
(Re Minister of Tobago Development)

99. A. Has permanent housing arrangements in Trinidad been provided to the Minister of Tobago Development by the State, and if so on what date were those arrangements put in place?

B. Can the Minister indicate the date on which the Minister of Tobago Development took possession of the keys for the house provided to her by the State, for her accommodation while in Trinidad? [Miss D. Cox]

Official Office in Tobago
(Cost of Outfitting)

100. A. Has the hon. Minister of Tobago Development incurred any expenses with regards to the outfitting of any official office in Tobago?

B. If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state:
   i) the total cost incurred and the purposes for which the costs were incurred?
   ii) what was the procurement process utilized in selecting a contractor for the services obtained? [Miss D. Cox]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION)
(FINANCIAL YEAR 2012) BILL, 2012

Bill to provide for the Supplementary Appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending 30th September, 2012 of the sum of the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2012) Act, 2011. [The Minister of Finance]; read the first time.

Motion made: That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings. [Hon. W. Dookeran]
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

(Adoption)

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that the House adopt the Second Report (2011/2012) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2012 Appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Committee in the House of Representatives met on Friday, May 25, 2012 and agreed to the following proposals with respect to the 2012 appropriation. The proposal was for the provision of supplementary funds in the sum of $1,543,590,700 to fund urgent and critical recurrent and capital expenditure to September 30, 2012, in the areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided. The increase in the heads of expenditure proposed is being sought by way of the Finance Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2012. The increase is earmarked in the following heads of expenditure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heads of Expenditure to be Increased</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Office of the Prime Minister</td>
<td>$11,900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Ministry of Finance</td>
<td>$1,108,118,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Ministry of National Security</td>
<td>$63,072,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Ministry of Transport</td>
<td>$50,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 Ministry of Science, Technology and</td>
<td>$45,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>61 Ministry of Housing and the Environment</td>
<td>$260,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,543,590,700</td>
</tr>
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Mr. Speaker, briefly I would outline the purposes for which these new allocations are being sought, as we had had a full discussion at the Finance Committee, and have circulated the questions that were asked by Members on details. Suffice it for me to say that with respect to the $11,900,000 in the Office of the Prime Minister, it is meant to meet the cost of legal fees and remuneration to the chairman and members of the commission of inquiry into Colonial Life Insurance Company Limited and the Hindu Credit Union and events surrounding the attempted coup of July 27, 1990.

In the case of the Ministry of Finance, additional funds are required for the following: $30 million to meet the cost associated with the procurement of legal, financial and commercial consultancy services in respect of a restructuring solution for Clico; $686,550,000 to facilitate the execution of an agreement between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Andean Development Bank; the subscription of common capital stock and the incorporation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as a special member country; $273,510,000 to meet expenditure with respect to the Fuel Hedge Mechanism for Caribbean Airlines Limited; $40 million to provide additional equity to the Export/Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited; $25 million to satisfy claims already made and those anticipated up to September 30, 2012 under the State Liability and Proceedings Act; $52,950,000 for deposits into the Infrastructure Development Fund to facilitate upgrading and construction of fishing facilities in the following 12 communities: Blanchisseuse, Cumana, Fullerton, Otaheite, Carenage, Las Cuevas, Orange Valley, Brickfield, Salybia Grande Riviere, Point Radix and La Ruffin.

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May I quickly point out that with respect to the Andean Development Bank of which Trinidad and Tobago was a member since 1994 as a holder of Series C shares, the investment of $686 million in equity will now upgrade the country’s status to normal membership, including Series B shares. Some of the benefits to be derived from the normal membership holding Series B shares are as follows, as opportunities will be created for:

1. Furthering of regional integration with Latin America through the adoption of mutually-supporting private sector-driven arrangements;
2. Securing long-term financing resources for the development of the country as well as technical assistance for managing and leveraging the various opportunities which would be generated;
3. To facilitate exports and associated search for markets which will widen the country’s economic space.

Already, the pipeline of infrastructure and technical cooperation projects of an estimated value of U.S. $900 million is being developed for possible financing by the Andean Development Bank.

With regard to the Ministry of National Security, an additional $63,072,700 is required to meet interim financing related to the acquisition of the four AV 139 Medium Twin Turbine Helicopters and associated training and maintenance support programme.

In the case of the Ministry of Transport, an additional $50 million is required for the following purposes: $5 million to meet operational and maintenance cost of the Water Taxi Service and $35 million to assist the Public Transport Service Corporation to meet the cost of recruitment of additional staff; the provision of
increased security services and the maintenance of former VMCOTT compound in Tobago, as well as a maxi taxi hub in Port of Spain; $10 million to enable the Port Authority to meet a shortfall in salaries and allowances emanated from the recently concluded industrial agreement with the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Trade Union and to meet management cost to the extent of fiscal 2012 in respect of the container examination station.

With regard to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, $45 million was required to facilitate the commencement of work on Phase one of the University of the West Indies Southern Campus. An additional $260.5 million is being provided to the Ministry of Housing and the Environment to meet the cost associated with the expansion of the operation of the Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme to provide employment opportunities for more persons in the lower socio-economic bracket across all communities approved by Cabinet on December 01, 2011.

And $5 million is being provided to the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism to meet cost associated with their coming national days and festivals.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in presenting the 2012 budget, we announced then the total expenditure of $54,634,400 and revenue of $46,992,000 yielding an overall deficit of $7.6 million or 4.89 per cent of the GDP. The adjustments included in the proposed Supplementary Appropriation Bill combined with the proposed transfer of $345.9 million to the Heritage and Stabilization Fund will increase expenditure by two point one three one point eight million.

When this increase expenditure is matched against the projected increase in
revenue of $779.8 million and analyzed against the backdrop of the saving and adjustments within the Heads of Expenditure, it results in an increase in the overall deficit on fiscal operations from seven point six four two point four million to eight point nine nine four point four million or 5.78 per cent of the GDP.

Mr. Speaker, these appropriations have been the result of what has happened over the last two years with respect to managing the fiscal accounts of Trinidad and Tobago. You would recall, Mr. Speaker, that two years ago when this Government first came into office, we outlined the seven major challenges that we were facing at that time on the fiscal accounts. The fiscal accounts reflected a major challenge with respect to what has been called the, “Clico situation” and the “Hindu Credit Union situation”; the backlog with respect to the Public Service wage negotiations; the Alutrint and the Rapid Rail Project that were in line at that time; contractor’s payments and VAT refunds; the financial regulatory system and cash balances available to the Government. The Government cash balances declined steadily from $17.7 billion at the end of fiscal year 2008 to $9.7 billion at the end of fiscal year 2009 and further to $5.43 billion as of June 2010, when this Government came into office. This was primarily due to degeneration of fiscal deficits which began in 2008. In simple terms, the Government balances in the Treasury declined substantially over the last two years as the then administration sought to maintain high expenditure levels in the face of drastically falling revenues.

Those therefore, were the seven specific issues on the financial balance sheet facing this economy and this country. Since then, I am pleased to report that we have had substantial progress in perhaps all areas pertaining to these seven fiscal
challenges. Two years later, we are in a position to indicate a number of developments which would show that we have addressed these problems frontally and have begun to see the results.

Let me first deal with the Clico situation. I think we are well aware and we have had many opportunities to debate this issue. I would like to update this House as to the current state with respect to payments to the policyholders as of today with respect to the Clico situation. You would recollect, Mr. Speaker, that for many, many years—[Phone rings]—Sorry, Mr. Speaker,—months rather, we had been pondering a solution to that problem. The solution was indeed a complex one and required an enormous set of measures that had to be taken: one, to deal with the depositors; two, to deal with the company; three, to deal with the assets to back the company and fourthly, most important to restore financial stability in a financial system.

You would recollect, Mr. Speaker, that that particular situation affected over 10 per cent of the national economy and had threatened to put the financial sector into disarray. And the possibilities of contagion existed.

Mr. Speaker, in order to address this problem we began an innovative programme by which we could handle each aspect of the situation in a systemic way that will not put undue pressures on the nation’s macroeconomic indicators, particularly our debt position.

I am pleased to report to this House that as of today the information given to me with respect to policyholders who have been processed and/or paid since this programme came into effect within the last year in total. This involves portfolios of those who were less than $75,000 which was our first payment, as well as,
payments for those who have investments greater than 75,000. To date of the 27,737 policyholders who were covered under this scheme, 23,658 of them have been paid. [Desk thumping] Representing 85.3 per cent of the policyholders—I repeat that, Mr. Speaker, for the country to understand that the Clico payout system has been a resounding success and has been applauded here and abroad. [Desk thumping] It has happened without putting at risk our debt profile and managing our cash flow position over the past two years and will continue to do so over the next two years.

A situation that could have affected the financial system has now been averted. The total percentage of the funds that have been allocated is over 72.8 per cent. So, what we have is 85.5 per cent of the policyholders have either been paid or are being paid, having processed the application and that amounts to 72.8 per cent or $9 billion of Government expenditure—in the last two years.

Mr. Speaker, we did include a compassionate window because we knew there were many in the society who were in great difficulties having lost their income. The records now indicate that 265 such persons did receive compassionate relief amounting to $113.8 million. [Desk thumping]

The breakdown is as follows: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the under-75s. Ten thousand eight hundred and fifty-five persons have been satisfied which amounts to 90.9 per cent. With respect to the over-75s, 12,803 which represent 81.1 per cent and this involves satisfaction of those in Clico, as well as, with respect to British American. It also, includes the credit unions and trade unions of which 117 access the funds that we have provided amounted to 75 per cent of those who were eligible to do so—[Desk thumping]—to a total value of $563.3 million.
Mr. Speaker, it is important in this Parliament to lay out the bare bones of the financial rescue plan that this Government put into place and stands firm today with a financial sector that is firm, solid and free of risk. \textit{[Desk thumping]} In addition, we know that we have not put at risk the macro pictures of the country and while there are still things to be done, our debt position remains comfortable.

This was the first challenge that we had outlined way back, two years ago and this is the first challenge that not only have we been able to address in a manner that has come unnoticed, really—almost unnoticed by the country, that it has been resolved at this stage. What has happened now, therefore, is that we have to finalize the remaining policyholders and their various reasons why they have not been finalized. We have to also put into place the necessary financial soundness in the new Clico Company which is now being put into place. I am advised that within recent times, people are renewing their policy with Clico which shall one day grow once more to be a serious insurance company in Trinidad and Tobago. \textit{[Desk thumping]}

Mr. Speaker, we had announced in this Parliament that we would set-up a Clico investment fund to deal with the policyholders who would have received coupons between the years 11 and 20 and that we would exchange those bonds for units in the fund. So the solution was, essentially, to pay some in cash, to pay some through bonds and to pay some through shares— an innovative programme. I announced at that time that we are taking steps to put that into place. As of today, I am advised that the arrangements are still being finalized and that the listing for this company is being discussed with the Trinidad and Tobago Securities Exchange Commission and the Trinidad and Tobago Stock Exchange. The
prospectus for the fund and the terms of the trust deed are being finalized at this point in time. I hope that within a short space of time we would have that new facility out to deal with the rest of Clico who would then be receiving whatever was owed to them in a one to one transfer in equity shares in the trust company.

So, Mr. Speaker, the overall response rate at which policyholders received their money ranged from 80 to 85 cents. In other words, the haircut was in the order of 20 to 15 per cent for the first 10 years. But, for the second 10 years it would amount to near 100 per cent. [Desk thumping]

That indeed was the first and most important challenge we faced of a financial nature. That has been acknowledged by all those who have looked at Trinidad and Tobago over the years, as to how we will manage this. I remember, when I first met the international bodies that came to look at surveillance of the financial situation of Trinidad and Tobago, each one pointed clearly, could the Government deal with the Clico situation and come out of it scotch-free? That was the concern. That was the highest level of uncertainty that they we were facing. That has now been reduced in commentaries to say that the Government has satisfied themselves and has satisfied the country that the matter was dealt with and they want an early resolution to the remaining part of the equation. So we have moved.

We have also indicated our desire to work with our sister islands in the Caribbean to see how we can contribute to the solution that is still affecting the Caribbean countries.

2.00 p.m.

So Clico was not a problem only in Trinidad and Tobago, it indeed had its effect in the rest of the Caribbean. As of now, that matter is still being looked at. But the
Trinidad and Tobago Government, when the Prime Minister went to the Caribbean Heads of Government, indicated the commitment of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to help solve that problem with a direct intervention of $75 million in cash in that particular solution, an addition to what has been done before.

So we know that what is happening in the Caribbean will affect us, we know that the economies in the Caribbean must be resuscitated, we know that the financial situation in the financial sector is at risk and, therefore, we are taking steps in order to try and buffer the solution to the Caribbean countries. So not only have we been able to deal with this major issue which I identified two years ago here in Trinidad and Tobago, but we are well on our way to assist the Caribbean countries in working out a solution, together with them and with their governments.

Mr. Speaker, associated with that was the Hindu Credit Union, an equally difficult problem and one that is currently being addressed. As of now, we have already processed somewhere in the order of 10,000 applications out of an estimated amount of over 100,000 estimation, and that matter is now being progressed and some payments have started in that respect, finally. There were a lot of legal hurdles to cross, but they have been crossed and now the process has started and payments have started. I do not have at this point the exact figures, but maybe I will get it before the end of the debate at closing time.

It is significant to note, Mr. Speaker, that we provided support not only to the Hindu Credit Union, but to all the credit unions in this country that were affected by the Clico situation. I repeat that point because we have worked out a special arrangement over a two-year period to pay them their indebtedness. There are some legal hurdles to be crossed there as well, as to whether or not these were accounts of individuals or institutions, but we put our minds with the legal people and resolved all these matters. So if there was a plan that was equitable, a plan that
was just, a plan that would ensure that growth can continue in Trinidad and Tobago and a plan that will restore financial stability in Trinidad and Tobago, it was this plan and I say that here today. [Desk thumping]

There are two other issues of financial nature and I would say some more at the closing with respect to the public sector wage negotiations. But one has to do with the contractors’ payments and the Value Added Tax (VAT) refunds. At that time, I indicated to this honourable House and I quote.

“…there is also uncertainty over the payments owed to many of our contractors based on contractual agreements with the previous regime. Many of our businessmen experiencing cash flow problems due to delays in VAT refunds from the Board of Inland Revenue. We estimate”—conservatively—“that the total owed to contractors amounts to”—almost or—“approximately $4 billion,”—at that time—“…the total outstanding VAT refunds amount to $2.8 billion.”

Mr. Speaker, before this debate is over I shall give you the exact figures with respect to our commitments, but I know that we have in fact met the commitments of our contractors over 60 per cent in full on this day and later I will give you the detailed figures.

With respect to VAT refunds, we have also been able to eliminate the backlog and put into place a situation that will pay people VAT when VAT is due, and that is the new policy that we have introduced. So when we talk about change in this country, we are not talking about change of faces, we are talking about change of policy, change that will effect for all times the future of this nation. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, it is in this context that I want to say a few words about some recent comments that have been made, emanating from the report of the Monetary Policy Report of Central Bank, in which it was pointed out that this growth rate of
Trinidad and Tobago has been revised downwards. That, by the sensational press, was taken out of context and there were strong headlines that were put forth in the newspaper about recession and slump. I say here today, based on the information we have at the Ministry of Finance, Trinidad and Tobago is not in any slump, in economical—[Desk thumping] [Interruption]

Mr. Roberts: That is the true facts.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What do you call that?

Hon. W. Dookeran: But let me also let you have the facts pertaining to what is happening globally, so that we know that we live in an interconnected world. We know what is happening elsewhere affects us. I got some information pertaining to the revision of growth rates in some of the major countries of the world that has happened over the last year, and for the record I want to put that in place:

With respect to Brazil, which is one of the strongest growing economies over recent times, one year ago they projected a growth rate of 4.2 per cent. Today, they are projecting a growth rate of 8 per cent. Let me go on. [Crosstalk]

China projected a growth rate one year ago of 9.7 per cent. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Today, they are projecting a growth rate of 8.1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance. Members of the Opposition and Members of the Back Bench of the Government, may I appeal to you to allow the Minister of Finance to speak in silence. If you do not want to listen to him, I would like to. I will invite you to follow in my footsteps and be silent. Kindly continue, hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The anxiety that was expressed is really a confrontation to come into the true context in which we are in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]
I was talking about China. The growth rate one year ago was estimated to be 9.7 per cent. It is now projected at 8.1 per cent.

India, projected at 7.8 per cent one year ago, has now been revised to 5.3 per cent. [Interrupt]

Mr. Sharma: That is where Rowley went.

Hon. W. Dookeran: South Africa, projected at 3.4 per cent one year ago, has now been revised to 2.1 per cent.

The United Kingdom, projected at 1.5 per cent one year ago, is now at .5 per cent.

The United States of America, projected at 2.2 per cent one year ago, is now projected to be 2 per cent.

Singapore—which we have not heard much of—projected one year ago to have a growth rate of 9.1 per cent, is now projected to have a growth rate of 1.6 per cent.

Germany, projected one year ago to be 4.7 per cent, is now projected to grow at 1.7 per cent.

France, one year ago projected at 2.1 per cent growth, is now projected to grow at .33 per cent.

Euro area, in general, projected to grow at 2.4 per cent, is now projected to grow at .7 per cent.

Canada—solid country, economically and otherwise—projected to grow at 2.9 per cent one year ago, is now projected to grow at 1.8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at Trinidad and Tobago, we had estimated that we had turned the corner and that we will move to a growth rate of 1.5 per cent during 2012. The recent figures have suggested that there has been a slowdown in certain areas, and that we will now be projected to grow at 1 per cent in spite of the slowdown, mostly in the energy sector.
So, Mr. Speaker, in the context of what is happening worldwide, Trinidad and Tobago can feel a sense of comfort— [Desk thumping]

**Dr. Browne:** What?

**Hon. W. Dookeran:**—that we have in fact turned the corner coming from that period, and that particular point was in fact enumerated by the International Monetary Fund Report which is now on the website with all the details. Whatever you may say about the prescriptions, the analytical work and the data is always well thought of, and these are some of the things that they indicated in summary in the last assessment:

Supporting a Recovery: The economy is turning the corner and growth is expected to resume in 2012. The recovery comes after an extended slowdown lasting three years. Supportive fiscal and monetary policies and restoring financial confidence are essential.

Implementing Fiscal Stimulus: Notwithstanding an overall balance in 2010/11, the deterioration in the non-energy balance implied a substantial fiscal stimulus. The near-term priority is to sustain the stimulus by implementing the investment program in the 2011/12 budget and developing new state enterprise investment plans.

Saving Energy Wealth: In the medium term, a major shift in the fiscal trajectory is needed to resume net saving for future generations in view of the country’s diminishing energy reserves while maintaining public investment to support growth. [Interruption]

**Miss McDonald:** The IMF?

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** The adjustment strategy should focus on rolling back transfers and subsidies to pre-boom levels by better targeting social benefits to vulnerable groups and strengthening the tax effort.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we did not roll back any of the transfer payments and
subsidies, [Desk thumping] and yet maintain the fiscal stability, and today, the Supplementation Bill will call for an increase in that particular area to support those under distress. [Desk thumping]

Containing Financial Vulnerabilities. Given the remaining financial vulnerabilities, continued intensified surveillance of the financial system is warranted. Although banks are well capitalized, profitable, and liquid, the—non-performing loans—NPLs have increased moderately. Non-banks have also come under stress. The authorities’ actions, including support to credit unions and other non-banking institutions, have reduced vulnerabilities. Completing the resolution of a failed insurance company, CLICO, will help to improve confidence.

Mr. Speaker, I put this in context for two reasons. One is that what we are facing in Trinidad and Tobago is not dissimilar to what the entire global economy is facing. But we do not take solace from that. We believe external factors influence us, but what we believe more is internal policy changes influence us more than external factors. [Desk thumping] That is why in our presentation we enunciated major changes in our internal policy areas. But before I go to that let me just point out that when I saw the reduction in the growth estimates for 2012, for 1.5 to 1 per cent—[ Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: One point 5?

Hon. W. Dookeran:—I decided to try and find out exactly what was causing that in the energy sector. After meetings with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and with members of the energy sector, I was told that this was not surprising. It was in fact the result of falling investment three years ago that we are now seeing that that development is taking place. [Laughter] [Crosstalk]

Let me just indicate to you—[Interruption]
2.15 p.m.

Miss McDonald: That is an insult! You are insulting us.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South, nobody is insulting anyone here. Take notes.

Dr. Rowley: Our intelligence, Mr. Speaker!

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but take notes, please. You cannot be shouting across the floor because—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: We were laughing.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but you cannot be laughing in the Chamber.

Dr. Rowley: We are laughing at the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker: Do not shout at the Speaker.

Hon. Member: Rottwieler behaviour!

Dr. Rowley: “Yuh cyah laugh now?”

Dr. Moonilal: Go outside.

Mr. Speaker: No, I am saying that you could laugh but at least do it in an undertone way, please. You know, I try to be very—hon. Minister of Finance, you may continue. [Desk thumping]

Hon. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, the point that I am making is that the economy did not start when this Government came into office. [Desk thumping] The decline in hydrocarbon production highlighted in the report can be easily traced to the fact that there were a very limited resource reserves added investments made in 2009 and 2010. This has nothing to do with the previous Government, it is the economy what it was then. Investments have picked up significantly in 2011 and 2012, but the results of these investments will take time to materialize. Again, the significant increase in the number of rigs demonstrates that the temporary drop in reinvestment rate has, at least, for the moment, been corrected. We note, according to the Energy Chamber statistics, the total number of rigs, land and marine,
operating locally, increased from three in January 2010 to 12 currently.  

Mr. Speaker, I am not here to suggest that we have covered all the vulnerabilities ahead of us. Indeed, what I have said with respect to developments externally, it is clear that we must now take real stock as to how we decide to move forward in the future. For it is necessary, as confidence rebuilds, that the investment profile of the country increases, and it is there that our greatest challenge lies. Whether it is investment, further investment in the energy sector, more investment in the private sector and accelerated investment in the public sector, the policy framework has been put into place, and therefore, that is what is going to unfold. But, there is a lag between the time the investment is, in fact, articulated and when it comes to being. In that sense, once we maintain a positive trajectory over the current year, I think we will be able to reap the rewards of the new framework that has been put together.

Let me also point out, Mr. Speaker, there has been some discussion recently in the press regarding our social security system. You would note that at length, we debated in this House, the entire question of the national insurance fund. We did introduce some additional features to allow those who have contributed to get an additional income of $1,000, meaning a minimum income of $3,000, for all the national insurance beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, we recognized then that in the calculation that had to be done on that particular issue, that it was going to affect somewhere in the order of 2,700 persons whose income will now be affected by the calculation of an additional $1,000 income in national insurance. That is only for those who are paying national insurance; it does not affect those who are not paying national insurance because their income remains to the minimum level of $3,000.
So, in the Finance Act, which this House approved, we actually did make a provision. The effect of that provision was that no one would have a lower income than what he was getting prior to the introduction of the new rates. Therefore, we put into law that in the calculation of the basic pension income that they should not be less than what it was before, although with the higher income, it could have been less if we did not put it in the law. So we took legal protection to protect those 2,700 persons who could have been affected with a lower income by ensuring that the income would remain at least what it was at the time of the introduction of the NIS pension fund. I just thought that I should raise that for the public because that is an issue of notice in the air, and I would be happy to meet with whatever organization that is calling for a meeting to discuss that further.

Dr. Browne: “Yuh meet dem already.”

Hon. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, while we put into place the necessary apparatus for the resumption of growth in the economy, and to see this moving forward, we have also been very careful to ensure that we put into place the financial capability of the country to deal with the requirements for the future. So having put the policy framework in place, having changed the energy fiscal regime and the non-energy fiscal regime, we also began to mobilize the resources in order to have it available. We recognize that we would have to invest more into infrastructure in the future. We recognize that there would be need for us to put into place a number of investments in the specific sectors. To that end, we opened negotiations with Inter-American Development Bank, and were able to mobilize both with respect to grant funding and loan funding somewhere in the order of $2 million of resources for investment which is going to unfold.

As I indicated in my opening remarks, we went into the Andean Development Bank whose rate of lending is very attractive. While I would not give you a figure now, I will say it is going to be below 2 per cent, and that they
would provide substantial support for infrastructure lending for the next five years to seven years. It is not going to be tomorrow and we have already begun that process, part of the thrust of trying to ensure that we have a better entry into the Latin American markets, and included in that is technical assistance support in order to help us work towards having a greater economic presence in the Latin American region with what is happening in terms of the global economics in the country.

In short, Mr. Speaker, I am saying that we need to really at this stage acknowledge that we have moved very far in confronting the issues which we inherited two years ago. We have set the conditions in place so that the financing requirements for growth and development would be available. We have the regime that we have put into place in terms of the fiscal operations for both the energy sector and the non-energy sector, and we now are working feverishly to the pipeline of investments projects that would come into stream in order to facilitate this growth over time, and it is a long time.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Long one.

Hon. W. Dookeran: There is always a gestation period, my dear.

As I said earlier, the fall in investment in 2009/2010 only affected us in 2012. So we have put into a place a platform within which these appropriations that we are seeking must be looked at. In it is an emphasis on securing financing for infrastructure. In it is a major investment for protecting the social sectors in the economy by transforming the CEPEP movement, and by ensuring that we get far more value for it as we expand it in the short term. It is no longer going to be a situation where the productivity is not going to be concomitant with expenditure, and that is the fundamental premise. I am sure later on in the debate the Minister responsible for that will give far more details on how that programme is being transformed; not as a programme for which you can get votes, but a programme for
which you can get production.

It is in that context, the appropriation before us is aimed at protecting the social equation; ensuring that we do not put at risk the economy, and at the same time, making sure that the country is poised for a better future. But, let us recognize that there is no such thing like “a free lunch”. Therefore, we must be prepared in so doing to ensure that if we spend in one hand, we will have to pay in a different area, and we recognize that. That is why we are arguing that there is a need to ensure that the growth compact that we are developing is located in measures of austerity at the same time.

I, as the Minister of Finance, have been very careful, sometimes my colleagues get annoyed with me, but they know that it is my job to make sure that I pay what has to be paid and I hold back what has not to be paid today. [Desk thumping] I think it is a position that we should adopt in terms of our financial discipline in this country so that we can ensure that the gains that we have made in the last two years will be sustainable. I must point out that as I look beyond the next two years—[Interruption] I am not seeing as good an international picture as I am seeing even today.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Finance, please, once again. Member for Point Fortin, I am hearing your voice loudly, could you kindly assist the House by taking notes? I am sure you will speak later. Do not disturb the House any longer. Continue, hon. Minister of Finance.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** There is a word of caution that we must in fact adopt strong measures of financial discipline; a word of caution that we must embark on a programme of increased productivity and competitiveness; a word of caution that we must not sit on the laurels of the past but we must ensure that we can convert the benefits of the past into sustainability for the future. That will have to inform our policy as we move on; as we drill down into real development in Trinidad and
Tobago, as we drill down to ensure that we can sustain positive figures. We are in a difficult position, we have been in a difficult position, but we have come a long way getting out of that situation. I urge this House to join with us in accepting the recommendations for the appropriation Bill so that we can together move this country forward and in a manner that we can all be proud about in the future. I beg to move.

Question proposed.

2.30 p.m.

Dr. Keith Rowley (Diego Martin West): I did not want to interrupt the Minister of Finance while he was in full flow and I am sorry if my expression of laughter did in fact interrupt him. If I was to interrupt him I should have interrupted him early in his presentation when, on a number of occasions—maybe unwittingly or otherwise, I am not ascribing anything to him, in following the documents—it was clear to me or to someone listening you would have gotten the wrong impression because the Minister of Finance did say million on many occasions, when in fact he should have been referring to billions. I simply want to advise the Minister of Finance that, for the purpose of clarity, especially for listeners, his diction should be clear and that million and billion are so far apart that it should not be left for any interpretation.

Mr. Speaker, today June 04, 2012 the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, having embarked upon its midterm year, has told the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the world that information coming from the Central Bank, out of the mouth of the Governor of the Central Bank, is inaccurate and by extension should be disregarded. [Desk thumping] I want to repeat that for those who were saying he never said that. Our Central Bank is an independent institution in this country and this Government does not accept or recognize that and that is why, on coming into office one of the first things the Government did was try to fire the Central Bank.
They attempted to get the Central Bank board fired whole scale and the President refused to that because the law did not permit that. So, in order to take control of the Central Bank, what the Government did was to appoint a huge number of members to the board of the Central Bank, increasing the number of members from seven to, I think 16, so that Government appointees of recent vintage would be in the majority. That is after the Government attempted to fire the Central Bank Board. We took note of that but we thought they would have respected the Central Bank’s role in providing to this country information which is believable, because it is when one does not believe what is being said to you, that your confidence is shaken and/or destroyed.

After that attempt and action at the level of the board of the Central Bank, which is a matter of undisputed fact, we now have the Minister of Finance coming here and making statements which can only be interpreted as expressed, that what was said by the Central Bank and interpreted by the media was in fact wrong and what he is saying is different and right—fact. What does that mean, Mr. Speaker, for Trinidad and Tobago, a country that has been in a crisis of confidence for years now?

Since this Government came into office, meeting an economy that was struggling with a decline which started in 2008 because the world economy had a serious hiccup, and it does not matter who was in office in 2008/2009, we in Trinidad and Tobago would have had to deal with that. We changed Government in 2010 for a continuation. In fact, the 2010 budget outturn turned out to be better than was projected by the Government that brought the budget before this Government came in office. It was a better outturn. We thought we would have had a bigger deficit, but the economy performed better, and therefore, when this Government came into office, it met a foundation better than was predicted for the
country. [Desk thumping]

**Miss McDonald:** That is right.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** So now, in its midterm, embarking on its third year in office, we had to laugh when the Government, in reporting to the Parliament and the country, skipped backwards two years and to say what we are in today as a result of their mismanagement and “dotishness”, is as a result of three years ago of some government in the past. It is not so at all. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I led an Opposition here that voted for this Government’s first budget—never happened in this country before. It is the first time in the history of this country that a government came to the Parliament with a budget and it was queried by the Opposition, but in the end received full support from the Opposition. [ Interruption]

**Miss McDonald:** That is right. [Desk thumping]

**Dr. K. Rowley:** And to come here today, to come here today, after your misbehavior, misconduct and incompetence after two years, entering your third year, to talk about the last government and the last budget.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has crossed a Rubicon today by taking issue with the Governor and the Central Bank in the way he has done. [ Interruption]

**Miss McDonald:** Yeah.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Because right now in this country—[ Interruption] I will give way.

**Mr. Dookeran:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for giving way, but may I point out for the record that I did not take umbrage—I take umbrage for the view that I took issue with the Governor. I said he said that there was a reduction in 1.5 per cent to 1 per cent. I said that the major headlines created a big issue of it and I suggested how that is happening globally as well as here, and what were the causes of it. It has nothing to do with the government of the past, it had to do with the
economy of that period, and a distinction between government and economy where sometimes you fail to make.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, so all of a sudden, the economy is on autopilot and has “nutten” to do with the Government and the Government’s actions. That is what he is saying; and, of course, it was the media who misrepresented and spoke about slump. Mr. Speaker, when you [Crosstalk] set about to turn around an economy which was pointing in the direction of growth, which is what this economy was doing when the first budget was presented by this Government, all the indices and the performance indicators in this country were that we did, in fact, have small growth. This Minister of Finance came here and told the country he was going to turn the economy around. We said to him: “Do not turn it around, it is heading in the correct direction—[Interruption]

**Miss McDonald:** That is right.

**Dr. K. Rowley:**—you could accelerate it but do not turn it around.”  [Desk thumping] That was the debate of this Government’s first budget. They did in fact turn it around and it has now been turned around to a decline, not growth, but a decline and it is that decline that was identified by the Governor of the Central Bank and whether you want to call it slump or recession, it is the same thing, it means that we are in decline. We are not growing—[Desk thumping]

**Miss McDonald:** Three consecutive years.

**Dr. K. Rowley:**—and no amount of dressing up could change that. This foundation has not given us, after two years, any improvement in our circumstance. That is a fact.

Mr. Speaker, I want the people of this country to understand what happens when there is no growth in the economy and when in fact there is a decline in the economy, it means that there is less revenue coming to the Government from the performance of the economy. So, here it is, we are in a situation where the
Minister of Finance comes here to ask for an extra $1,500 million, which is $1.5 billion. This is six months after he came for an increase of $2,700 million, which is in fact $2.7 billion. [ Interruption ]

**Miss McDonald:** In January.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** So, this is the second time, subsequent to the budget of September, that the Minister of Finance has come to the Parliament asking for more money to add—[Desk thumping]—to a situation where he had in September of last year, presented the largest budget in the history of this country, $56 billion. So, in September last year, which was the Government’s second budget, they had a year and a bit to completely look at the environment to do all kinds of things. They were bringing the second budget and that second budget was $54.6 billion. That was in September.

Come January, he is in front of the Parliament again asking for $2.7 billion and we ask: Where were you in September, did you not see these things in September? The sum of $2.7 billion was had. Six months later, you come for $1.5 billion more. This is trying to balance the budget after the budget has been presented. Because, I will point out to you that most of the things being funded now by this request and the request before, would have known to the Minister of Finance when he prepared the last budget. Had he put them into the budget, all that would have happened is that the budget, deficit, instead of being $7 billion, would have been almost $9 billion. The way he dealt with it was to leave out things that were known to him—[Desk thumping]

**Miss McDonald:** Aaah!

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Present a budget of $54 billion, identify a deficit of $7 billion and then say to us: “We are going to fund a $7 billion deficit”, knowing full well that he had not addressed a number of matters that to be addressed. And after the budget was passed here in September and the country felt: look we have this
$54 billion budget, largest ever in the history of the country, the country’s service should have been taken care of and therefore we can proceed now to have some confidence in the Government’s plans and programmes and we can look to a good outturn. What happened? Immediately after the budget was passed, the Minister of Finance began to make way back to the Parliament for the first $2.7 billion addition and now he is again here for a $1.5 billion addition. And he praised himself and says today: “We have not rolled back anything.” In other words, he knows that he is on an expenditure train unrestrained and it brings us into question about the revenues and I would come back to that.

But let me show you how the Government is budgeting by “ratchifee”. So, $54.6 billion passed in the budget of September. You come back in January, you ask for $2.7 billion increase. You did not identify any decrease on that side. So, you asked for $2.7 billion more. You come today and you ask for $1.5 billion more.

Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to page 8 of the Minister of Finance’s response to the questions at Finance Committee, because we in the Opposition asked him: “How are you going to fund these increases? He said: “I would tell you when we come to Parliament.” We are here now and I can tell you. On page 8, the Minister of Finance sets out to identify the sources of revenue that will meet these increased expenditure. I am going to read them.

Sources of revenue, he had budgeted tax on income and profits from oil companies of $14.1 billion; the revised projection for increase income to meet the increased expenditure is $14.1 billion, no increase there; taxes on income and profits from other companies, he had budgeted $8.48 billion in the original budget, he is reporting a revised figure of $8.17 billion, so there is a reduction in revenue there; taxes on property, he had budgeted $15 million, he is projecting $11 million and that requires a laugh too if you know what that means; taxes on goods and
services, he had budgeted $8.05 billion. He is now projecting $8.04 billion, a reduction in revenue there.

In VAT he had—I am reading from the document where the Minister of Finance is trying to show us how he is going to fund the increases of January and of June. He says taxes from VAT, he had budgeted $6.4 billion, the revised figure is still $6.4 billion, identical; taxes on international trade, in the budget, he had budgeted $2.24 billion, in the revised figure he is still budgeting $2.4 billion, no new revenues there; property income, curious because we know we are not collecting any property taxes anywhere, but here we see he had budgeted $4.73 billion and he is projecting to collect $5.47 billion, which means he is expecting a huge increase in property income mainly from royalty on oil and gas. And when you look at the oil and gas revenues that he expect to change, he had budgeted $1.951 billion. He is now projecting $2.52 billion. So, he is expecting an increase in revenue on royalty on oil and gas from $1.9 billion to $2.5 billion. That is approximately an extra $600 million. Maybe he might want to tell us a bit more about that when he winds up. That is going to come from, I guess, the market conditions we are getting, but it is only a $600 million more.

Profit from state enterprises, he had budgeted $1.5 billion, the revised figure at this time is $1.4 billion and, like most other heads I mentioned, we are seeing a reduction in revenues. Non-tax revenue, he had budgeted $894 million and he is now projecting $1,098,000,000. That is approximately $100 million or thereabouts.

2.45 p.m.

And, of course, borrowings which is, where if you do not have your own revenue, and you are going to spend this kind of money, then you are going to borrow. But he is projecting in the budget—well, he got the budget for $6.6 billion, and he is projecting $6.6 billion in borrowings, so he is showing no
increase in borrowings.

There is something called “Other Financing” which I hope he will give us a little more detail about. And other financing now—the Green Fund. The Minister of Finance is about to raid the Green Fund, because for unemployment levy and the Green Fund, he had projected $2.3 billion; he is now projecting $3.3 billion. He is aiming to raid the Green Fund and the unemployment levy up to $1 billion.

So there are three areas where the Minister of Finance is pointing out to us where he expects to get revenue to fund the extra $4.2 billion increase. Because—remember I told you, he came for $2.7 billion in January, he is now here for $1.5 billion; that is $4.2 billion in addition to the budget of $56 billion. But when you look at the total budget, revised by the Minister of Finance, we know he brought a budget here for $54 billion, we know he has asked for $4.2 billion more; 54.6 and $4.2 is how much? That is $58.8 billion. “Ent?” But he is showing us that the revised budget will be $56.4.

This is budget by “rachifee,” because when he is called upon to show us—[Desk thumping] where the $4.2 billion is going to come from, he only shows us $1.8 billion in revenues, and that means he knows full well that the Development Programme, as approved by the budget, will not be affected to the tune of the $7 billion, because he is not now talking about an increase of $9 billion or $8 billion, he is showing us a lower level of deficit.

So if we add up what was passed by the Parliament in September, having not heard of any reduction in any expenditure of any of those programmes, but having approved the $2.7 billion in January, and today, they will approve $1.5 billion more, it is a simple thing to add what has been approved, subsequent to September, what has been approved in January of this year, added together to know what the budget for this year is.

And what is he telling us? Fifty six point four billion dollars. How can the
final out-turn of the revised projection be $56.4 billion, when you have, in fact, come to Parliament and got approval for $4.2 billion on top of $54 billion? The Minister of Finance is playing games with the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is Government by deception as usual. [Desk thumping] It is more lies, more deception—[Desk thumping] and they believe—[ Interruption]

**Mr. Speaker:** The last time you were on your legs, you used this expression, lies and lying. [Interruption]

**Hon Member:** Uhhhh!

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to rule that out of order, and I do not believe you should be using that expression; it is unparliamentary as far as I am concerned. It is disorderly and it is out of order. So I would ask you, do not go down that line with the deception, lies and lying.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Deception too?

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes.

**Hon. Member:** What!

**Mr. Speaker:** Because you are attributing that to a whole Government. Just as how nobody on this side—[Interruption]

**Hon. Members:** Yes! Yes!

**Mr. Speaker:** Well, I am ruling. I am ruling

**Hon. Member:** “Aye-ya-ye!”

**Mr. Speaker:** I am ruling that you are not to do that in this House. You can do that at a press conference, not in this House. Okay. Continue, hon. Member. [Crosstalk]

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Miss Cox:** “What is dis!”

**Dr. K. Rowley:** I understand your ruling, and I accept it, and I withdraw the word “lie.” It just came to me automatically. I was so accustomed to being brutalized
by the Government, that the word just came out so appropriately. I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

I do not want the intervention by the Chair or my colleagues on both sides to miss and cloud what is happening here. I would like anybody on the Government side, when your turn comes, to get up and take issue with what I am saying here, because my entire contribution is based on the Government’s own numbers. I am not fabricating any of this.

It was this House that passed the budget in September. We know what the figure was that we passed, it is a published figure. It was this House in full public view that passed the $2.7 billion increase in January. It is this House which today I presume will pass this $1.5 billion.

And I am saying, when I look at the attempt to provide us with an answer to the question we asked in committee stage, how are you going to fund these increases, because you already had expenditure in the original budget which you could not fund. And you said you had a deficit which you will fund by borrowing. We asked you, how you are going to fund these additional things?

And the Government attempts—and I presume, the Minister of Finance speaks for the whole Government, and those who are here on the Government side are here joint and severally bound. So where we hold the Minister of Finance accountable, we hold the entire Cabal accountable. All of them, Mr. Speaker. All! Because how can you tell me—[Interrupt]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, please. I know that this is a very emotive debate, and Members will tend to use words that ordinarily they would not use. I have ruled in this honourable House, you cannot refer to either side as a Cabal. I have raised that and I have ruled on that. [Interrupt]

**Hon. Member:** Both sides?

**Mr. Speaker:** Both sides.
Dr. Moonilal: What about Kabal? [Laughter]

Mr. Speaker: So, I am asking Members, if you want to describe hon. Members, in this House, do it in an honourable way, please. Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me and this note, on the bottom line, that the Minister of Finance is only able to show us proposed projected revenue of $1.8 billion. I presume that only applies to the increases that will be approved today; those of the $2.7 billion of January, I presume they had been funded separately and differently. That is what he would have us believe.

But the bottom line is, one of the reasons the Governor of the Central Bank unfortunately was able to report to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, that notwithstanding our expectation that our position should have been different, because we had a good foundation to build on, is that the Government has not been carrying out the Development Programme as approved by the Parliament.

We have been in a recession for quite a while, and the Parliament has approved expenditure which would require this Government doing certain things, and that should bring about economic activity. So when the Central Bank reports, it should be reporting on the out-turn of that activity. That has not been happening. What is happening is that we are having grandiose plans on paper approved by the Parliament, which reflect itself in a major deficit spending programme, but it is not happening. And that is why the economy is in a slump.

And I am saying so in my own impression. [Desk thumping] I am not here quoting the Governor of the Central Bank or quoting anybody, I am making my own assessment. The economy is in a slump because the engine of growth which is to pull us out of the slump has not been kick-started by the Government’s policies and programmes. The Government has been sleeping on the job.

Mr. Speaker, while we are taking issue with what the Central Bank is saying to the country from the Government’s side, while the Government would have us
believe—in fact, one Government Minister said he found it curious, that the Governor of the Central bank was making the statement when he did, because he made it just before the celebration time in Mid Centre Mall.

**Hon. Member:** Who said that?

**Dr. K. Rowley:** A minister of Government said that; the Minister of Works and Infrastructure said that. He took issue with the timing of it. So the Minister of Finance cannot run away from the fact that the Government has issues. The Minister of Finance cannot today run away from the fact, or sugar-coat the fact, that the Government has issues with what the Central Bank said, because the minute it became public, a senior Member in the Government took issue publicly with the Governor of the Central Bank, ascribing motives to his timing.

Here we are being told, do not accept what the Central Bank says. You know, is it that the Government is prepared to tell us that what the Central Bank says, that real GDP slipped by 2.6 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year is not true? Is anybody on the Government side prepared to say that to this country, that the Central Bank’s position in its document: “Real GDP slipped by 2.6 per cent in the last quarter of last year.” You cannot tell anybody that with a straight face, because we all know that the last quarter of last year was the end of the state of emergency where the Government shut down the economy.

**Miss McDonald:** Yes.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** That was when the Government extended the state of emergency. It started in August, September, October and November, 90 days were up; they came to the Parliament, extended it; people were working less hours; businesses closed down. The state of emergency was hurting the economy. And even businessmen who started out supporting the Government’s position on the state of emergency, by December were saying; “Please end it, because you are destroying my business and destroying the economy.” So, when the Central bank reports, that
the last quarter saw a 2.6 per cent decline, I defy anybody on the Government side
to tell the people of this country that that is not true.

If you are going to look at whether an economy is in recession or not, you do
not look at this year versus last year, or this Government versus the last
Government, you look at the performance of the economy quarter, by quarter, three
months, three months, and three months at a time. And what the
Central Bank is telling the country, the last quarter of the last year, the quarter
before in the last year and the first quarter of this year, it has all been decline,
decline, decline. That is a slump. [Desk thumping] And whether the Government
wants to accept it or not, we know that we are not to believe anything the
Government tells us, because we have difficulty understanding why the
Government has difficulty with coming clean with the people of Trinidad and
Tobago.

Miss McDonald: Lovely put! Lovely put!

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, one of the requests by this Minister today for
money, is for something called the University of the West Indies (UWI), South
Campus. And we are asking, you knew that you were going to incur this
expenditure. [ Interruption]

Miss McDonald: Yes!

Dr. K. Rowley: The Cabinet approved this in March of last year or May of last
year; the budget was presented in September. So when the budget was presented
there was an approval for the South Campus.

Miss McDonald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: And, therefore, it should have been included in the budget that
was brought here in September. When they came back in January action had
already been taken, because they had already had their big PR show, and sod was
turned and all of that for the South Campus. So to come here today, and seek to—
Miss McDonald: And ask for $45 million.

Dr. K. Rowley:—you are asking for $45 million out of $500 million, “eh.” Because what the Cabinet approved in May of last year, was a project to cost half and billion dollars for which the Minister of Finance made no provision in the budget. [Interruption]

Miss McDonald: No consultation.

Dr. K. Rowley: But action is taking place on the ground and with the contractors—[Interruption]

Miss McDonald: Uhhhh!

Dr. K. Rowley:—and the Government is out there taking credit for the project, but no provision in the budget. So now the Minister comes here, and is asking us for $45 million as though it has just been discovered that the last budget cannot cope with the expenses for there. We are saying it is all subterfuge, and when I said he knew—[Desk thumping] because had he made that provision in the budget of September, it would have gone down to expand the deficit. It would have gone there. So he left them out, or they were left out, it was the budgeting process that left it out, it was not lack of knowledge. [Interruption]

Miss McDonald: They have a problem with that budgeting process.

Dr. K. Rowley: It was not lack of knowledge. Mr. Speaker, it brings us to the point of how these capital projects are to be funded. Whether you agree or not with the building of a South Campus is not the point. I am not here taking issue with that now, I will take issue with that later on. But having decided as an act of the Government, to enter into this capital programme to build—whether it is the South Campus, the hospital in central Trinidad, in Preysal there, the highway or whatever, what this Government has been doing is denying itself funding that is available from sources which this country holds in its asset base.
3.00 p.m.

I make reference specifically to the lack of use of the IDB in these programmes. These programmes for the hospital in Preysal, the south campus or the road to Point Fortin were ideal to be funded by the IDB if you are going to use loan funds, because there are other ways of funding projects. The last Government’s way of funding the highway to Point Fortin was to do it by a design/finance construct where the developer would have been required to bring the money in and fund the project and, on completion, you make the transfer. So, the raising of the funding would have been done by whoever the contractor was. This Government decided to go by way of central Government’s funding of the project from the Treasury.

I ask you: why would this Government embark upon projects which are eminently fundable by IDB sources and then, once the projects have been kicked off and they are underway, contractors are on site, then the Government struggles now to borrow money to fund the project? That is what this Government is doing.

In the meantime, before they put any funding in place, you have these requests to fund them from the cash inflows. The reason is that the Government did not, and still probably does not want to, subject itself to tendering under IDB rules. You see, Mr. Speaker, the easiest thing for any Government of Trinidad and Tobago to do is to approach the IDB and say: “We have this project for which we would like to have your approval and you provide the funding” Trinidad and Tobago is in a position to be an easy borrower at the IDB. We are one of the original members of the IDB; we have very little outstanding loans. In fact, the last time the UNC was in office, there was an IDB loan for, I think, school construction and it came to grief, where we paid on that loan millions of dollars of commitment fees while not using the loan. That is the UNC record with the IDB.

Now that they are back in office, they do not approach the IDB for any
funding of new projects because to access IDB money, you must, from the very beginning of the project, follow the IDB guidelines, which is, that all tendering has to be made available for open tender in every single IDB country; allowing contractors from all IDB countries to tender if they wish. It has to be open. It has to be transparent.

It also has to be exposed to a review by the IDB because even if you allow the tenders to go public and there are submissions from member countries from all over the world; if at the stage of evaluation you make “ratchifee” or at the stage of award, you are corrupt or you are irregular, IDB rules allow for an intervention by the IDB to review even your award and then the IDB will then rule whether it has been properly done and whether your finding and your award should stand. Only then would you be allowed to access the IDB funding.

This Government wants no part of that and that is why the Government has studiously followed a pathway where it initiates projects, selects contractors under dubious arrangements, hands the contracts to contractors and then now set about to find funding for the projects. That is how the Government is proceeding; award contracts and then try to find the money. That closes the door of the IDB funding to these specific projects because there is no way, after the Government has gone that route, it can now come to the IDB and say: “We have tendered for a project; we have selected contractors; we have awarded a contract; we need some money now to execute the contract or to finish it.”

The IDB will not listen to you. They will simply tell you: “The project was not funded under IDB rules and, therefore, we cannot help you.” They have to go to new sources and the new sources is the open market place; or, more interestingly, now we are being told that in this increase that we are being asked for, is US $100 million to upgrade our membership at the Andean Bank from Category C to Category B. The Minister told us the reason why we are doing that
is that Andean Bank money is available at low-interest, even at 2 per cent. Do not be fooled by that, Mr. Speaker!

IDB loans are also low-interest loans and they also carry something called a moratorium. This UNC has a record that you can look at against the background of award of contracts. We have an experience with this UNC Government. When the last UNC was going to build the overpass at Valsayn, they approached and got approved moneys from the European Development Bank. It carried a three-year moratorium, which means that you spend the money; the money was available at concessionary rates and you had three years before you began to pay it back; except that, like the IDB, the European Development Bank requires certain transparent tendering and award processes.

The UNC Government chose to ignore the money available from the European Development Bank. They chose not to use that fund and its moratorium. They chose not to use that fund and its low interest; and they chose to give money from the Treasury to UDeCott with instructions to hand the contract to a particular contractor. That is the UNC history and that resulted in the delay of the construction and one contractor taking the Government to court. One local contractor, who was a bidder in that process, took the Government to court over that matter. It all has to do with the Government wanting to be able to influence who gets the contracts. The development banks know that that is what corrupt governments do, so they put regulations in place to prevent them from doing that. If you want our money, your tendering process must be transparent and your award must be acceptable to the bank.

This Government does not want any part of that, but somebody has told them that the Andean Bank is not as stringent as the IDB, so they bolt to the Andean Bank now. This is going to raise our profile in the Andean Bank and, hopefully, they will get money from the Andean Bank. This brings us to the point:
to fund what? The projects that are in place now are already in place. Is it that the Andean Bank will fund those projects? I doubt it.

He speaks about new projects in the next five to seven years. So here it is we have new projects to be funded in the next five to seven years—and that is what the Government is preparing to do now while it struggling to fund the projects that are on the ground and underway; all because the political directorate wants to interfere with the process of award. This Government is obsessed with wanting to specify who gets what in this country.

Today, there are many contractors in this country who conducted their business, government come, government go—UNC, NAR, PNM—they had their business going. This UNC Government has taken the position that they will lose their contracts; people will lose their jobs because they are obsessed with determining who gets what in this country. It reflects itself in the wider Government policy. So you see major capital projects being embarked upon—hospital, road, and university—with no clear identified funding and where funding should be available from the agencies that we supported over the years, they want no part of that because they do not want to subject themselves to the tender rules of those agencies. The country is put on notice.

Mr. Speaker, I told you about the Minister of Finance knowing what was in front of him and not taking care of it in the national budget. The Minister of Finance knew that the Ministry of Finance had a commitment to CAL for a hedge fund arrangement to provide CAL with subsidy for its fuel. He knew that. We had a budget here recently. What we are seeing in today’s document is that the original provision for CAL—and whatever else CAL is involved in—I think was $450 million. I do not know that that $450 million was only for fuel subsidy. I will ask the Minister of Finance to clarify for us whether the $450 million that is mentioned here as budgeted—which we are now going to increase by $275 million—the
original amount was only to treat with the Ministry’s obligations for their fuel subsidy; whether there were other expenditure including capital expenditure in there; and whether, in fact, as is being said to us now, that this $275 million you are asking for, for CAL, is a standard loan arrangement specific only to fuel subsidy.

You know what bothers us, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance comes to this Parliament with a straight face after a Motion of No Confidence was raised in this House where one of the items of concern that was raised in the Opposition quarter was this whole business of what was going on at Caribbean Airlines. Interestingly enough, the Minister of Finance entered that debate and had nothing to say. Not a single government spokesperson in March had a single word to say in response to concerns raised about Caribbean Airlines. We warned this country that Caribbean Airlines and the way it was being managed and mismanaged by the Government posed a clear and present danger to the taxpayers of this country. Not a single Government Member said a word about it. The Hansard is there to show.

Three months later, we are here and we are being told that we are to approve, today, $275 million for CAL’s fuel subsidy. You have to ask yourself: could that be the same airline where the Government-appointed board, with great fanfare, announced a profit of $200 million that turned out to be a loss of $340 million? Could not be the same airline. You have to ask yourself if that is the same airline where, in seeking praise and accolades, the Government and its spokesperson, led by the Prime Minister, was receiving a cheque for US $500 million claiming to have come the illusive profits of Caribbean Airlines.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thirty-six (five), imputing improper motives of the Prime Minister. If you go back to the Hansard, he is saying that the Prime Minister received US $5 million. It is the Children’s Life Fund; not the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Speaker:** I think he is making reference to the fact that the cheque was
presented to the Children’s Life Fund. I do not think he is imputing improper motives there.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is the Children’s Life Fund; not the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is the Children’s Life Fund I would imagine.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, your interpretation is entirely correct. I did, in fact, talk about the taking of accolades. I notice he took no issue with that.

The Minister of Finance sought to hoodwink us this afternoon. Clever. He used a substantial portion of his allocation in presenting this Motion to us this afternoon, giving us a whole unrequested report on Clico. Good! The Minister of Finance was telling us about what was happening with Clico, except that largely everything he told us today was told to us before and he gave the impression to anybody listening—

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and Leader of the Opposition has expired.

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. *[Miss M. McDonald]*

*Question put and agreed to.*

**3.15 p.m.**

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, anybody listening to the Minister of Finance this afternoon, and judging by the amount of the time that he spent on the Clico situation, and the details he went into about Clico could reasonably come to the conclusion that the $1.5 billion that we are asking for has some substantial amount of Clico issue in there. It is only $12 million of the $1.54 billion that we are asking for today. Only 11.9 billion has to do with any Clico issue. So I could not understand for the life of me why the Minister of Finance thought he would spend half an hour talking about Clico, but he made the most interesting statement which again we ought to look at. He concluded—and it is now crystal clear for the
country to observe—that $9 billion of public moneys have been paid toward the Clico issue which he now takes credit for having rectified.

I want to draw to this country’s attention that when the previous Government set about to deal with the Clico issue—which we all agreed had to be dealt with. When we got up one morning and heard that Clico had collapsed, the Parliament convened a few days later and the entire—[Crosstalk] Mr. Speaker, please restrain the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Speaker:** You have my full protection.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you. And I know why—he does not normally behave like that—he is behaving like that because he knows what is coming. The entire Parliament met here and we debated and we agreed unanimously—there was no dissenting voice in the Parliament—that Clico would be bailed out by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Miss McDonald:** That is right.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** That is a fact. The State intervened in the Clico issue—because Clico is private sector. But because it posed such a systemic risk to the country the State intervened. There was not a single—[Interruption]

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara. I am hearing you very loudly. Your turn is yet to come to speak. Kindly take notes and allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue, hon. Member.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, there was not a single dissenting voice in the Parliament on that day. The matter was put to the vote and it passed unanimously. The previous Government had an approach which sought to restore confidence by the Government backing Clico, and it resulted in persons rolling over their deposits in Clico.

There are persons today who are suing the Government, saying that they took the Government’s word, rolled over their deposit in Clico and subsequently
the Government of Trinidad and Tobago changed its position and said, “you have to take a loss”. Those matters are before the court right now. However, those who were in the position opposed to the PNM were telling the country that no public money should be used to bail out Clico. In fact, one Minster of Finance of this Government called the Clico business a Ponzi scheme and therefore did not qualify for state moneys to bail them out, and they held out to the country that they had the plans and programmes to fix the Clico matter without public money. That is why the Minister of Finance is disturbing me now because he does not want me to tell the country that notwithstanding the original position of the bright boys of the COP and UNC, that they could have fixed the Clico matter without public money, today he told us that he has fixed it, $9 billion of public money. What has changed?

The only thing that has changed is that he has huffed and puffed, promised and promised and eventually delivered on the same approximation that would have caused the PNM to support the Clico issue. Because the approximation done on record—and I call the media and anybody else who wants to know; it would have been approximately $10 billion. That is where we were at. The prior arrangement would have been approximately $10 billion. He spent two years huffing and puffing, creating all kinds of confidence issues. After he put in his new plan and his second plan and his third plan and his fourth plan, it ended up costing taxpayers $9 billion.

In other words, we benefited in no significant way from the huffing and puffing of the Minister of Finance. At the end of the day, the Clico issue still cost taxpayers approximately what it was estimated to cost in the beginning. All they had was a different Government arrangement. This current arrangement still has issues in the court because notwithstanding what he has said about all those who got their money, what he did not tell you is that those who did not get and those who are challenging him in court. Cannot deny that. There are people challenging
him in the court. And there are those who did not get their money.

So I do not know why the Minister of Finance came here today where only $11 million out of 1.5 billion is about Clico to spend half of his time—instead of telling us how the Government intends to treat with the weeks, months, years ahead of the CAL subsidy. Because it seems to me that the country would have been better off finding out how the Government intends to treat with an ongoing rolling liability of hundreds of millions of dollars of fuel that the Treasury is committed to paying at CAL and Air Jamaica. Tells us nothing about that, gives us no insight as to how the Government will address that, gives us no insight as to whether it will end—because we asked that before.

When we asked him about the first year, he gave us the figures and he said he will come back and tell us what will happen in the next year. We have heard none of that. He puts none of his time towards dealing with the $275 million for CAL, but spends 40 minutes talking about Clico when the Clico component here is $11 million. His cost to the State and the cost of the previous Minister are approximately the same thing. So in other words, Mr. Speaker, you take them for what they are.

The helicopters, in the present arrangement we are being asked to agree to increase the budgetary allocation to pay for the helicopters. When the Minister of Finance brought the last budget those helicopters were on the cards. The Government had already taken a decision to cancel the OPVs and keep the helicopters, that they would buy the helicopters. They had entered into a purchase arrangement for the helicopters. Those costs which are now before us should have been factored into the budget for this fiscal year. They did not do it.

Another example of knowing what you had to spend, but did not find its way into the budget for the budget debate, but comes nine months later to pretend that something has come up and you have to now make extraordinary arrangements to

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budget and increase the budget for it. They could have been upright with us upfront and say this is what we have to pay for during the next fiscal year but to do that would have put this Government in a position where it is very uncomfortable. And that is the position of levelling with the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and telling them the truth.

They are not accustomed to being there, they wait and come after, create a new story and go as far as to say it is the previous Government’s actions that caused this to be in front of us today.

Mr. Speaker, with all this expenditure and all the underperforming on the revenue side one, would think that the Minister of Finance would have taken some time—and I am asking him or his Government—to tell this country exactly what is happening to our paymaster issue in this country, because all is not well in the energy sector. And the Government is behaving as though it is not so.

Our energy markets are changing considerable. Even while this Government came into office two years ago, in that two-year period there has been significant changes in our energy market. And I will tell you, Mr. Speaker—I raised it before in this House—at Point Lisas as I speak to you now, there is a supply issue where there is not enough gas for all the plants. When I raised this with the Government before, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs came here told us it was a maintenance issue, and when the Toucan platform comes back on stream it will go away. The country heard that and we accepted it. The platform has come back on stream.

We are still being told up to this morning that these are maintenance issues resulting in this sustained shortage of gas in the country. But I can tell you, there is one gas supplier in this country whose business is not confined to Trinidad and Tobago; it is a world supplier. And if you are paying attention to what is going on in the world and in their business—as we should in Trinidad and Tobago because
they are one of our major suppliers—you will see that contrary to what the Government is telling us, that it is about maintenance to come back on next month or next week, they are saying to their shareholders that they could be in this position until the end of 2013.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, this Government has come into the Parliament and in the country and told us that they have entered into some kind of agreement, with a major company, Sinopec—a Saudi Arabian country and the Chinese—for this huge gas project. And they praise themselves as they are wont to do: the biggest investment project ever in Trinidad and Tobago. Great! Where is the gas coming?

All those in the know will tell you that to bring that project to Trinidad and Tobago the Government of Trinidad and Tobago would have to give certain concessions. That being so, what do we have to hear from the Government about the existing plants in Point Lisas which are having gas supply difficulties, which are having pricing difficulties in Trinidad and Tobago because gas prices in Trinidad and Tobago remain much higher than gas prices in the market where are products are being sold? So the peculiar issue now, is that Trinidad and Tobago investment from abroad is obtaining gas on old contracts at prices much higher than what gas is available for in the North American market.

The result of that is we are seeing mothballed plants in North America coming back on stream and we are seeing local companies with foreign investment saying to the Government that they would want to have improved prices—meaning lower prices—when these contracts are terminated. We are not hearing a word from the Government on these fundamental issues, not a word. What we are getting is; smoke and mirrors, playing with numbers, playing with PR and trying to blame the previous Government.

This country now has in front of it to make some serious decisions about the
oil and gas sector. Today, I call on the Government to come forward before the country, come to the Parliament, come to the Opposition, come to the people of this country and let us have an understanding of our circumstances insofar as it involves oil and gas as we go forward, not backward, as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of options available. One, is that users of gas in this country are going to have to find gas that is cheaper than is available now. The question is, all the exploration that is being done now, will that produce gas that is cheaper? The answer is no. So it matters not how many rigs are drilling now, if gas is found it is not likely to be cheaper. The gas users are saying that they want cheaper gas. If we give the Sinopec people concessions to bring that plant here in Trinidad and Tobago what are going to say to the investors of long-standing here whose contracts are going to be up in the next year in two or three, four or five? What are we going to say to them?

This alone should tell you that a major gas policy is demanded of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago now because the circumstances have changed. Do not wait until shareholders abroad look at their bottom line, look at the circumstances and we get up one day, and we hear that some Point Lisas plant is to be moth-balled, or worst, that the shareholders, the investors pick up the machinery and take it to a place where gas is cheaper.

These are very real possibilities against a background of a Government that has embarked upon endless borrowing because we are seeing no growth. What we are seeing is consecutive decline, what we are seeing is increased expenditure. If Trinidad and Tobago ever needed a sustained revenue stream from the energy sector it is now. And it is not sufficient for the Government to come and tell us that we are drilling 12 wells more than a few years ago; clearly when there is a global slump, end of 2008 into 2009. That is not when people go investing and putting extra wells down. It was a period of decline not only here in Trinidad and
Tobago, worldwide. But, that has now gone into the past. 2011 and 2012 are not 2008 and 2009. The bigger issue is, what is the policy that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will hold out to the world.

3.30 p.m.

I will tell you something, Mr. Speaker. There are Government Ministers telling the country about our circumstance. Are you aware that the Minister of Finance went to Montevideo Uruguay and painted such a rosy picture of our economy and our circumstance that he was roundly applauded down there? [Laughter] Are you aware of that?

While the people of Trinidad and Tobago do not know if we are coming or if we are going, when the Minister of Finance spoke in Uruguay, they believed that what he was saying was true and is sense, “Trinidad and Tobago is doing wonderfully well”, so they applauded him. [Crosstalk]

**Dr. Browne:** Wrongly applauded him!

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Round, r-o-u-n-d not “wrong”; roundly applauded him.

**Hon. Member:** Rowley applauded!

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, there is a Minister of Trade and Industry, and I do not know what he bases his utterances on, but he is forever trying to convince us that we are being washed with foreign investment. Let me quote something in the *Guardian* that might have slipped you, Mr. Speaker. I am quoting here from the *Guardian* dated, I think, it is February 05—no, it is actually May 16, 2012. [Crosstalk and laughter] I leave you the assignment of proving me wrong to tell me that the *Guardian* did not have that. But seriously, Mr. Speaker, these are serious issues. Listen to what has been reported at the Caribbean Investment Forum, the coverage from that. It says:

“And whereas foreign investment in T&T declined by 3 per cent between the first half of 2010...”
Mr. Speaker, I would like you to hear. My colleague is disturbing me.

Mr. Speaker: Members, please, I would like to hear the Leader of the Opposition. Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, I would like you to join me and listen to the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. K. Rowley: He might learn something. I am quoting here from a summary of Trinidad and Tobago’s position which was presented to the Caribbean Investment Forum and it says:

“And whereas foreign investment in T&T declined by 3 per cent between the first half of 2010 and the same period in 2011, it increased by 25 per cent in the DR in 2011.”

It, therefore, follows that a Minister of Trade in the Dominican Republic could really talk about foreign investment flowing into his country because their Caribbean environment, competing for foreign investment like we are, saw a 25 per cent increase—

Mr. Roberts: It is 2.5, check the point!

Dr. K. Rowley: I am quoting from the *Guardian* and I see no point. Let me continue to quote:

“Also, T&T attracted 27 per cent of all foreign direct investment into the Caribbean in 2008 (compared with the DR which received 28.5 per cent...”

So, in 2008 the Dominican Republic got 28.5 per cent of foreign direct investment and we got 25 per cent. So, we were pretty much close to par. It continues:

“but this country only got 6.6 per cent of total inflows in 2011...”

And the writer here is using the ECLAC figures:

Hon. Member: Who is the writer?

Dr. K. Rowley: It continues:

“...while the DR received 53 per cent.”

So we were humming along at 6.6 per cent of the foreign direct investment into the...
region for 2011 when the Dominican Republic was getting 53 per cent. The writer pointed out that as recently as 2008 we were neck and neck. They were getting 28 per cent and we were getting 25 per cent. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, our circumstance has not improved and whatever we have been doing has not been effective.

The simple point I want to make is that this being so, if the Government wants to take issue with the story in the *Guardian* that is their business. I am simply quoting from public documents which, in fact, gave the source as the ECLAC figures for 2011. If they want to take issue with that they could, but I would invite the Government to take issue with the absence of unemployment figures in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Miss McDonald:** That is right!

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Since this Government came into office, we have not been given the benefit or the privilege of seeing or reading official unemployment figures in this country. [Desk thumping] So they want to take issue with the ECLAC figures; they want to take issue with the *Guardian* report on the foreign direct investment percentages, but they will not tell us when we are likely to see the official unemployment figures for Trinidad and Tobago.

I could follow the unemployment figures in the United States of America every week or every month if I want to. Those figures are important because they indicate where the Government is positioned with respect to its policies impacting on the lives of the people that they are supposed to be acting for.

Presently, in the United States of America, poor unemployment figures in May are having a serious impact on how people view the out-turn of the election due in November, but in Trinidad and Tobago, the fourth quarter of 2010, no figures; first quarter of 2011, no figures—second quarter, third quarter, fourth quarter—and we are now into the second quarter of 2012, and never have we seen, under this Government, official unemployment figures.
Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude by telling you that the people of this country will do well to listen to people like the Governor of the Central Bank and other persons who have a track record of speaking the truth, and to not take what the Government tells them without examining it very closely because not only with respect to the economy and the country’s finances can this Government be shown not to be levelling with the people of Trinidad and Tobago, it is virtually on every issue. [Desk thumping]

If it was only on the issue of finance, it was bad enough, but let me give you another example that has nothing to do with the Government’s own finance, but it has to do with crime fighting which is affecting the economy, affecting our performance. Nobody could argue that our exposure to excessive and unacceptable levels of crime and general criminal conduct is having a negative effect on the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

As part of our attempt to treat with that so that the economy could breathe and we could go from decline to growth, we created an FIU in this country, and the Government true to form wants to ensure that it dictates who gets what and who does not get. When we took issue with the Government about its illegal entry into the appointment of the Director of the FIU, the Government by way of the Minister of Finance, the Attorney General and the Prime Minister told us that it had to be done to protect us from being blacklisted, and the person in office who was put there improperly had to stay because FATF would have blacklisted us if we had not done so.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to take issue with the Government’s position from the Sixth Follow-Up Report of CFATF. It is the 2012 report, the most recent report, and I crave your indulgence to quote two paragraphs. On page 2 it has this to say:

“Trinidad and Tobago has submitted three follow-up reports in May and
October 2010 and May 2011...”

Note the time, Mr. Speaker. Under this Government, we submitted three follow-up reports. It continues:

“Based on a review of the follow-up report this report...”

Which is the one I am quoting from here now, the most recent.

“will recommend whether Trinidad and Tobago should be placed on regular or remain on expedited follow-up.”

In other words, our circumstance has not been improved in any way by the hiring and selection of any particular person. It goes on to say:

“Trinidad and Tobago was rated partially compliant or non-compliant on fifteen (15) of the sixteen (16) Core and Key Recommendations.”

Mr. Dookeran: That is an old report.

Dr. K. Rowley: It is an old report. So, 2012 is old.

Mr. Dookeran: I will bring the new one later.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am happy to hear that because I take no pleasure in this. If the Member is saying that the 2012 report I am quoting from is an old report, then I would like to hear the new one, but I would take him, Mr. Speaker, and I hope he has a new position on this one too—I would like to hear his new position, because I hope there is one—on paragraph 27 on page 9 it says:

“It should be noted that the PSC’s selection of the FIU Director was vetoed by the Prime Minister as allowed under the Constitution.”

This is FATF taking note of a major development that was very contentious in this country. It goes on to say:

“The above measures effectively places final approval for employment of staff at the FIU outside the FIU, thereby undermining the autonomy of the FIU and its effective operation as required by FATF standards.”

So, FATF is observing that what we have done, what we are doing and what we
have put in place are undermining the autonomy of the FIU and its effective operation as required by FATF standards.

So I am hoping that the Minister will tell us—as he is saying now, this is an old report and he has a newer one and that the new one would say that this is not so. FATF is now saying and I quote:

“The authorities…”

Meaning the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

“…should review the above measures with a view to ensuring the autonomy of the FIU in compliance with the FATF standards.”

So, in other words, contrary to what the Government was telling us, that their strange behaviour in digging their heels in and insisting that their illegal appointment remains head of the FIU to please FATF, FATF is now saying that that appointment is a cause of concern to them; it has the potential to undermine the autonomy of the FIU; and it is recommending to the Government that it takes step to ensure that the autonomy of the FIU meets FATF’s standards.

I call on the Minister of Finance, on whose recommendation the Government took that action with the FIU, to comply with the FATF standards and ensure that the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is protected and that the Government does not continue to put us in a position where a report like this, now for international consumption, shows that the autonomy of a body created by Parliament to be independent and autonomous has been undermined by actions of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, we cannot believe anything they tell us. We are waiting now to hear from them. [Desk thumping] We are waiting now to hear from them, whether the economy is to be influenced by our best efforts in protecting our borders; whether, in fact, they have completed the arbitration in London and whether, in fact, we are in line to get the $1.4 billion they promised and they must
tell us what the outcome is. They must also tell us if the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is taking any steps in London to seal the outcome of the arbitration decisions in London. They must tell us that.

Mr. Speaker, we believe nothing they tell us. [Desk thumping] We live here and we know the economy is in a slump; [Desk thumping] we know that the confidence has not been restored; we know that the Government is playing games with our interest; [Desk thumping] and we know that this Government is inimical to the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] “Spend, spend, spend, find their friends, if it’s not there find yuh family.” That is the policy they are following in Trinidad and Tobago and they borrow and spend. [Desk thumping] Mr. Speaker, they bring us no joy, and they hold for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, perpetual grief. Thank you. .

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to join the debate at this time on a Bill to provide for the Supplementary Appropriation for the Service of Trinidad and Tobago for the Financial Year 2012.

It is, of course, my intention to focus on the Head of expenditure that involves primarily the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, and to build the case to justify requesting from the Parliament additional financial resources to meet critical needs of the Ministry of Housing and the Environment.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I did not take the opportunity, quite briefly, to respond to a few issues raised by the very distinguished Member for Diego Martin West and Leader of the Opposition. The theme of the Opposition Leader’s contribution really surrounded the issue of believability, and on several occasions he had to be reminded that it would have been difficult to use harsh words that were unparliamentary, but it really had to do with that issue of
believability, not “boldfacity”, but believability.

The Opposition Leader began by insinuating that the Minister of Finance had cast aspersions and, indeed, may have insinuated, as far as it relates to the intentions of the Governor of the Central Bank. The Minister of Finance himself corrected that early in the contribution, to indicate that at no time did the Minister of Finance nor the Government seek to castigate or cast aspersions on the Governor of the Central Bank. But rather, the Minister of Finance was responding to some of the issues raised in the newspapers and in the media, and the extent to which the way the issues were discussed in the media may have either deliberately or inadvertently created further misunderstanding. The Minister of Finance sought to deal with it from that perspective.

When that report was released, it was very interesting that I myself called the Minister of Finance the evening to discuss with him very briefly this report. At no time then and at no time today did the Minister of Finance ever sought to cast any aspersions on the integrity of the Governor of the Central Bank or on his report, but rather the way the contents of that report were published or publicized in the press. Having said that, that is also the role of the press. Our job is not to write and report news that way, but to really give our case, present our own views and interpretations.

I thought for a minute there, while the Leader of the Opposition was on that line, that it was quite interesting that the Minister of Finance today was indeed a former Governor of the Central Bank. I could never forget, when the time came to appoint a new Governor of the Central Bank, the Government at the time—of which the Member for Diego Martin West was a prominent Member of the Cabinet—would have taken the decision, took the position that they had no difficulty with the Member for Tunapuna, but they really had their own person to put, they had their own choice. The then Prime Minister, the Member for San
Fernando East, was very kind. He said to the then Member for St. Augustine, “We have no difficulty; you are a good man, but it is just we had our own candidate for that position.”

The Member for Diego Martin West was a Member of that Government, that administration. How it comes full circle, that today he accuses the Minister of Finance of casting aspersions on a sitting Governor of the Central Bank. So you see, what goes around really comes around.

The other curious matter about that is that the former administration placed on the board of the Central Bank several persons who it was felt may not have been properly qualified to sit on a board of the Central Bank, including one of their more noisy or vocal supporters and flag wavers, who still writes in a weekly newspapers. All the years we asked about this member’s qualifications and his travels, they actually came to the Parliament to amend the Freedom of Information Act to ensure that information on the Directors of the Central Bank is not allowed to be made public. It was all done with the Member for Diego Martin West in the Cabinet, and today they complained that the incumbent Government is stacking members of the Central Bank.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West, and I am responding to another issue raised, that of the IADB, indicated that it was his belief, his observation, that the incumbent Government may not have wanted to engage the IADB, because of their, to his view, stringent procurement policies and requirements of client governments and so on, and this is the reason the Government of Trinidad and Tobago today would seek to enter into loan agreements with institutions, but not the IADB. Again, the Member for Diego Martin West sat in a Cabinet that agreed that the NAPA in Port of Spain be funded through a concessional loan from the Chinese Government, not the IADB, through which the waterfront was financed, not by the IADB, through which the
government campus was financed, not by the IADB, through which the SAPA in south Trinidad was financed, not by the IADB. But today he claims that this Government is avoiding the IADB.

But when they were in Government, they were going to the Chinese, they were going for concessional loans. The infamous smelter, was that financed by the IADB? No. The rapid rail, IADB? No. The Member, who is a former Minister of Housing, and I will come to more of that later, ignored the fact, and the Opposition Leader should know, that the Ministry of Housing and the Environment has entered into an agreement with the IADB for 240 million Trinidad and Tobago dollars, for its neighbourhood upgrade programme. We continue to do business with the IADB, in the education sector, in the agricultural sector, in the housing sector, we continue to engage the IADB. The early childhood education centres are also being financed through loan arrangements with the IADB. The climate change programme is being financed through the IADB.

I wanted to ask the Member: When you were in the Cabinet, why did you not ask the IADB to finance the NAPA, the SAPA, the waterfront, the Government project, the Hyatt, if the IADB had those stringent rules? But you see, what goes around comes around.

To make matters worse, the Opposition Leader, who, I always say, on any nightmarish occasion, could appear as the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago—

**Hon. Member:** No, please.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You have OCD?

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** My colleagues would protest and make noises, and one colleague might faint away here, but notwithstanding that, an Opposition Leader is really a Prime Minister in waiting. He stood in this Parliament, that is televised live on the Internet, and cast aspersions on the Andean Development Bank, a major
financial player in the western hemisphere. The Opposition Leader, aspiring to be Prime Minister, cast aspersions on their procurement policy, on the way they conduct business. This may be a Member who will one day enter into negotiation or have to continue some business arrangements with the Andean Development Bank. So you see, I come back to the issue of believability. How could you believe them? Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader I believe is spending too much time in Oropouche. [Laughter] and is not concentrating on his research.

The Opposition Leader also raised the issue of budgeting, and that the Minister of Finance ought to have known about some of these matters and why did he not include these items in the budget. It is common knowledge that in the aftermath of the state of emergency, the Government embarked upon an aggressive social policy agenda to ensure that we secured the gains of the state of emergency, as it relates to a specific community and providing assistance to communities. Therefore some expenditure for our social programme would have been required in the aftermath of that policy, after the state of emergency. This could not have been discussed before or thought of in that way before. So there are times in the budgetary cycle when there is a need to come back to the House to ask for a supplementary vote, given the exigencies of the time, and this is one such time.

Mr. Speaker, concerning the issue of the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Minister of Finance had indicated that, again, the Leader of the Opposition was wrong in his understanding of the issue and reading from a report. The Leader of the Opposition also read a report from the Guardian, but kept the writer as a phantom and did not want to tell us, but we will find out eventually, so we are not worried about that. It must have been somebody whose name he does not want to call, for one reason or another, so we will not press him on that. The Member continues a mantra that the Opposition is using now to describe the incumbent
Government as a—well he was using the term that we do not use here.

**Hon. Member:** Unparliamentary! *[Laughter]*

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** He knew he was wrong, as he is always aware that he is wrong. He described the Government as a government that one could not believe, and he characterized the Government as prone—in fact, he ended with that flourish. It was the last over of the 20, so he came down with everything. He tried something *[Laughter]* in the end. When he realized he was in the 20th over, he started “flinging bat”, and started with, “the Government was—could not believe and corruption, and help their friends and their family”, and would not account for moneys spent, and so on.

I have heard this time and time again, and it is the policy of the Opposition to characterize the Government with monotonous frequency, as a Government that is prone to mismanaging the financial resources of this country, helping friends or family and so on. That is a monotonous and tedious “sloganeering” on the part of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, I will just give one example, just one, because I am coming to the issue of who to believe here. When you come to the Parliament, you come with clean hands. If you would like to lead an argument that another side is not to be believed, then you must be believed, because you cannot convince the population that they should not believe the Government, when nobody could believe you.

I would give one example. A few days ago—well, not a few days ago—a few days ago we were in Tobago for a massive rally at market square. *[Desk thumping]* If you are to judge by that rally, it is very clear there will be a shift in the next election on the island. A week before that, we were at Mid Centre Mall for another mammoth crowd and mass rally. On that occasion I raised an issue dealing with the management of the finances of Trinidad and Tobago by the previous administration. I said that information had reached me that an agency
under the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, particularly the UDeCott, had entered into an arrangement to purchase an executive villa in Tobago.

I gave the information on the evening of May 24 to the country, indicating that the UDeCott entered into an arrangement to purchase an executive villa in Tobago.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, that would have been done around 2007. The member for Diego Martin West was very clear that it could not have been done when he had supervision of the UDeCott. The UDeCott purchased this executive villa in US dollars. I am not aware that state companies and special purposes companies can access and spend US dollars in this way. So, for approximately US $450,000; more than TT $3 million, purchased an executive villa. The Leader of the Opposition was not pleased that I called the name of witnesses to this agreement, and I will not call the names of witnesses, but just to say one of the witnesses was indeed the attorney-at-law at UDeCott at the time, there were other attorneys.

The UDeCott entered into this arrangement for an executive villa. To this day we can find no decision of the board of directors of UDeCott to purchase an executive villa in Tobago. We can find—search as we may—no decision of the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to purchase an executive villa in Tobago for UDeCott. So this was done without board approval, it was done without Cabinet approval and I venture to say it was done without even the knowledge of the then Minister in charge of UDeCott. Who is that? Who was the Minister in charge of UDeCott in November 2007?

Mr. Warner: The Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It was not the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you very much.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But who was it?
Dr. Rowley: “I don’t know.” [Laughter]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He does not know. [ Interruption] So, Mr. Speaker, this was done—I just want to get something from this desk drawer here. [Laughter] [Pulls out document]

Mr. Speaker, when I made this announcement on the night I got some interesting replies from persons in the know. First to begin on May 28 in the Trinidad Express, a letter appeared that suggested and purported to be that of a note from the man of the moment Calder Hart, and this letter says that:

“At no time did I or any UDeCott Executive under my supervision use the home while I was chairman”—so the person purports to be the former chairman, Calder Hart. It continues—“it was not purchased as a vacation home”—so there is a confirmation it was purchased—“I question the highly politicized manner which this information was provided to the public”—so he vex I raised it at the rally—“the home is hardly a secret to people in both organizations”—I think, meaning UDeCott and Nipdec—“and in fact it was a senior development manager from Nipdec who was first appointed to the post and was required to relocate his family there”—stated Hart.

The Member for Diego Martin West did not take this line; he was concerned with my calling the name of a witness. But, he wants to convince the population not to believe the Government. That is the issue. I had cause to visit this villa in Tobago, and an official of UDeCott was kind enough—

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(1).

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to governance. I am speaking to governance. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Just now! I think he is responding and he is linking. Go ahead, continue.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You “protesteth” too much. [Interruption] You see, Mr.
Speaker, I have in my hand here—let me finish quickly—the guest book from the executive villa in Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** “Ooooooooh.”

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** This is the guest book. It is here. [ Interruption] It is a guest book. [Continuous interruption and desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to you and I want to tell you who have been the guest. [Interruption] I want to say who have been the guests at this villa.

**Mr. Warner:** Call it out.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, I would say very clearly, I do not intend to divulge the names of these people; some of these people are private persons, some are foreigners and there are persons who are locals. I really do not want—I am seeing foreigners. But the comments are very interesting to the villa: one person writes, “beautiful, thanks for the great memories.”

**Hon. Member:** “Oh goooood.”

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Next: “Tobago at its best”; May 01, 2007—but our purchase was in November. “Tobago at its best; great fun; great weather.”

Well, let us come to now when we purchased. As you come down, Mr. Speaker—“we had a wonderful week here in Tobago; love the villa.”

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** You have another comment, but I not want to read all the comments, there are a good few pages. I want to get to the interesting ones: in 2008/2009, so we would clear.

**Mr. Warner:** “Who in charge?”

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** “Now arrived and expecting to have a great time at the villa. I will.” June 2008. July 2009: “thank you for the wonderful hospitality”—the person signs. Next one: “your hospitality was beyond words. Thank you, it was greatly enjoyed”; July 2009. [Interruption] Which manager staying in the
house here? Which manager?

Mr. Speaker, it continues, 2009: “our stay was too short; enjoyed all the facilities, sorry we could not extend our time”—the person—“and I enjoyed, you were so hospitable to us.” The next one, 2009: “the villa is beautiful, like a paradise, we had a”—[Interruption]—no, this was bought for a manager. This was bought for UDeCott Programme Manager to live in the house, because this was required for their projects in Tobago. That is what Calder Hart is saying. But, “we had a wonderful stay here, I am very grateful, thank you for the wonderful hospitality.” And the one that take the cake, May 11, 2010—[Interruption]—“Let we geh tha clear—wha is dis ah nex’ manager?”

**Mr. Warner:** Thirteen days before election.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** “Lovely place, Patrick. Thanks for inviting.”

**Mr. Roberts:** “What? Waaaay.” [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Warner:** Thirteen days before election.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** “Lovely place, Patrick. Thanks for inviting.”

**Mr. Roberts:** “Thas Peña?” No shame! [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the guest book. It would have been Patrick Chookolingo or something, [*Laughter*] or what is the “fella” name? Patrick Swayze, the actor. I do not know, I do not know, I cannot say. [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker, this is what they told us was the villa for the manager, and you have guest signing in. [Interruption] Three million dollars of taxpayers’ money gone without approval. That is the point too; you can argue the place is probably worth it, but that gone; $3 million and, without approval from board or Cabinet, I think without knowledge, they were entertaining friends and family. [Interruption] They were entertaining friends and family, this is how they operate. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask you something: you think the CEPEP chairman or
the UDeCott chairman could go and buy property in Tobago without board approval, Cabinet knowledge or the Minister’s knowledge and pay in US dollars? You think that could happen today? [ Interruption]

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind you or to inform the House for the first time that Cabinet took a decision earlier this year that all UDeCott projects will be supervised by an inter-ministerial committee chaired by the Prime Minister. That committee meets every two Fridays to look at the UDeCott portfolio in health, in national security, Red House, whatever it is; the UDeCott work is supervised by an inter-ministerial committee. Today if UDeCott managers need to travel they need to get the approval of their line Minister. You cannot take a plane to go Barbados or Grenada unless the Minister does not approve that. You think this could happen?

We put in place that the hierarchy of UDeCott comes to an inter-ministerial committee fortnightly to explain themselves, give progress on their work and to take questions from Ministers. [ Interruption] So if there is something happening and you get information that something is not right, you have UDeCott chairman, CEO, chief operating officer, financial officer; they come before a ministerial committee and they answer questions on financial accountability. [ Desk thumping] That is the new UDeCott today. This is the UDeCott of the PNM. [ Holds up document] And today those opposite would like the population to believe that they are pure, they are righteous, holier than thou and they participated in this wanton waste of taxpayers’ money. So, if you have a manager in Tobago, you cannot get a guest house for the manager? It has no guest house in Tobago? “It had none.” You cannot use a hotel at a moderate price? “No, it ha none too.” You buy that. [ Interruption] “No, and that is the thing, now it own by UDeCott, so good, UDeCott own it.” [ Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker, if they come back in office they would buy a villa three times
the price; they would buy another one for three times the price because their attitude is, “it own by UDeCott.” That is what we had to subject ourselves to for 10 years, and, they come here today to play holier than thou. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned some matters concerning CAL (Caribbean Airlines). If Caribbean Airlines is in a difficult position today it is a result of years of mismanagement. Years! [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Chaguanas East and the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, could I ask you, if you have some relationship, go behind me. [Laughter] Do not disturb the speaker whilst the speaker is on his legs. That is that Member who has been given permission. You are shouting to each other and you are using unparliamentary language at the same time. Please, could you maintain silence? Continue, hon. Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Member opposite spoke to the issue of CAL and the position that Caribbean Airlines finds itself in today, wanting, almost symbolically and in real terms to disassociate himself with the CAL/Air Jamaica arrangement that was entered to by a previous Government of which the Member for Diego Martin West was a Member, a Member of that Government.

Mr. Speaker, in the Parliament of 2007—2010, the Member for Diego Martin West sat in different places, I believe, but as a Member of the Government, and that Government entered into an arrangement with Air Jamaica. Today, that arrangement has meant certain challenges for Trinidad and Tobago. But no, he disassociates himself from the CAL/Air Jamaica; disassociates himself from the smelter; disassociates himself from the balisier tie; everything of the past, so it is left for us to remind them.

To hear my friend opposite speak about the Clico matter as if we were not aware of the details. We came in an emergency to the Parliament to address this
matter of Clico. A former Minister of Finance piloted the Bill and so on, and left out a part of the story, which she later confessed to, and that story, which is a fact, is that on Old Year’s Day in 2008, I believe, went down to the bank and move out resources—

**Mr. Sharma:** In her nightie.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:**—did not tell her colleague from Port of Spain South what was happening.

**Miss McDonald:** Why it had to be me?

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Well, did not tell any colleague—not only you—and bailed out, then claimed in the newspapers she did not know what roll-over meant, surprising, and rushed down the road on Old Year’s Day. That is a fact. [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker, we got into that position, in comes the new Government with the biggest challenge facing us, Clico, HCU. [Interruption] The next biggest challenge, apart from Clico, the big challenge left with Air Jamaica and Caribbean Airlines, and we are still coming to terms with that. Still coming to terms.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** One point five billion dollars.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** That one, we are still coming to terms. While on the board then of Caribbean Airlines, you had gentlemen on that board who conduct business in a very curious way. One Member of that board who they determined to be an expert in industrial relations, collected contracts from the company to undertake industrial relations work, because they just decide, well, this man is the best man for the job, come, do it. [Interruption] “Dey jus decide that.”

4.15 p.m.

There was no tendering, they did not go out. This is a society where at that time you had Percy Ceziar, deceased I think now, you had other industrial relations consultants all about. You did not put something in the newspaper and ask for
consultancy services to help. You took a director, you say, look this man is the best for the job, give him it. And he said—in all fairness to him, he said he was the best for the job too. So, they gone, they do their thing. There are other businesses that they undertook, that led us in a bind. The slots at Heathrow—US $5 million—

[Interruption]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And now is £100 million for one.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** So, Mr. Speaker, that matter is still an outstanding matter, worthy of an investigation. Today, they come to talk about Caribbean Airlines and the position that it finds itself today.

Mr. Speaker, they take no responsibility, they take no blame for anything. They just come and appear, drop from the sky and casting aspersions. Today, the Government is asking the Parliament to support a request for increased funding for the CEPEP Company Limited to achieve its growth and development programme.

I want to say without a doubt, that the CEPEP today, is not what the previous Government left. It is not the CEPEP of May 2010. Today the image of this company has taken—has been enriched. The image is no longer of a company painting stones on the road, taking pebbles and reassembling it into a circle. Today, people tell you all over the country, anywhere you go about the great work CEPEP is doing.

Mr. Speaker, the CEPEP has been involved in several programmes to build its capacity, to develop its business potential, to expand its health and safety record, to ensure that there is worker protection, to ensure that we recognize health and safety principles and standards. The CEPEP programme has been expanded, but it has been expanded in a curious way. You see, when we came into office there were 106 CEPEP contractors, more or less. I actually have a list of the names of these CEPEP contractors who we found on-entry. It makes for interesting reading, if I really had time, I would like to read it, because in this list
you will see persons from the general council of the PNM, you will see persons whose names bear resemblance to their officers and members, and I always have a laugh with this. One person who was recently put in charge of rewriting their constitution is a former CEPEP contractor. So they must have had a very good CEPEP, because that person is now rewriting the PNM constitution.

**Hon. Warner:** What about Laventille West?

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** No, I will not get into that. What they did is that they had 106 contactors more or less, but these contractors had several teams, 6 to 12 teams, and they would have a huge, huge contract with enormous resources. When we came in and we did a demographic spread we discovered that there were parts of this country that were completely untouched and unknown by CEPEP, unknown. They had no service from CEPEP and we sought to bring a certain equitable distribution to the country. But we did that by reducing the number of teams. So instead of having one contractor with 12 teams, we could have had four contractors with three teams.

**Hon. Sharma:** Well done, well done. [Desk thumping]

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** That is why today, Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that we may have on our roll, 185 CEPEP contractors, but the same number of teams as they had under the former administration, because we increased the contractors, but reduced teams. So persons are not now with 12 teams making hundreds of thousands of dollars, some of which went into the criminal enterprise.

You see, today—“knock wood as we say in Trinidad”—if you go to the courthouse you might hardly discover CEPEP workers or CEPEP contractors with matters before the Magistrate’s Court, hardly. But there was a time in this country, if you wanted to know who was a CEPEP contractors, you go by the Magistrate’s Court, because they double up as bailers. You charged persons for possession and you know of narcotics, illicit substances, and when you go by the courthouse you
ask the fella accused, “where you working?” In CEPEP. You say, “Who is here to defend you?” It was a CEPEP contractor.

Today, you will hardly find that because we have flattened the system to ensure that we do not produce that type of “financial Don”. They were producing “financial Dons” in the CEPEP and that is what we have prevented. This is why the last PNM administration would have spent $310 million on CEPEP, but the incoming administration of the partnership spent $320 million in the first financial year. So it was not much, but we increased the contractors—that is the difference, and we ensured that places now in Trinidad where people would not have benefited from that service, were benefiting.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to you that the extra resources we are asking for now, came out of the commitment by the Prime Minister in December to increase our activity in specific areas that were deemed to be hot spots—areas where a certain measure of employment and economic activity was needed, and needed urgently.

It is clear and the Minister of Finance made the point, you cannot overnight; get an investment decision in the energy sector, and within a month or two that starts up. It does not work that way. If you take a decision to build a tower, skyscraper buildings, it takes a year or more just to go through legal procedures, engage in RFP, tendering, contract administration. It does not start overnight, but those projects create jobs, and they create jobs for several years. Programmes like the CEPEP can create jobs within a few weeks. They can register companies and create jobs and bring much needed economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, when you spend money in programmes like CEPEP—I want to tell my friends opposite, because they know, that money goes back into the economy. It is spending, it goes back into the supermarket, into the shops, into the stores, into the hardware, into the pharmacy; you generate economic activity.
Our years of complaint against URP and CEPEP, had not to do with the objectives of the programme. It had to do with the mismanagement of the programme by the former administration. They gave out CEPEP contracts like “hops bread”, and they gave out contracts, Mr. Speaker, to persons who they deemed at that time to be community leaders.

Today, you have much more contactors in the system, more employees—and you know this is “boldfacity” to the highest, friends and family. I should get this listing here and give you an idea of the friends and family. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to call the names of the general council. If you went to a meeting of contractors before May 2010, it was the PNM general council you were going to meet.

Hon. Roberts: True.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And they know it. I do not want to call the names of people. I do not like doing that. I do not like calling that.

Ms. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I think I have to rise on 36(5)—[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: In respect to—[Interruption]

Ms. Mc Donald: In respect to, if you attend a meeting of the CEPEP contractors, is the PNM general council. That is utter “farseness”.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no, do not go there, please. The PNM general council, does not feature here. I deal with Members of Parliament.

Ms. Cox: Some of us are members of the general council.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please. Hon. Member, apparently your language is causing some disorder, so I ask you and so on to be careful, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, if my friends want me to read the names, I do not want to, but they want me to. I will read some. Who is Foster Cummings?

Hon. Members: PNM.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Who is Jennifer Marishore?
Hon. Members: PNM.
Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Who is Marva Bostic?
Hon. Members: PNM.
Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Who is Alvin Reece?
Hon. Members: PNM.
Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Who is Prakash Persad?
Hon. Members: PNM.
Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not want to do this. I do not want to continue. Mr. Speaker, let us move on.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, hon. Member for Laventille East/Movant, you are going to speak, I am sure today, and whatever you want to say about CEPEP, please retain your firepower for that period. Please, retain your firepower, but allow the Member for Oropouche East and the hon. Minister of Housing and the Environment to speak in silence. Continue hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the listing here of the contractors, May 2010, and I will share it with any Member if they want. I am really not prepared to read it out.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate, it was asked during the Finance Committee meeting, a question was asked as to the areas that will benefit given the increase in the resources to be made available. I want to indicate that there are several areas in the north/west—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Thank you.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: —that we are looking to increase our contract and our work and such areas would include, Richplain Diego Martin, Petit Valley, Beetham area. In the north/east, there are also some areas where we need to intensify our presence, particularly, La Horquetta, Valencia, Fredrick Settlement. In the south/west, in some areas, we intend to provide greater CEPEP assistance in
the area of Point Fortín. We also intend to increase our presence in San Fernando. In the south/east we have areas that are in dire need of the assistance of CEPEP, including, Mafeking in Mayaro, Reform Road to Williamsville, Mayo, Whiteland and some of these areas. So, we intend as well to recruit more workers and to do activity in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, the CEPEP work is not only the cleaning work. That is the point I was making. We were pleased over the last year or so to embark upon innovative strategies and programmes involving CEPEP. To ensure not only the image of CEPEP changed, but to ensure that CEPEP undertakes vital work in the national community, work that we have been calling for years. We launched the CEPEP Marine Programme. This is a programme where the CEPEP through the contract system provides beach clean-up north/west of Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure through the contract systems, Mr. Speaker, that the beaches—that they undertake regular clean-up activities using appropriate machinery and equipment.

We have collaborated with several Government agencies. We promised before the election that in programmes like CEPEP and URP workers will be protected, we will engage in enhancing policies of health and safety and we are building the occupational safety and health competence. We have had several training programmes. Indeed, we have recruited former trade union leader and labour activist, Mr. Robert Giuseppe to assist us as a coordinator in this area—[Desk thumping] to develop health and safety policies and practice for our 185 contracting companies and our 10,000 workers. Mr. Speaker, that OSHA initiative is ongoing.


Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We may have to ask Mr. Michael Osuana to also assist us with reimagining the CEPEP and I am sure they would want to look at that.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to education and training, we have signed a
memorandum of understanding with COSTAATT to ensure that we provide training, much needed training to CEPEP workers. We provide educational opportunities to CEPEP workers. They can go out in the community today with basic literacy training, writing, reading, and yes, basic skill in computer literacy we are now teaching. \[Desk thumping\]

With Nedco we have finalized a memorandum of understanding to provide financial assistance and financial literacy to CEPEP contractors. CEPEP contractors can now learn about financial arrangements, understanding investment and understanding savings. Mr. Speaker, the arrangement with Nedco is promising for us since it will ensure that contractors save and invest.

**Mr. Speaker:** The speaking time of the 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, I think it is a good time for us to pause for tea. This House is suspended until 5.05 p.m.

**4.31 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.05 p.m.:** *House resumed.*

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, before the break, I began to outline some of the new and novel initiatives of the CEPEP Programme as we justify its expansion. I indicated that we are extremely proud that, like URP, we were able to take the CEPEP Programme and transform it, in a short time, by enhancing its work. The CEPEP Marine pilot project was started in December 2011, which, as I indicated before, deals with the beach clean-up. It is also done in partnership with the Institute of Marine Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, today, another hallmark of the CEPEP: in May 2010 when we
met CEPEP it was an isolated programme—although heavily funded and still is—among the environmental agencies. Today, the CEPEP Programme is conducted in collaboration with the various agencies in the environment—particularly the Forestry Division—and has embarked upon several initiatives involving reforestation, planting of trees and beautification, in collaboration with the Forestry Division. The CEPEP Programme also partners with the Environmental Management Authority, working on environmental projects. The CEPEP Programme is also geared towards a business development model, in that we intend to increase the revenue that CEPEP makes.

When we got into Government, CEPEP would have been generating some revenue—almost, I believe, $1 million per year in revenue. We have taken that from $1 million in 2010, today CEPEP generates between $4 million to $5 million per year in revenue. [Desk thumping] We expect that, within three years, given our business development model, CEPEP would generate revenue to the tune of $20 million, annually, to help pay its way.

Mr. Speaker, the CEPEP Programme is also involved—apart from its core activities—in disaster and emergency responses. We work along with the Disaster and Emergency Management Agency, and we are a primary support to that organization in event of disasters. We also undertake several charitable initiatives supporting distressed and underprivileged members of our community. During the Christmas season, you would recall, that the CEPEP Programme was engaged in several very worthy community-based projects to assist members of the community.

Mr. Speaker, the business development model would focus on a marketing programme to sensitize and build public awareness of our business in CEPEP. We would also strengthen our human resource structure and system to market CEPEP as a business that can serve, not only the state sector but also the private sector. We
are not too far from the day when the CEPEP would undertake increasing work with the private sector in the area of landscaping, beautification and clean up.

We have dealt with the initiatives with COSTAATT and education; we have dealt with training; we have dealt with CEPEP Marine and we have dealt with financial literacy through Nedco. There are several other agencies we work with and, of course, one that we would now build a strong partnership with and we are happy to announce is that the CEPEP programme, through our coordinator, would embark upon a programme of education and training with the Cipriani Labour College, to ensure that our in-house staff are trained in basic and elementary industrial relations practices; understanding conflict resolution et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate further that this type of training is critical. We have, for a long time, felt—the data would suggest—that in seven out of 10 conflicts in the industrial relations arena, are generally rooted in poor industrial relations practices that, at times, violate not just the law, but violate established conventions of the International Labour Organization.

It is our intention that CEPEP contractors and CEPEP managers will be trained, with the assistance of the Cipriani Labour College, in basic principles and practices of industrial relations to ensure that workers’ rights are protected; that workers understand their responsibilities and to ensure that proper health and safety standards are implemented and maintained. In this way, the CEPEP worker would be a worker who would fall under the decent work agenda; to ensure that that worker is protected; that the worker has rights and responsibilities and, indeed, offers a higher quality of service to contractors, to CEPEP and to Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, this is the company that I have described. We intend, with the extra resources, as well, to work a collaborative effort with the Housing Development Corporation. We would see, in the coming days a joint programme
between CEPEP and the HDC to continue and intensify our Colour Me Orange Programme which provides, not just work, but provides as well, importantly, income for underprivileged and distressed areas in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the Colour Me Orange Programme will target HDC estates, particularly, in areas that have been deemed hot spots, where we have seen an increase in crime; where we have also witnessed, regrettably, over the last few weeks—we have seen in the press—reports of protests and so on where, generally, young persons are crying out for employment. It is quite interesting, that those persons have also complained that the Colour Me Orange Programme was too short and it should have been extended. We are hoping the CEPEP would work in collaboration with the HDC to expand the Colour Me Orange Programme and to bring relief.

Mr. Speaker, the Colour Me Orange Programme has in it, another training facility where persons can get on the programme and learn valuable skills in fabrication, carpentry, plumbing and other skills. The Colour Me Orange Programme gives an opportunity for young people to learn skills and to use and market those skills in the private sector to private residences and so on. That is a very important initiative from the Housing Development Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I would not take much time again, because I know several of my colleagues are queuing up to continue this debate. Once again, I take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance on his presentation. The Minister of Finance has distinguished himself as a very calm and mature Minister who came in at a very difficult time in the economic history of Trinidad and Tobago and has provided the steady hand and strong leadership to ensure that the economy was sustained. He really steadied the ship.

When the Minister of Finance earlier outlined the state of several economies across world—very influential economies: India, Brazil, China and others—he
painted a global portrait of the decline in economic activity in the forecast. The Opposition Leader admitted that the earlier decline in 2008/2009 was based on the global trends, but he would not admit that any reassessment of our estimates today is also based on global trends. So, it is not something new at all. We are very privileged—if we would continue along this line—and would achieve that one percent growth and, at least, come out of decline. It would be a big achievement for us.

Mr. Speaker, we have all confidence that Trinidad and Tobago’s economy would perform as well as it can, given the circumstances. We have confidence that the investment projects in the energy sector and in construction would lead to employment creation and would lead to further economic activity.

There are huge projects that would take place within the next few weeks, including the beginning of construction of the south campus of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. By September we should be on the ground with the children’s hospital in Couva. In a couple of weeks we would start the Arima Police Station. We expect by September/October to begin the fire station in Mayaro.

Mr. Speaker, that is a point I wanted to make as well. If you drive throughout Trinidad today, notwithstanding all the talk you hear of business talking, or contractors do not have enough work and selling equipment, at every turn you could see Farmalls, tractors and heavy equipment at work; almost at any turn you can see this. In the housing sector we have started construction at Union Hall in San Fernando; at Egypt Village in Chaguanas and Fairfield in Princes Town. All houses are built by local contractors. [Desk thumping]

The road works, notwithstanding the temporary slow down involving the PURE, have intensified. So, you have road works, drainage works, housing, construction of the hospital, sporting facilities and schools. Really, there is
enormous activity taking place and much more to come, so that the business community and, particularly, the construction sector would benefit from that; and employees as well.

The other sectors, Mr. Speaker, are also poised for take-off and we expect that this would redound to the benefit of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Before I call on the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, I just want to put on record the following, so that Members who are to speak subsequently would be guided—I am referring to an earlier contribution made by the Member for Diego Martin West.

I want to take this opportunity to remind hon. Members of the use of unparliamentary language and/or words which tend to be insulting and highly offensive. I advise hon. Members of the use of the word “dotishness”, especially when it is being directed at a Member or to Members of this honourable House as a collective. It is in those circumstances I wish to rule that the adjective “dotishness” is unparliamentary and should not be used in our debates in this honourable House by Members of this Chamber.

So, I just wanted to put it on record so that all Members would be guided accordingly. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Colm Imbert (Diego Martin North/East):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The record would show that I have never used that word under your speakership. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] I have never used that word in the last two years. [* Interruption*] And the Speaker is vouching for it. [*Interruption*] No, no, this is serious business. [*Interruption*] I must, I know.

Mr. Speaker, I was attempting to take notes from the last Member, but it was a little difficult because he really did not give us anything to comment on. The hon.
Minster of Housing and the Environment used his time to “buss mark”, as is his want. He waved a book which you could buy in any stationery store. He said he is not going to call names and then he read out things that, who knows whether he was reading from blank pages.

You do not know. I have heard stories of people giving speeches in this House, three hours long. In those days one could give speeches in excess of 75 minutes and the person was reading from a blank page. So, one would never know whether this guest book that the Member waved for us was real, imaginary or if he picked it up on the way to Parliament today. One does not know, but it is all absolutely irrelevant because it has nothing to do with the matter we are discussing today. I have told the Member before, that he really needs to change his approach to presentations in this House and to lift the level of his contribution.

Mr. Speaker, let me deal with some of the issues raised by the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance said that the Central Bank Governor was misreported; his words were taken out of context; the headlines took it out of context, or whatever. The message that was conveyed by the Minister of Finance is that the Central Bank Governor never said that Trinidad and Tobago’s economy is in a slump.

Now, I have one such headline here. It is the Trinidad Guardian of May 24, 2012. The headline is “T&T’s Economy in slump says Central Bank Governor”. The Minister of Finance was at pains to say that is not so. I took notes of exactly what he said because he did say some things that I could take notes of, unlike the person who came after him on the Government side. He has told us that Trinidad and Tobago is not in any slump; Trinidad and Tobago is not in any recession and that the Governor’s words were taken out of context.

Mr. Speaker, this article puts the Governor’s words in quotation marks. It is not an interpretation, it is a report of what the Governor said. I am going to read
“Central Bank Governor Ewart Williams says the economy is in a slump, with three consecutive years of economic decline, slow implementation of Government projects and a reluctance by the private sector to invest, all contributing to the slowdown. In presenting what he acknowledges will be his last Monetary Policy Report, Williams said yesterday: ‘The economy has been in a slump and we are waiting on the recovery and the recovery has been delayed.’”

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please, whether you believe the Member who is speaking, whatever your views about what he is saying are, that is immaterial, but I take offence to the interruptions and this stream of interjections that continues.

I ask Members, especially on the Government Benches, to allow the Member for Diego Martin North/East to speak. If you have objections please take notes, but do not interrupt him or the House, which is disrespectful, while he is on his legs.

Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, continue.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand why the hon. Members opposite are so jumpy. This is not good news and it is not a good reflection on the stewardship of the Minister of Finance over the last two years. The Minister would not want the country to think about this or he would not want the country to know what is being said.

“Asked if T&T was in the same situation as the United Kingdom, which has seen two consecutive quarters of negative growth and was now in a technical recession, he said:” —This is the Governor. —“Our situation is even more serious, in that we have had negative growth for three years. That’s the
issue. It’s not so much the quarterly variations. We have had negative growth for three years and that’s our challenge: How do we get out of that slump?’”

Now, any ordinary reporter, subeditor, headline writer, would take these statements by the Governor—where he said “The economy has been in a slump”, how do we get out of that slump? Anybody would take those comments and write a headline “T&T’s economy is in slump”. The problem is that the Government needs to own up and face reality. That is one of the problems we are having in this country. I heard the Minister say a most astonishing thing; that when he heard what the Governor had to say about the decline in the energy sector, he went to find out what was going on. He is supposed to know.

Mr. Speaker, I brought a matter on the adjournment in this Parliament, almost six months ago, with respect to the Government’s failure to deal with the decline in oil production in Trinidad and Tobago. The Member for Tunapuna is a Member of this House. Everything was outlined in terms of the decline in crude oil production; the problems we are having with natural gas production. The Minister of Energy came and, to his credit, did not deny anything. He admitted that the situation was not good and he indicated the steps that he was taking to deal with what was a very bad situation for Trinidad and Tobago. Almost six months ago. [Interruption] What? One week ago? The Minister of Finance had to go and ask the Minister of Energy what is going on? Where has he been for the last five months? Has he been sleeping? I must ask these questions.

The Governor went on to say:

“…the bank has decided to downgrade its growth forecast for this year from 1.5 per cent to one per cent, and...in doing so it noted there were major downside risks to not even achieving that anaemic growth of one per cent.”

So, it is quite possible it may end up with zero or it is quite possible it may have a
repeat of what has occurred for the last three years where we may have a decline in the economy in 2012.

Now, I just heard the Minister of Housing and the Environment say—it is the only thing I recorded from his presentation—that at almost every turn you can see construction in progress, equipment at work. That is not true. That is just not true, Mr. Speaker. The government needs to deal with this situation. One of the statements made by the Governor—this is not the first time. This occurred in 2010; it occurred in 2011 and it is occurring in 2012.

“He noted the Government had a surplus on its budgetary allocations of $2.8 billion which suggested several projects had failed to get off the ground.”

These are the facts. This is the reality that we face in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Governor also went on to say that:

“...for growth to return, output from the energy sector would have to increase…”

Well, that is obvious.

“and that would be contingent on the maintenance work being completed on time. Asked if that alone would lead to higher output, bearing in mind the natural decline of oil and gas wells, Williams said: ‘What’s happening now is, in addition to the trend, we are having declines coming out of these mechanical breakdowns, because of safety upgrades, because of maintenance.

So in addition to the natural declines we are having other things that are coming in the way, so I don’t expect us coming back to levels of four years ago but I expect the declines will not be as dramatic.’ He also identified the present confrontational industrial-relations environment and the inability of Government, labour and business to find a formula linking wage increases to
productivity as a threat to the economy and the competitiveness of parts of the export sector.

He said the bank had come to the conclusion productivity was on the decline.

‘…the indicators that I see are suggesting that productivity levels are coming down.’…He said the business community also…identified crime as another factor that was hurting business, with an increase in the cost of security and…a reluctance to invest further.”

Mr. Speaker, these are the facts. I would have expected the Minister to give us a little more meat in terms of his treatment of these issues. It seemed to me that all the Minister was worried about was the way the media portrayed these facts; because these are facts. Let us go now to the actual report itself. I saw the Minister waving the report, I have the report. Let us go to it and see what it says. If the Members opposite are unhappy with the way the media has reported what the Governor said, let us deal with this.

Mr. Roberts: Why you did not start there?

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, through you, I would accept that sotto voce question across the floor. The Governor said so much more in his press briefing than is contained in the bare data in the report. He analyzed it, he interpreted it and he gave projections. I think it is important for Trinidad and Tobago to understand what the Governor of the Central Bank is saying. Let us deal with the facts: Summary of Economic Developments. This is the latest economic indicator bulletin, dated March 2012; so it is very current; just two months ago.

“Gross Domestic Product

• The Trinidad and Tobago economy contracted by 2.6 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2011, a similar rate of decline as in the previous quarter.”

UNREVISED
Let me repeat that:

“a similar rate of decline as in the previous quarter. The decline in real GDP in the fourth quarter...mainly reflected falling energy sector output, which contracted by 7.8 per cent.”

Mr. Speaker, while all of this is going on the Central Bank is also recording that the average price of crude petroleum was significantly higher in the period under review than in the previous year. So, we have a declining economy in a period of high oil prices. How is this happening? We also have rising inflation in this report. We are told that:

“Headline inflation rose to 9.1 per cent on a year-on-year...up from 6.8 per cent in January.”

So, 6.8 per cent inflation in January, 9.1 per cent inflation in March. I heard figure the other day—just a couple weeks ago—of 11 per cent. So, we have rising inflation, high oil prices and a contracting economy. Why is this happening, Mr. Speaker? This is why we have to be concerned about the information that the Minister has given us in his responses to the questions we asked in the Finance Committee. Quite frankly, I do not believe the responses; they do not make any sense. I will go through, in a little while, and explain why I do not believe that these responses make any sense.

I will go now to the December 2011 Economic Indicator Bulletin. The first one I read just now, March 2012, I am now going to read December 2011.

“Gross Domestic Product
• The Trinidad and Tobago economy contracted by 2.6 per cent in the third quarter of 2011...
• Activity in the energy sector declined by 5.6 per cent in the quarter ending September 2011.”

UNREVISED
• **5.35 p.m.**

So in the third quarter we had contraction of 2.6 per cent—that is 2011. In the fourth quarter we had contraction of 2.6 per cent. We had a decline in the energy sector of 5.6 per cent up to September 2011 and a further decline of 7.8 per cent up to December 2011. So this is what has been happening in our economy.

• If you go to March 2011, the Trinidad and Tobago economy contracted by 3.6 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2010. Energy sector activity was down by 4.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2010. June 2011, Trinidad and Tobago’s economy contracted by 1.7 per cent in the quarter ending March 2011. The energy sector recorded a 2.7 per cent contraction in the first quarter of 2011.

• So the outlook, as you go through the last two years, is not good, Mr. Speaker, and we need, at the level of this Parliament, to have serious discussions on what is really happening in our economy, rather than all of these platitudes, and these feel-good messages and so on. These are things we need to discuss as a country, because it will affect all of us, no matter which Government is in power. If our economy goes into a tailspin, we are all going to be in trouble.

• Now, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs issues a bulletin giving data in the energy sector on a monthly basis and on a quarterly basis. I have the bulletin for the year of 2010. They also do annual—January to December 2010, and I have the crude oil and condensate production figures of 2010. And if I go to May 2010, the total crude oil
and condensate production in Trinidad and Tobago was 100,851 barrels per day.

- If I look now in the latest document published by that Ministry, March 2012, I go to the same table, Mr. Speaker, and I look at our oil production in March 2012, what do I see? I see that in March 2012 our oil production is 81,670 and in February 2012, 80,241 barrels per day. Now, Mr. Speaker, those figures are the lowest figures for oil production in this country since the 1950s. These are 1957 and 1958 figures in terms of oil production that we are looking at. The actual reduction is in the vicinity of 20,000 barrels per day. In fact, if you take the February 2012 figures and the May 2010 figures—and I am using May 2010 because that was when this Government came into office—you get a reduction in oil production of 20,610 barrels per day over the last two years.

- If you work that out on an annual basis, that is equivalent to gross revenue from oil for the oil companies of US $752 million or TT $4.8 billion. That is what is coming out of our GDP, because of the reduction in oil production, a 20 per cent decline in oil production since this Government has come into office. And these are facts. This is not hearsay; this is not a doom and gloom message; that is factual. I am taking it off the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs’ website, and I would have expected, if the Minister of Finance is coming to tell us that he is going to finance the additional expenditure by way of additional revenue—and when you go and look at the table that was presented to us in this document, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, there is no
additional revenue of any significance coming from taxes on incomes and profits, either from oil companies or from non-oil companies.

- In fact, the estimate for taxes on incomes and profit from the non-oil sector—companies in the non-oil sector—is actually showing a reduction. I am using the Minister’s figures. The original budget projection back in October 2011 was that companies in the non-oil sector would contribute $8.48 billion in tax revenue during this fiscal year. The Minister has now revised that figure downwards to $8.17 billion. So there is a reduction of approximately $300 million in estimated taxes on incomes and profits from companies in the non-oil sector. The estimate from oil companies is the same, which just tells me that the person who put this together was a bit lazy. They cannot be the same. It is the same down to the decimal point, but it cannot be. They just put the same figure again.

- But the fact of the matter is, if the Minister of Finance is predicting a $300 million shortfall in collections of taxes on incomes and profits from companies in the non-oil sector, then he is predicting a decline in economic activity in Trinidad and Tobago. It is obvious, because you tax companies based on their earnings. So if the earnings of the companies in the non-oil sector are going down, then their economic activity is going down.

- The Minister appears to be financing some of the additional expenditure from an increased estimate of royalties on oil and gas. Well, we know that the price of oil has gone up. If we go to the March 2012
bulletin we see that the average price of crude petroleum for April 2012 was US $103 per barrel. The Minister, in his budget statement, told us that he was using a lower figure for the estimates of revenue from oil. I believe the figure is $75. Am I correct? And the figure for gas was $2.75? Right.

• Now, when you see, however, Mr. Speaker—these figures are always misleading and finance Ministers and people in the Ministry of Finance do not like to tell you really what is going on. Because when you see a price for West Texas Intermediate of $103, that is not the price we are receiving for our oil. That is marine crude—light, sweet oil—at $103. But a significant proportion of crude oil in Trinidad and Tobago is from land—heavy crude, and you are averaging maybe $75/$80 a barrel—for heavy crude. So the weighted average price of oil may be a little over $85, maybe $90. I am not exactly certain of the figures; I am just using my knowledge of land production and marine production.

• So that we are a little above the revenue figures in terms of the weighted average price of oil from which we get our royalties. But if our oil production has dropped by 20 per cent over the last two years, then even if the price of oil goes up, once the production is going down at this drastic rate, the net revenue from oil may very well be the same or less. So I am a bit skeptical of the Minister’s projection that he intends to get about $600 million more from royalties on oil and gas. We shall see. But what I find of great concern is that the Minister is expecting to raise $1 billion from an item which he has put a very vague and ambiguous
heading next to as: “Other Financing”. What on earth does that mean? I would hope that the Minister in his winding up will tell you what “Other Financing” is, because it falls directly under “Borrowing”.

• So is it borrowing? Can you tell us, please? Because that is a footnote under the table which says that other financing from which he expects to get an additional $1 billion includes the Unemployment Levy and the Green Fund, and as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, this is a very, very dangerous situation that we find ourselves in, Mr. Speaker.

• So I hope that someday—it may not be today but, someday—that we have a debate in this Parliament about income and expenditure; that the Minister of Finance will come clean and tell this country what is really going on. Because, you see, I do not want to be here in October of this year, or September or November, whenever the budget is read—whenever—and hear this line. This is out of the 2012 budget statement: “Last year’s projection of positive economic growth did not materialize.” There was a lot of cut and paste in this. I am hoping that your speech writer will not cut and paste that out and put, “Last year’s projection of economic growth did not materialize”, when you present your 2013 budget.

• But we need to have a serious discussion in this country. There is no point in saying that lack of investment three years ago is responsible for the problems now. You are in Government. You were elected to deal with these issues. I have told the Minister before, you cannot spend your whole five years blaming the PNM for the problems [Desk thumping]
that are being experienced by the people of this country. It is not going to hold any water. Why did you say that lack of investment three years about is responsible for the problems now?

- You did not say that in your 2010 budget statement. You did not say that in your 2011 budget statement. You did not say that in your 2012 budget statement; in the Review of the Economy, 2010, 2011, 2012; it was not in the Public Sector Investment Programme document. It appears in no speech that the Minister of Finance has given us over the last two years. Why is it in June 2012 he gets a bolt of lightning and suddenly discovers—he has a catharsis; he suddenly discovers—that the problem of our economy are because of the PNM? The PNM left Government in May 2010.

- **Mr. Roberts:** They were thrown out. They did not leave.

- **Mr. C. Imbert:** And this “blame the PNM” refrain is getting a bit tired.

- The other amazing thing that the Minister said that I could not understand, he did a lot of boasting about the Clico matter and you have to wonder what world is this Minister of Finance living in? Not in Trinidad and Tobago. Because he went on to say that the Clico rescue plan was a resounding success. “We have paid 85 per cent of the policy holders.”

- **Mr. Roberts:** True.

- **Mr. C. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, what the Government did, they passed a draconian law taking away citizens’ right to due process; taking away citizens’ right to seek judicial review of the actions of Government
officials and Central Bank officials and officials in Clico. They passed a draconian law to stop people from going to the court to claim their just entitlement and they refused to pay the interest on the policies, and they chopped the capital by 20 per cent, and he calls that a resounding success. Mr. Speaker, I wonder, as I said, what world all of them are living in.

- On April 20, 2012, an article was printed in the Express newspaper. The headline is—and it is not a misleading headline; it is not out of context; it is not a sensational headline; it is factual:
  - “CLICO policyholders granted leave to apply for judicial review.”
- And, you see, the Minister does not like to talk about these things at all.
- “The United Policyholders Group has been granted leave to apply for judicial review of Government’s decision not to pay them the full sum of money due on their CLICO Executive Flexible Premium Annuities.”
- This is just April 20; two months ago. But according to him, everybody is happy.
- “In the Port of Spain High Court yesterday, Justice Joan Charles said she was satisfied…”
- The Judge, after having reviewed the case and the documents presented by the United Policyholders Group, said she was satisfied:
- “…that the group has raised several grounds for judicial review with a reasonable prospect of success.”

5.50 p.m.

Hon. C. Imbert: So this is a finding of the high court that the policy holders have a reasonable prospect of success. The policyholders initiated legal action against
the Prime Minister and the cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. It was later agreed that
the Attorney General would be substituted as the defendant. Attorneys acting on
behalf of the group contented that there was a guarantee given by the state in 2009,
that their money in the Colonial Life Insurance Company Limited, would be safe.
And if there was any deficit in the company's statutory fund, that Government
would make up the deficit.

Queens Counsel, Peter Knox, submitted, that when the new administration
took up office in 2010, Finance Minister, Winston Dookeran, announced a plan to
repay policyholders their monies without interest, over a period of twenty years.
This plan was inconsistent with the guarantee given by the previous government.

It was argued that where a government or a public authority wants to change
a policy, which has created a legitimate expectation of a substantive benefit, which
is a protection in public law, it has to adduce evidence to show an overriding
public interest. The judge ruled that the group had raised several grounds for
judicial review....

Mr. Speaker: Honorable member, I want to raise 36.2 of our Standing Orders.
That matter is properly before the Court as you have rightly said, and the judge is
advancing certain views. I don't think we should get into that. I have given you
enough space to make your point. I would ask you to refrain from referring to
that— refraining from making references to that matter, in accordance with 36:2 of
our Standing Order.

Hon. C. Imbert: Sure, Mr. Speaker, but this matter is no longer pending; it is
not pending. And that is what this standing order says, that the matter is pending.
But, I accept your ruling. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that while the
Minister of Finance is beating himself on his chest, and saying that everybody is
happy, a number of aggrieved persons have gone to the Courts, and they are
making progress with their application, that they be paid the full amount with
interests, Mr. Speaker. And I have no doubt, that at the end of the day, they are likely to be successful, Mr. Speaker.

You were going against the Speaker's ruling.

Hon. C. Imbert: What ruling? Mr. Speaker, could you talk to the member of St. Joseph, please, he is disturbing me?

The Speaker: You have my protection.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, I know they don't like to hear these things, you know, if you bring up a matter, where a judge has made a decision, they say *sub judice*. If you read out what the Central Bank governor said, they say misquoted. If you bring up some other thing, they say imputing improper motives. If you bring another fact for them, they say, disorderly conduct, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to deal with the issues, Mr. Speaker. They can't handle the truth.

And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I will now go to the page 41 of the manifesto of the Peoples Partnership, Mr. Speaker. And on page 41, under the rubric "Ageing population, life begins at 60. A fair deal for older people." That government or that party, or that collection of parties said, our government will reinstate the Old Age Pension Act. And this is the astonishing thing that they said, "Pensions must be an entitlement and not a grant." I want to repeat that. In the UNC manifesto. We are not talking here -- well, UNC, TOP and MSJ or whatever it is. As far as I am concerned, it is UNC manifesto. They just put their symbol on it. Mr. Speaker, in this manifesto, the coalition that formed the government said that pensions must be an entitlement and not a grant. They went on to say another astonishing thing; our government will remove all restrictions and qualifications for people to receive an old age pension.

And thus this is English; this is not misquote. This is not out of context. And thus, every citizen will automatically receive a state funded old age pension.
upon attainment of pensionable age. And our government will increase the value of the monthly old age pension entitlement to $3,000.00.

Now, let's take this paragraph and analyze the English words. One, two, three, whatever. We will get to the destination. What the Peoples Partnership said, that pensions must be an entitlement. That is No. one, No. two; they will remove all restrictions and qualifications, so that every citizen will automatically receive a state-funded old age pension, upon attainment of pensionable age. And they will increase the monthly old age pension entitlement to $3,000.00. If you take any English interpretation of these words, Mr. Speaker, what it means, is that the Peoples Partnership said, as soon as you hit 65; let's forget this ad that they are quarrelling about. Because it is a big noise about some newspaper ad, or however many ads that one of the people working for them published in the daily newspaper, that put the pensionable age at 60. Let's forget that for the moment. Assuming, but not admitting that is really 65. What this document -- this is the manifesto, this is not no misprint. What this means is that the Peoples Partnership promised, every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of qualifications, that they will receive an old age pension of $3,000.00, upon attaining the age of 65. It has no other meaning. You could spin it, you could put it on a plate with peas and rice, it will mean the same thing.

What about daal?

Hon. C. Imbert: Peas and rice. No, it is quite all right. That is for you. Right. But, Mr. Speaker, let us look at what the Minister said. This is why I have to wonder whether the Minster is living in Trinidad and Tobago. He says that there has been some commentary, some discussion in the public domain over social security benefits. You see, he doesn't want to deal with an issue, he is very evasive, you know. Some discussions in the public domain over social security benefits.
And then he goes on to say "in the Finance Act, we made a provision that no one would get a lower income than before." The people didn't expect to get a lower income. The people expect to get a higher income from you. That is what you promised them. That is what they voted for. And if you told them that when they hit age 65, regardless of their income, regardless of their circumstances, regardless of anything, they will get an old age pension of $3,000.00, why now, are government spokesmen saying, "well, you know, what we did, we want to make sure that you did not get less than before because, you know, if we had left it so, you woulda get less. Who you trying to fool? No wonder the elderly people are mobilizing. Because they all went to school and they all understand English, and they know what you said, and they are educated by the Peoples National Movement. And they understand what this means. If you told them that regardless of restrictions and qualifications they will get a pension of $3,000.00, and you are now giving them a thousand, $800.00, $200.00, $500.00, then you have betrayed them. And I would like you to see you talk your way out of this one.

They will try.

Hon. C. Imbert: They cannot. This is in black and white. What they would say the person who prints the manifesto misprint that? Two years later? Two years later you will come and say the manifesto has a misprint in it? And when you make these promises and you don't keep them, this is why there are credibility issues, Mr. Speaker. This is why there are credibility issues and you wonder why people are protesting, and you wonder why people are blocking the streets. I heard coming up the road today, I heard about a protest in Arima, where people have strewn the streets with all sorts of debris protesting against the member of Parliament for Arima. They are not satisfied with their roads.

Name one road in Arima.

Hon. C. Imbert: You see, Mr. Speaker, this government has a credibility
problem, and it doesn't seem to understand that it has a credibility problem. Let us deal with the Minister of Housing. The Minister of Housing gave us a glowing presentation of how he is going to transform CEPEP. The CEPEP workers will come from humble grass cutters, they will be transformed from humble grass cutters into entrepreneurs, and they will be trained in all sorts of things, and they will be educated, and so on. He gave us a glowing presentation about all these wonderful things he is going to do with all these CEPEP workers, Mr. Speaker. But let us deal with the facts. The allocation for the CEPEP in the 2012 budget was $320m, Mr. Speaker. I went and I got the Hansard record of the contribution of the Honorable member for Oropouche East, during that budget debate. I could not find a single word in here which should lead anybody to believe that he had a financial deficit that he was short $260m, Mr. Speaker, nothing, not a word, nothing from the Minister of Finance when he spoke about the allocations in the budget, and so on. But here we are, just about eight months after the budget was read and CEPEP's allocation for 2012 has gone from $320m to $580m, Mr. Speaker over half a billion dollars. 81% increase. With all of these wonderful things that the Member for Oropouche East is going to do in CEPEP, how can this country sustain a $600m expenditure on this programme? You cannot give the old age pensioners their money but you could find $600m for this programme, and you could find $686m to put into the Andin Development Corporation, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister tells us, we are in a difficult place. I took notes of what he said. He said, we are in a difficult place, you know, things bad. That is what he said. But with one stroke of the pen, Mr. Speaker, the CEPEP allocation has gone from $300m a year to $600m a year, Mr. Speaker. And these are the same people, who decry that programme, who condemn that programme, who said it was a make work scheme, and who said it was just giving out money, and so on, Mr. Speaker. I will, you know, let's see what happens in the next 12 months. Let us see if that
$600m that the Minister is speaking about is, in fact, going to be money well spent. Let us see if we get value for money. Let us see what the facts are, as opposed to the propaganda.

You know, I read in this budget speech this address of the Minister, where he was talking about what CEPEP is for. Hear his words. “We know as a fact that CEPEP was used in the last election.”

The Speaker: Just hold on. The speaking time of the honorable member for Diego Martin North/East has expired.

Hon. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the speaking time of the honorable member for Diego Martin North East be extended by a further thirty minutes.

The Speaker: Honourable members the question is that the speaking time for the Honourable member for Diego Martin North East be extended by a further thirty mines. All in favor, say aye? Any against? The ayes have it. The speaking time of the Honorable Member for Diego Martin North East is extended by a further 30 minutes. You may continue, Honorable member.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this is, in fact, a statement made. I apologise, Mr. Speaker. This is a statement made by Mr. Ramadar. We know as a fact that CEPEP was used in the last election and before that to bring crowds to political meetings at Woodford Square, when it was packed with CEPEP employees who complained bitterly, many of them that they had to be there, otherwise they will not get a job. How many CEPEP workers were in the Reinzi Complex on the 24th May? All ten thousand of them.

Oh please, the complex was empty.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mid Centre Mall. Sorry, Mid Centre Mall. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that when you spend your political life….

The Speaker: Members on the Government side allow the Honorable Minister

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to speak. Continue, honourable Minister.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, when you spend your political life criticizing something condemning it and describing it in a particular, and then you go and increase it by 81%. Is not 8% the budget gone up you know, it is 81%. It gone from $300m to almost $600m.

Rent a crowd.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** And when you spend all your political years criticizing that sort of thing as make work patronage, dependency syndrome et cetera, et cetera. And then you come and you double it Mr. Speaker, that is why.

**The Speaker:** Please, please, members, allow the member to speak, please.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** That is why I am telling them, they have a credibility problem. I am sure between CEPEP and URP, they cross over a billion dollars, you know, in budgetary allocations. When you go and check it you will see the same programmes that they condemned so bitterly, when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker. And speaking about URP, I mean, URP under this administration, the less said the better. It is a disgrace. In my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I could say without any fear of contradiction, there is possibly one URP gang out 40 or 50 or whatever many they have, on paper. They are on paper. There is one. I have gone through my constituency on several working days, Mr. Speaker, driven the length and breadth of the constituency, Mr. Speaker, at eight o'clock in the morning and I found one URP gang working, one. And on inquiry, Mr. Speaker, the members of that gang told me they got pressure because they actually working, Mr. Speaker. So the less said the better about URP. There has been no transformation with URP under this administration. URP is riddled with ghost gangs and all the kickbacks and the paybacks and the criminal elements in URP.

Just the other day, the Manager of Diego Martin URP, was arrested for arms and ammunition, Mr. Speaker, a notorious criminal, that they put in charge of URP.
in Diego Martin, Mr. Speaker. As I said, between these two programmes which they described as make work, they are now crossing one billion dollars, Mr. Speaker.

You were going better.

Hon. C. Imbert: That is all right. Mr. Speaker, let me just deal with some other issues. You know, the Minister of Works is forever complaining about not having money. Always complaining, no money, no funding, he need money, not getting money from the Minister of Finance, not getting support from his colleagues in terms of funding for his various road programmes, and so on, Mr. Speaker. I just want to outline some facts. I know the Minister of Works is a very touchy individual. You say anything he fly into a rage and start to get vex one time, he get hot. But let me -- we will see. Mr. Speaker, I just want to deal -- I want to deal with some issues now in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, because I would have hoped to see, Mr. Speaker, if they are going to increase expenditure and increase allocations, I would have hoped to see an increased allocation for the Minister of Works. I would have preferred that, Mr. Speaker, than some of the things I am seeing here. $686m for the Anden Development Corporation. What is to come out of that? The gestation period for a project going to anyone of those multilateral development corporations is about eight years. You have to do environmental impact analysis, feasibility study, all kind of laborious procedures and so on, Mr. Speaker before you can get one red cent out of these multilateral agencies, Mr. Speaker.

I remember, I will give you a real story. I remember in 1995, negotiating…

The Speaker: Please, please, members for Chaguanas East, and D'abadie O’Meara please, please, please. Continue.

Hon. C. Imbert: I know what the problem is, infrastructure education. But, Mr. Speaker, in 1995, we in the Ministry of Works were negotiating with the Caribbean
Development Bank to extend the Solomon Hochoy Highway, Mr. Speaker, from the Toruba area, down to the Golconda area, Mr. Speaker, 1995. The whole of the UNC administration of 1995 to 2001 expired, the 18/18 period expired, and a new Minister of Works was appointed in 2002 and the project was finally completed sometime in 2003/2004, Mr. Speaker. A typical example, in 1995 we had already developed the project scope, we had already developed the terms and conditions of funding. We had already worked out the tendering procedures and so on, with the Caribbean Development Bank. That project took nine years, Mr. Speaker, to be completed. And that is well known in this country and many other countries throughout the world, Mr. Speaker. I really want -- I cyar use the word admire, but Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the faith that the Minister of Finance has in accessing funding from these multilateral agencies. Yes, there are benefits. Of course they are, you get the benefit of greater oversight, you get the benefit of greater -- a more transparent procurement process. These are tremendous benefits that you get. But you also get an eight or nine year delay before you could get your project implemented. So when is this pipeline of funds from the Andin Development Corporation going to become available to us in Trinidad and Tobago in the form of real projects, Mr. Speaker? Not pie in the sky; not projects on paper. There are projects in this Public Sector Investment Programme 2012 that appeared in the Public Sector Investment Programme 2011 and in 2009, and in 2008, and in 2007, and in 2006, same project, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the problems this government has is its lack of experience. It is all very well to say you are going to get loan financing of concessionary rates from the Andin Development Corporation, but when? In the year 2020? In the year 2022? Mr. Speaker, and I am a bit concerned of us putting $686m, into that organization at this time when there are, in my opinion, far greater and more pressing requirements for that $686m.
But let us go to the Minister of Works. I would have preferred that I saw some additional funding for PURE, for example, for the Highways Division, for the Drainage Division. I can speak about the Drainage Division. Mr. Speaker, I was in the vicinity of the Maraval River just yesterday, and I can say again without fear of contradiction that in the upper reaches of the Maraval River it is full of silt, six, seven feet of silt. It has not been dredged for this year, this rainy season. Rainy season has begun two weeks ago, and the Maraval River has six or seven feet of silt in it, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, I noticed he is taking advice from -- taking basket from a colleague in the back. But I mean, that colleague in the back does not represent anybody in Maraval. When this rainy season comes and the people of Maraval suffer flooding, and they suffer flood damage because the Maraval River and its tributaries, and the Debe River and all of the known suspects and culprits in the Maraval area that deal with -- that contribute to flood damage have not been dredged and clean, and the Diego Martin River has not been dredged and clean. I am just talking about the region of Diego Martin. When it comes, then I wonder what you are going to hear from this government.

I wanted to make a point. In November 2011, Mr. Speaker, there was a disastrous flood in the Maraval area, disastrous. And it was so bad, it caused the Prime Minister and her cabinet or significant numbers of her cabinet to tour the area and make the usual promises of relief to the citizens of Maraval.

The cause of that flooding was multifaceted; Mr. Speaker, the Debe River overflowed its banks. The Maraval river overflowed its banks and so on. And these are major water courses that need attention, Mr. Speaker. But one of the things that is of great concern to people in this country and this is where their credibility comes into play. And I know that the PURE programme was shut down for a while. But I heard the other day that it has been resumed. The Maraval roundabout -- the Maraval access improvement project, Mr. Speaker, was opened
by this government with great fanfare in May 2011, Mr. Speaker. Part of that project involved a new wall along the boundary of the Trinidad Country Club. It is a well known intersection, the intersection of Long Circular Road and Saddle Road in Maraval, Mr. Speaker. And the new wall was quite attractive. It was built under the new administration. In November 2011, the wall collapsed. The government visited the area, Mr. Speaker, and as I said made the usual promises, but to date in June 2012, the wall is still on the ground, Mr. Speaker. Nothing has been done to reconstruct the Country Club wall in Maraval. Now, all of them who visit Maraval from time to time because they seem to love the area. They always up inside of there. They will every day when they pass that area they will see this collapsed wall, the debris still on the ground, still in pieces, grass is growing in the foundation, Mr. Speaker. And I would like the Minister of Works to let us know, because the Minister of Finance has given him no money. Tell us -- That is all right. This is a part of Trinidad and Tobago. I would like the Minister of Works to tell us when that country club wall will be reconstructed, because six months of looking at that eyesore, Mr. Speaker, is six months too long. I hope the Minister will tell us he has received the funding and he can resume the reconstruction of that wall in -- at the earliest possibility, Mr. Speaker.

The other issue in Diego Martin that is of great concern to the citizens of the region of Diego Martin, Mr. Speaker, is the widening of the Diego Martin highway. Now, that project commenced just before the general election of 2010 with the first phase, Mr. Speaker, which was to improve the roadway up to Victoria Gardens in Diego Martin. The second; third and fourth phases involved completing the dual carriageway from Victoria Gardens down to Acton Court, Mr. Speaker. The second, third and fourth phases never got off the ground. So I raise that matter in this Parliament towards the end of 2010. The Minister of Works told the Parliament, that work would resume on the highway widening project in Diego
Martin in April of 2011. April of 2011, came and went, nothing happened. I raised the matter again, Mr. Speaker, later in 2011, and the Minister came to the Parliament and said that he had been misled and given bad advice by his Technical Advisers. And they are the ones who had told him that the Diego Martin highway work would resume in April 2011, and they had given him bad information. I took him at his word; at face value. He said that work would resume in February 2012, Mr. Speaker. I remember at the time asking him if he was sure that that was so. Well we in June 2012, Mr. Speaker, and all I am seeing on that project is some little signs, saying, "this property is earmarked for acquisition." But I am not seeing any bulldozers, I am not seeing any backhoes, I am not seeing any workers, I am not seeing any construction work, Mr. Speaker. And I am hoping that in this reallocation of funding, and this supplementary appropriation, that something is going to be done to give the Minister of Works, the funding that he requires to acquire those properties in Diego Martin, and to complete the Diego Martin Highway Improvement Project, Mr. Speaker. Because there are credibility issues. A new government comes in promising the sun, the moon and the stars. They say they will do better. They tell the people vote for us, we represent change. And then you sit down and watch projects just hang up for two years, Mr. Speaker. And there is no justification for any of this, Mr. Speaker.

On a positive note, the Minster of Sport, in somewhere in 2010, had answered a question that I raised about why the work on the northern recreation ground, better known as the Bagatelle Savannah had come to a halt. And the Minster said at the time, that the Minister of Finance had given an instruction that all these projects are to be cancelled. If I am misquoting either of you, I will sit down. And I asked the Minister of Sport, when will these projects resume? Because it wasn't just the Bagatelle Savannah, it was the Patna recreation ground, it was the Morne Cyril Ground in Paramin, it was the Pascal Recreation Ground in
Maraval, and it was the Saddle ground in Moka. All of which, Mr. Speaker, had been stopped by the new government. The Minister told me at the time, he can't say. He said, the projects have been cancelled, and he can't say when they will resume. I am happy to be able to say something positive in this contribution, Mr. Speaker. But lo and behold, and it is not in the supplementary allocations, so I don't know where the funding is coming from. Work has resumed on the Pascal recreation ground in Maraval. The Saddle Hill recreation ground in Moka, the Patna recreation ground in Diego Martin, the northern recreation grounds in Bagatelle. And there is a fifth one. And I wish to thank the Minster of Sports. I mean, I give credit, where credit is due doh mind the Minster is two years late. Doh mind he cancel the projects for no reason. I wish to thank the Minister of Sport for finally after two years, resuming the projects in the constituency of Diego Martin North/East which the youths of the area have been crying for, for the last two years. It doh matter to me. You could say what you want.

Mr. Speaker, before -- how many more minutes I have?

The Speaker: You have to end at six-thirty.

Hon. C. Imbert: I have seven minutes.

The Speaker: You have ten minutes.

Hon. C. Imbert: I have ten minutes. I am sorry to disappoint the Minister of Sport. I have to say something positive, I mean, come on, the young people are happy and I am happy that the work has resume, doh mind it is two years late. Doh mind you make them suffer for two years. But coming back now, Mr. Speaker, and, you know, doh mind, Mr. Speaker, there are questions about the identity of some of the contractors. One of whom is a twice defeated COP candidate for the constituency of Diego Martin West. He happens to be one of the contractors. You do not know that? Do not play that. Mr. Speaker, I can say now that Mr. Rocky Garcia, is, in fact, working on three of those grounds in my
constituency. I can say that without any fear of contradiction, Mr. Speaker, having visited the grounds and spoken -- it is all right. I didn't cast any aspersions. I am simply reporting to this House, that a former defeated candidate of the COP, is the beneficiary of three significant sporting contracts in the constituency of Diego Martin North/East.

How the work going?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker

Mr. Speaker: Please allow the Minster for Diego Martin North/East to speak. You have my protection. Continue.

Hon. C. Imbert: What is the problem? I am reporting facts, Mr. Speaker. But let me come back to the Minister of Finance. So touchy; thin skin. But, Mr. Speaker -- yes, he is. One of the questions -- all I said, Mr. Speaker, is that he should get more money, and look how vex he get. Well, Mr. Speaker, let me go -- that is what you feel. Mr. Speaker, let me go to the responses emanating from the second meeting of the Finance Committee. We asked a question about the fees being paid to lawyers in the Commission of Enquiry, into Colonial Life and British American and Hindu Credit Union. Mr. Speaker, I was astonished to discover that the Commissioner is getting $35,000.00 a day; the Lead Counsel is getting $25,000.00 a day; the Junior Counsel, this is the one that really annoyed me; $12,000.00 a day, Mr. Speaker. The salary of a member of parliament is $14,000.00 a month. We get $14,000.00 a month. This government is paying junior attorneys $12,000.00; a day, Mr. Speaker; a day. $400,000.00 for the brief, the brief $400,000.00, and the daily fee, $12,000.00; a day, Mr. Speaker. Is a serious matter, Mr. Speaker, very, very serious matter? You know, people make jokes; people say all sorts of things about Parliamentarians, and how much they should be paid. And they have no idea of what is going on.

Mr. Speaker, I have been asking a question here, they deferring it. You
know, this is the same government that wants to boast about how they answer questions on time, promptly. There is a particular question I have been asking they keep deferring it. And, you know, the purpose of that question is to elicit factual information about the salaries of Chief Executive Officers in state enterprises, because some of these people receiving excess of $100,000.00 a month. So you have a Minister -- and I am talking about 2012, you have a Minister. Mr. Speaker, you know, they is a bunch of jokers, you know, sometimes. Mr. Speaker, I said "sometimes". But I will withdraw that. The thing is, you have a Minister -- let's take the Minster for Oropouche East. Who has the HDC and the Udecott reporting to him, among sundry other corporations. And the people in these corporations are getting over a hundred thousand dollars a month, Mr. Speaker. And this is across the board. And for some reason, they ducking the question. Why would you not want the country to know how badly paid members of Parliament are, when it is compared to the people that they have to supervise, Mr. Speaker. Please answer the question, Mr. Speaker. Please answer the question. But coming back to this thing, I was horrified to learn that we are paying junior attorneys, $12,000.00; a day, $60,000 a week, quarter million dollars a month, is what we are paying junior attorneys to attend and do their work in the Commission of Enquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing is, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance spoke about the fuel hedge, I would ask him to deal with this. The former Chairman of Caribbean Airlines, made an allegation that he was operating on the basis of a particular fuel hedge, and it was reduced out of the blue, it was reduced by the Minister of Finance suddenly, without any warning, causing Caribbean Airlines to incur a huge loss in 2011. Well, I see here that the date of the decision is as follows: "In February 2012…” So it is this year. ....Air Jamaica." I would also like the Minster to tell us whether there is any substance to the allegation made by the former Chairman of Caribbean Airlines, that you switch the fuel hedge on him, and that
you reduced the amount of the subsidy to Caribbean Airlines, causing Caribbean Airlines to incur a loss, Mr. Speaker. Because that airline is under a cloud of confusion. You know the former Chairman has said when he left – when he demitted office as Chairman of the Board, this is Mr. Lok Jac, they had almost a billion Trinidad and Tobago dollars in the bank. And this is $140m US. That is $850m Trinidad and Tobago. That is what he says that there was over $800m Trinidad and Tobago in the bank account of the Caribbean Airlines, and now there is nothing, absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. And we really need to get to the bottom of all of this. What is going on with Caribbean Airlines? Does the government intend to continue with Caribbean Airlines? What are your plans? The former board was expanding routes and talking about your board now under Mr. Nicholas, was expanding routes, reopening the London route, going all over the place, expanding the airline. The Lok Jac board was batting in their crease, keeping the routes very tight and, you know, streamlined and so on. Could the Minister of Finance tell us what are the government plans for that airline? Because it is burning a $500m hole in the country's pocket every year at this time, Mr. Speaker. Whatever? We need to know, Mr. Speaker. And this is what I will close with. You know, it is easy for them to say like this and like that. But you in charge now. You have the responsibility to govern this country. You have the responsibility for dealing with these problems. That is why I am asking these questions, Mr. Speaker. And that is why the pensioners want to know why you promised them $3,000.00 a month, regardless of qualifications, and you cutting their pension from $3,000.00 to $1,000.00? They want to know. Tell them, Mr. Speaker. And the people in Diego Martin want to know why are our road projects in a state of perpetual limbo. Why are not these projects advancing as we see in other parts of the country? Is it a funding problem? Is it a money problem, Mr. Speaker? I will call upon both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Works
to deal with the issues I have raised in my contribution.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Minister of Words and Infrastructure.

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me take the Member of Diego Martin West first because I had not planned to spend much time on his submission, Mr. Speaker, because he didn’t say much, but when I heard him say that the budget of the Minister of Finance, is a budget by ratchifee, and when he said that the government is sleeping on the job. And, Mr. Speaker, when he gave us some voodoo maths to say that $2.7b asked for in January and $1.5b asked for now is $4.2 b. And he said how, of course, we dishonest and that we knew that this shall be in the budget and Cote ci Cote la. And, Mr. Speaker what I cannot understand is why so often the member from Diego Martin West misleads this house.

Mr. Speaker, in January, the bill came to the house, No. 2 of 2012, and the bill that he was referring to Mr. Speaker, the Financial Supplementation and Variation Bill, 2012, Mr. Speaker. In January the bill he was referring to when he add 2.7 with 1.5, and got 4.2, and accused the Minister of Finance of ratchifee budget, that bill, Mr. Speaker, was speaking about the appropriation for the financial year 2011. Mr. Speaker, look it here. Look it here. And he takes the 2011 and he makes it 2012. And he comes here and he adds 2.7 and 1.5. That is the only thing he got correct 4.2. He takes that and he comes here and calls it ratchifee. The Minister of Finance came in January to the house, of course with a bill, and the bill reads, “An act of…of the sum financial year 2011.” Look it here. And he comes here and Mr. Speaker, what is worst when you go to submission of the Minister of Finance, throughout his submission in January, he is making the point, he is saying the 2.7b which we speak about resulted from advances from
treasury deposit and he talks about the Point Fortin highway and the Credit Union and Clico, and so on. So he says in terms of what actually happened during 2011, fiscal 2011 actually showed that there was an unexpected provision expenditure of $5.9b. It is here in his submission. He comes here, the same week he came here and he says he saw the AG in New York, and the AG told him and people told him, why the AG this and that, and so on. And then when we checked and so on, the AG never even went to New York. But he comes here and he galleries before the public this paradigm of virtue, virtue personified and he comes here to mislead the house, Mr. Speaker. As always, talk and run.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member for Diego Martin West, the bill which the Minister of Finance has brought here has listed several areas of expenditure, one of which Mr. Speaker is to pay for some fish landing sites. Mr. Speaker, let me call a few for you. And if the member for Diego Martin West does not want us to fix those sites and to reduce the bill, I am sure the Minister of Finance will accommodate him. Because, Mr. Speaker, one of the sites we are fixing is Fullerton, in the constituency of Point Fortin. What are we doing? Upgrading the roof structure and constructing storage bins, we are going to see about the concrete floor, ram to the engine, and so on and so on. In Point Fortin, Fulliton, don't fix it?

I asked for it?

**Hon. J. Warner:** Tell him so, when he talking. Diego Martin West, Mr. Speaker. In Carenage, a fishing site which has been suffering and left to languish during his term as the MP and so on has not been fixed. Under this government, it was stopped. That is being fixed now, by the Minister of Finance. Do not fix it? And he comes here, you know, this paradigm of virtue, this honesty personified, this angel in bright clothing, to do what?

Mr. Speaker, and I will go further. And this is serious business man. Mr.
Speaker, there is one St. Anns East, Las Cuevas, fix it? Tell me not to fix it, you know. Reduce the money and don't fix it. Since the PNM era that has been allowed to languish and it is being fixed now, that is what the money is for. That is what the money is for. And he comes here with his voodoo maths, 2.7 from 2011 and 1.5 from 2000 make 4.2, and the budget he says is ratchifee. And he wants to be a Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, he is aspiring to be the Prime Minister of this country? Heaven help us if that happens, if it ever happens. And, in fact, let me go further. You know when he was speaking; I asked myself if he could untie the latches of the shoes of the Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, I look around on his members and I asked myself, they need a prospective Minister of Finance on that side. Look around. Begin from Point to Point Fortin South; begin from La Brea to Diego Martin North/East, you name for me one prospective Minister of Finance.

La Brea

Hon. J. Warner: La Brea, you cannot even be a good school teacher.

Mr. Speaker, I really don't want to spend time on him, he is not here. I want to talk about the member from Diego Martin North/East.

The Speaker: The honorable Minister for La Brea takes objection about what you have just said about him not being a good school teacher.

Hon. J. Warner: I withdraw. You are a good teacher. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West, this famous mathematician, this paragon of virtue, Mr. Speaker, had nothing to say up to today about the accounts of the THA. Nothing to say, neither public or otherwise the THA accounts where $105m cannot be accounted for in one vote, $27m in another vote, $2.9 in another vote, Mr. Speaker and the list goes on and on over $108m cannot be accounted for in 2005. No account for 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, nothing to say about that. And he comes here to fool who? I will not waste time on him. I will go back to the member for Diego Martin North/East, who said that this government must face
up and face reality, must own up and face reality. Well I nearly burst out laughing. We must own up and face reality. Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Diego Martin North/East was the Minster of Works and Transport, Mr. Speaker, and he spent $475m on a rapid rail study, and the box under my table I kicking it every morning still, did you face reality? That is why they vote you out. Mr. Speaker, I ask again he spent $52m on the MV, $25m to buy it, $27m to repair it, and it has not done one sailing as yet. Did you own up and face reality?

Mr. Speaker, he spent millions to host the opening of that flyover by Grand Bazaar, right. A fella came down for the air, a calypsonian for $1m, Mr. Speaker. Did you face reality? Mr. Speaker, and, you know, what is so funny, the report he spent so much time on it, this report that he spent half of his submission on, this report is for the last quarter of 2011, more than six months ago. Things have changed today, and he is talking about this. Mr. Speaker, he said don't spend the last five years blaming the PNM for the problems we face today. We would spend a lifetime blaming you all for the problems of this country today. And we would not have enough time. Mr. Speaker, he said, he began by talking that government -- he accused us of a lack of experience. Well if we are inexperienced and we can do all of this, and we can do all of this in education, in such and such, in technology, in gender youth -- Mr. Speaker, in Social Development, I cannot go into -- Mr. Speaker, Housing and the Environment. Mr. Speaker, all of this, this here represents the accomplishment of a government that you call inexperience. Well if this is what an inexperience government does, you keep your experience. You keep your experience, you hear. Mr. Speaker, he has spoken about the wall in Maraval. We had to do an enquiry, Mr. Speaker, to know why the wall fell. We appointed a firm to give us the inquiry to know why it fell and to investigate before we go even to the contractors. That report from the firm came in about three weeks ago and we are now working on it. You do not rush to build a wall and you
don't know why it fell. You do not point finger, Mr. Speaker. And we did say, enquiry. Even the Diego Martin highway he spoke about. Work has begun on the highway over a month ago, go back in your vehicle and drive there tomorrow and see for yourself. I am telling this Parliament….

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I was there yesterday.

**Hon. J. Warner:** Then get a new glasses; get a new pair of glasses. Mr. Speaker, I am telling this Parliament that work began there a month ago; a month ago. And, in any event, you talked about the wall that fell, the wall that fell in Maraval. Mr. Speaker, I saw on TV some houses that collapsed in Las Alturos, Mr. Speaker built because the wall fell, you will ask about the wall, I am saying ask about the apartments, as well. Mr. Speaker, the apartments they built during the PNM time, Mr. Speaker, Las Alturos, Mr. Speaker, the apartments are now falling, $27m, Mr. Speaker, gone, gone just so, $27 m. He is not concerned about that. Mr. Speaker, in Wellington Road in the south, 250 homes have to be demolished, Mr. Speaker. They are collapsing. Built when? During their time. He said he is repairing them.

We will try.

Good luck to you. Mr. Speaker, you go by the river, how you call it again in south, houses built on the river bank.

Gasparillo

**Hon. J. Warner:** Gasparillo. Thank you. They are about to collapse, Mr. Speaker. And you are asking about a wall in Maraval, ask about those things, as well, because we are fixing all and everything.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to tell this Parliament, that the rivers referred to have been dredged. And, again, they are being dredged, Mr. Speaker, for the rainy season. Mr. Speaker, the Maraval River has been dredged, so too…. 

**UNREVISED**
Hon. C. Imbert: You lucky this Parliament proroguing in three weeks, you know.

Hon. J. Warner: You want meh to sit and give you a chance to answer? Mr. Speaker, and also too, the Couva River. I also heard a member say the Couva River; I didn’t even know the honourable member knew where Couva is. I do not know where Couva is. All I am saying to you again the rivers have been dredged and shall be dredged again. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to spend much more time on the member for Diego Martin North/East, in any case. Let me go to my submission.

Mr. Speaker, when we come to this house and if you listen to the last two speakers on the opposition benches, you get the impression as if a supplementary appropriation bill is something that they are hearing for the first time. It is something new. Mr. Speaker, they are behaving on the other side, as if never before this kind of bill came to this Parliament. And, therefore, this is the first time this has happened. Mr. Speaker, I am making the point here that a bill like this is not unusual, Mr. Speaker. Everyone who has been in government for a long time, especially the member for Diego Martin North/East, everyone knows that there are times when it becomes necessary for any government to come to Parliament to seek additional funding. Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting, I am saying now, that the previous government, the PNM, did it on several occasions. Came to this house year after year for additional funding. And let me give you some examples, Mr. Speaker. In 2006 the budget was $30.6b, Mr. Speaker. That budget was passed and they came to this house twice, Mr. Speaker, for additional funding. On June 02, 2006, they came here for $4.009b for additional funding. September 8th, 2006 the very same year, $3.39b. How come today it is something new, as if they never heard it before. How come, of course, today it is a big thing, as if the sky will fall
out? I am coming to that just now. Mr. Speaker, in 2007, they passed their budget for $31.493b, by January 23, 2008, they came back to the house for $1.125b. What happened then? It was good for you when you were in government but it is bad for us over here. To build fishing depot and so on, to improve people lives, it is bad then, Mr. Speaker. In 2008, Mr. Speaker, their budget was $36.477b. On May 28, 2009, they came to the Parliament for $4.16b. And four months later on September 29, 2009 they came back for another $3.9 billion.

6.50 p.m.

In one year $8.6 billion and now it is a big thing. It was not bad then. It was not a “ratchifee” budget. It was not, “mumbo jumbo,” then. But, now it is. Because everything this Government does to improve people’s lives, especially people you all have neglected over the years in south and central, especially, is bad. People in Tobago must not be helped. People in south must not be helped. People in central must not be helped. Because for you all, the Government was and would always be Port of Spain. We have changed that. [Desk thumping]

In 2009, the budget was $44,206 billion. That is in October. January 24, they came back for $1 billion in supplementary funding. What is the big thing? What is new about this? The point is, there is nothing sinister or mysterious about coming here to ask for additional funding. You make it sound as if it is something mysterious, something sinister, something wicked.

We have come here to seek Parliament’s permission in the full glare of the public. We have come here having given the public an account of our stewardship on May 24, Mid Centre Mall and last Saturday in Tobago. We have come here—and we are accounting to the Parliament for our stewardship. We are saying to complete the work we need more money.

Mr. Speaker, every single Minister who, of course, will speak on this side
and who have spoken so far, every one of us, since we entered Government in May 2010, we have accounted to the population for the money spent for our stewardship—*Desk thumping*—every one of us.

Last Thursday, the *Guardian* commented in a two-page article, they praised this Government, the People’s Partnership for I quote:

“…doing what no other political party in office has ever attempted to do— that is deliver an annual report card on its accomplishments.”

That was the *Guardian* last Thursday. The *Guardian* is saying to us we are reporting the people,

“…Trinidadians/Tobagonians are accused of having short memories, so it is in their interest—and the PP’s too—have in print a scorecard that can be updated annually, until the completion of the administration’s five-year term.”

comes to an end. That is what they are saying inside here. They said here, it shows that the regime—the Government—has in fact been doing a lot of work. And they list what has been done. Has this ever been said of the PNM?

**Mr. Sharma:** No.

**Hon. J. Warner:** Have you all ever done that to them? You come here week after week, month after month to be critical of our efforts of what we do. Has anyone, anytime, anywhere written this about the PNM?

**Mr. Sharma:** No.

**Hon. J. Warner:** I will go further. Listen to more comments in the *Guardian* newspapers.

“The publications highligth the PP Government’s achievements over the last years and which appeared in the daily newspapers last week are invaluable instruments to give the electorate the opportunity to assess what the coalition was able to deliver in keeping with the promises made during the 2010
general election campaign...”...a cursory glance at the second publication shows the regime has in fact been doing a lot of work.

In spite of this—I continue quoting—

“...only an administration confident that it is serious about transparency and diligently going after the people’s business would dare take that quantum leap...”

Miss Cox: Who wrote that article?

Hon. J. Warner: Buy your Guardian newspaper for yourself.

Miss Cox: No, you have to say where you get it, you are in the House.


Dr. Moonilal: Subreno or Subraro or something.

Mr. J. Warner: You thought it was Keith Subero.

Mr. Speaker, and I am saying therefore that we have raised the bar on governance. [Desk thumping] We have raised the bar on governance. [Prime Minister walks in]

Welcome, Prime Minister, you came at the best time. [Desk thumping] When I said that we have raised the bar on governance and we could not do this, Prime Minister, without your leadership.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you.

Mr. J. Warner: We have established a brand new standard that any future Government has to measure up to. Of course, and let me make this point, in no way is this Government afraid to tell the people how their money has been spent, you know. Nobody will ever ask this Government here, where the money gone? You will never see a headline anywhere, anytime, this Government here, “Where the money gone?” Who in Tobago, “Where the money gone?” In the Ministry of Housing, the last Prime Minister asked, “Where the money gone?” Always had a
problem. Not this Government. We are not afraid to come here and say why we spent the money and why we need more.

Your Government, the PNM Government spent over $400 billion during the last term and up to now are people still asking, “Where the money gone?” Up to now, they cannot understand where the money was spent. Up to now, they do not understand, what was done with the money because their lives have not been improved.

What do they see for the $400 billion that you all have spent? You want to see? They see an incomplete Tarouba Stadium that was supposed to be opened in 2007. That stadium was to be built at a cost of $275 million. To date, the money spent is $900 million, so far. To complete it, to fix it, we need $150 million, again. Where was the concern then? Where was your concern then? Where did the money go during your time?

Scarborough hospital, the PNM began that too at an estimated cost of $120 million. The PNM began that also. That stadium remained suspended in animation for years. To date, that hospital has been delivered, but by whom, by us. [Desk thumping] And after PNM’s bad spending, it cost $735 million. [Interruption]

Dr. Moonilal: It started at what, $150?

Hon. J. Warner: Beginning at $120 million, from $120 million to $735 million. And, “yuh comin” here with your voodoo maths to say $2.7 million and $1.5 million—

Mr. Speaker, the National Oncology Centre. The budget for that originally was $300 million. The PNM spent $120 million on the foundation of the centre. That remains as it is for the past several years. Today, this Government also has to complete that.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to remind my friends on the other side is that they must not forget that even NAPA—when we came that building up at the
Savannah—we had to do repairs at that facility for between $80 to $100 million. You were not worried about the money then.

**Miss Hospedales:** That is not true.

**Hon. J. Warner:** When it is your time to come and talk, answer and say so. Right. We had to do repairs to that building of about $80 to $100 million—not true, when you are talking here, say so and prove it. That is all.

The Government Campus, downtown, was also incomplete. Even the Waterfront Towers was supposed to be a big financial complex; this complex was to have several businesses and so on. The only business it has so far, is the Parliament and some Ministries which we brought in. Not a single business came here.

The Parliament, the Red House, which we had to vacate. Mr. Speaker, for nine years the PNM Government was repairing the Red House. Year after year you passed there and saw this monstrous eyesore. They spent over $200 million on the Red House, the Parliament and to date nothing has been done.

This spendthrift Government, they forget they put up a flag at the Hasley Crawford Stadium for $1.2 million.

**Mr. Roberts:** $2 million.

**Hon. J. Warner:** Mr. Speaker, $2 million—a flag. And coming to ask the Minister of Finance today—some—I cannot use that word anyhow—but, coming to ask him, matters which, of course, make little or no sense.

Mr. Speaker, the Chancery Lane Complex. The Complex was originally earmarked for completion in August 2007, at a cost of $296 million. By April 2010, the cost had reached $440 million. And moreover, the contractor walked off the job; left the job because he said he could not take more cost overruns.

On January 20, 2011, the *Guardian*—I am sure you are going to ask me who, of course, write it, Kevon Felmine, wrote this article on January 20, 2011.
“Chancery Lane complex now home for vagrants, thieves.” Four hundred million dollars spent. The guy walked away. And it was left, just so, as a home for vagrants and thieves. Nothing said about that. Year after year, “yuh comin” for money, you could not finish that. You could not come year after year and ask for more money to finish it? Listen what it says here in the article in the Guardian newspapers, January 20, 2011, I quote, Mr. Speaker:

“The unfinished multi-million dollar Chancery Lane Complex in San Fernando, which was supposed to house Government offices, has now become a refuge for vagrants. The building, a project of the Urban Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago (UdeCott), on which construction was ceased in April 2010, has also become a haven for thieves…” yesterday...thieves had carted away copper wire, pipe fittings, galvanized sheets and other items....”“...on evenings the homeless walk with their cardboard boxes, used as make shift beds, to spend the night in the complex…”

That is your record. And, you coming to talk here now about the Bill and funding and you forget that you left this, you left $400 million, just so. All where you turn is waste, waste and nothing but waste.

Mr. Sharma: PNM waste.

Hon. J. Warner: I could go on and on, you know, about how much money they spent and where. But, I have made the point, I believe, to show the kind of Government and the things that we inherited.

Look, Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Community Development inherited over 50 community centres, almost all of them unfinished, cost overruns. He today is pulling the hair from his head to know how to complete them.

Mr. Roberts: That is why he is bald in the middle.

Mr. Seemungal: He do not have much at all.
Hon. J. Warner: Fifty centres, tell me is not true, “nah.” You left those centres to be completed. Nothing was done. Why did you not come for money to finish them? Fifty centres, some even in the PNM constituency. Nothing was done. Today we have inherited a burden. So what you are seeing here is a legacy we have inherited from the PNM—a legacy of incomplete structures all over. We have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to complete projects which they abandoned, just so. They could not deliver them.

Some of these projects are two, three, four and five hundred per cent cost overruns. We have to face that. You heard about Clico just now and whether Clico got 80 per cent or 85 per cent or 90—the problem was solved. Again, we inherited that. If that was not solved this economy would have been in tatters. The Member for Diego Martin North/East, he comes here—[Interruption]

Mrs. Bissessar: Where is he?

Hon. J. Warner: Well, he always talks and run. He comes here trying of course, to ridicule the Minister of Finance. For decades these projects have been there.

The highway to Point Fortin and the Diego Martin highway, all these things again are what the PNM began and left. And, as I say highway to Point Fortin—let me before I say that, I will come back to the highway just now.

Hon. Member: Do not forget.

Hon. J. Warner: Forget.

7.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has since been saddled with the task of unrolling decades of neglect throughout the country, especially in rural areas. During the PNM era, they forgot places like Latchoos Road, Gopee Trace, Goodman Boulevard—[Interruption]

Miss Cox: Cuchawan Trace.

Hon. J. Warner: I must come to Cuchawan Trace—Cacandee Road, Munroe
Road. They do not know these places exist, Mr. Speaker. If you go and see the joy and the happiness of the people in the Latchoos Road and Goodman Boulevard and so on. In is a place called Congo Hill, the people had not gotten water for 35 years; they have water flowing now. In Union Village in Mayaro, for 98 years, they had no water. What sin could those people have committed, that for 98 years, they—[Interrupt]

**Miss Cox:** Not only that area; other areas.

**Hon. J. Warner:** “But all yuh had de money.” When you built them high rise places all over town and so on, “why yuh eh fix them.” Mr. Speaker, 98 years, no water, I hear, in Union Village; it cannot be fair; it cannot be right. You forgot those places, man. We now had to come to open up those places. We had to come to build bridges in those areas, fix the roads and make them useable once again.

Mr. Speaker, I am accusing the PNM Government of neglecting rural areas deliberately. We had to go to Woodland to do some flood mitigation works. For years, Woodland under water—Oropouche West. Nothing has been done. Once you pass Caroni Bridge, nothing for you. We have changed that, and the budgets that we have had here, year after year, reflect that change. [Interrupt] Spend all the money there and you still want to get your road fixed. And do you know what is bad? “All yuh even neglected Tobago, man.” The Prime Minister had to go to Tobago last Saturday to reassure them that this Government is different, that we shall improve their lives. [Desk thumping] Mr. Speaker, 5,000 people in Market Square, including Sugar Aloes.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Outside an election year.

**Hon. J. Warner:** And there is no election. [Interrupt]

**Miss Cox:** She is royal!

**Hon. J. Warner:** Yes, that is right. Very royal!

**Mr. McLeod:** It was 7,500.
**Hon. J. Warner:** More than 10 per cent of Tobago’s population; 7,500 in Tobago and there is no election. Listen, in the air—[Interrupt] Yes, from Trinidad, all “ah dem” was on the plane and on the boat and so on. That is why you all will always remain on that side. Always! Never, ever, ever to come on this side. [Desk thumping] The mentality! This is no election year. There is no election in the air. None! But we went there to talk to Tobago—not to talk down to them, to talk with them—and to tell them that it is time to put Tobago first. The budget and the Bill today, all that contributes to that.

Mr. Speaker, they are even annoyed because this Government is building an Oncology Centre in Penal.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** The Oncology Centre at Mount Hope remains.

**Hon. J. Warner:** But sure! The one at Penal does not replace the one at Mount Hope; work is going on there also. So work is going on in Mount Hope which they left for years and work is going on, of course, in Penal. “Do not put nothing in Penal, do not put no campus in Debe.” What is wrong with the people in south? Why should they be neglected? Are they not people too? Are they not part of this country? A campus in Tobago; never before. I am asking myself, something has to be wrong with the mentality.

Mr. Speaker, the spending by this Government has touched people’s lives all over the country. This is a Government that does not discriminate. That is why you would hear the Minister of Education building schools in Paramin and Rose Hill, Laventille. Why did you not build it before?

**Dr. Gopreesingh:** In Belmont.

**Hon. J. Warner:** Building school in Belmont. Building them; the plans have been passed and the designs are there; school is going to start. He has said—I was with him last week with the Archbishop of Port of Spain, Joseph Harris, and he told him that he wants the school to finish in a year. Why did you not build
schools in those areas? Why you did not? Why did you not come here with a Bill like this present Bill, and say, “I want money to build a school in Belmont or Laventille”, but “yuh” coming here as crybabies—12, 11 crybabies—crying here week after week. [Laughter] Coming soon: a Children’s Hospital in Couva; you have the GATE which has expanded; CEPEP, of course, has given jobs but you all are complaining.

I want to go to the highway to Point Fortin. I want to make the point first of all, that this highway to Point Fortin is more than 50 years overdue. I want to make the point also that the PNM had no interest in building this highway, but because we realize that the place has developed to the point where there is now gridlock traffic in Penal, Debe and Siparia, even to go to Point Fortin is difficult, we said we shall “bite the bullet” and build the highway. Mr. Speaker, this highway will create thousands of jobs overall. Contractors, who, of course, the PNM drove out of business, are now seeing hope.

I am saying to you again, this is productive spending. This is not unproductive as during the PNM time. This highway will go a long way to stimulate the economy of the country but specifically of the south west. This highway will bring greater access to goods and services for the people of Point Fortin and environs. The people of La Brea—[Interruption] I am saying that the highway will bring, of course, greater access for goods and services for the people of La Brea. [Interruption] Access roads from La Brea, Point Fortin, and I am telling you that the highway shall be beneficial to your constituencies as well. I am making the point.

Mr. Speaker, goods and services will now become cheaper because of this highway and the new traffic as we have it. Businesses from outside the area will now find it more attractive to expand the activities as the south west will now become more accessible. I am mixing this thing in a nutshell, and telling you why
the highway to Point Fortin is a good thing which the PNM did not do, which they neglected. That is why we are saying that a highway to Point Fortin must be built; but, if you were to wait on the PNM, this would never happen.

Let me make the point, too. There are those who are saying that this MP had said he did not want the highway before and he wants it now. But, this MP had said so because, at the time, this MP knew that there was no campus in Debe; no Oncology Centre, no courthouses and so on. A host of development has taken place. Therefore, because the Government has changed and has brought development to the area, it makes a highway now almost imperative and that is the whole point.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say here that there is a controversy making the rounds about the highway. Let me begin by saying very early that the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure has always been open to dialogue. [Desk thumping] We have tried consistently to talk to the “Highway Re-Routers” as they call themselves. This has been the instruction—not the advice—of the Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister held a two-hour meeting here with all the stakeholders, all the MPs in the area, and she said, “Okay, fine”—and the Highway Re-Routers were all there.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: All the Government MPs.

Hon. J. Warner: “Well, all yuh did not object, so what it is the point? All yuh did not object the highway so why I talking to all yuh?” Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was saying to you that the Prime Minister said—Dr. Kublalsingh was there with his people, all the MPs of the Government were there and the people who came there to talk about Debe to Mon Desir were there, and we listened for two hours. Then she said, “Listen, I do not know all the technical details. The Ministry of Works and Infrastructure will stop work for such time as they go back to their drawing board and come up with some grand idea to see if there are any other alternatives.”
She also said, “You must meet and meet the technical people from Dr. Kublalsingh’s side and from the Ministry.”

Mr. Speaker, on three occasions, I called Dr. Kublalsingh. He had a meeting with us at the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, and he walked out because he wanted to get equity in the committee. I said, “Okay, yuh want equity. Yuh want to bring six people, nine, 12—bring people.” Because it does not mean that because the Ministry has six people you have to bring six. “If yuh want to bring 12, bring 12”. He walked out the meeting and so on.

Mr. Speaker, then he met me at TV6 and he told me “Jack Warner, ah telling yuh, this Government, I will bring down this Government and I will stop the highway, and mark my words yuh cannot win.” I say, “Dr. Kublalsingh, lets not shake on that”, and I left him. He then went further to join a union that has vowed to bring this Government down. At least, of course, he started working with them because the union’s public announcement is that this Government must be brought down, and so, of course, he started to work with them. And he joined a party that says that we must not celebrate. Fine! Go ahead!

But, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I want to make the point that this Government is committed to dialogue. As late as today, this morning, I sent to Dr. Kublalsingh’s home in Kerria Drive, La Floriasante, D’Abadie.

Hon. Member: Is D’Abadie he living? [Crosstalk]

Hon. J. Warner: It is in the telephone directory. So I said:

Dear Dr. Kublalsingh,

Invitation to attend a meeting—

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. [Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar]

Question put and agreed to.

UNREVISED
Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, before you continue, the Members of the Opposition seem to have taken objection when you described them as “cry crybabies”. I want to let you know that no Member of Parliament can be described as a “cry crybaby”. So I will ask you to withdraw that statement because no Member of the Opposition can attribute that to the Members of the Government and vice-versa, so I would like you to withdraw that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: No cry crybabies, just crybabies.

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I withdraw it. I should have said complainers. Right, thank you.

Mr. Roberts: And we will buy lollipops for everybody.

Hon. Member: That is disrespectful.

Hon. J. Warner: So the letter goes as follows:

Dear Dr. Kublalsingh—

Heading is: Invitation to attend meeting to discussion the technical issues relating to the Point Fortin Highway.

Mr. Speaker, I am reading this because the public must know that this is the fourth attempt. The Prime Minister in Tobago this weekend, again, said make another attempt. So I came back today and I wrote him again. It goes as follows:

Dear Dr. Kublalsingh,

I take the opportunity to invite you to a meeting with the staff of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and NIDCO to discuss the technical issues relating to the Point Fortin Highway.

You would recall that at the last meeting held at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure Head Office on Wednesday, 18th April, 2012, there were issues raised concerning the realignment of the route of the highway. Officers of NIDCO have done a report on this realignment, and we therefore invite you and your team to give your suggestions and comments on this
report.
The meeting will be held on Friday, 8th June, 2012 at 8.30 a.m. at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure Head Office, Admin Building, Level 6, Corner Richmond & London Streets, Port of Spain.
I thank you in advance for your cooperation.
Copied to Minister Stacy Roopnarine, PS Cheryl Blackman, Dr. Carson Charles.
This represents the Prime Minister’s instruction to continue with the dialogue. But, I want to make the point to you that while we are committed to dialogue; dialogue will only happen when parties are prepared or are ready to talk and to listen. What is the point of having dialogue if persons are fixed in their position?
7.20 p.m.
I am sorry, hon. Prime Minister, thank you for that extension. I feel honoured. [Interruption]
Miss Cox: Tobago Love.
Hon. Roberts: “Yuh jealous or wat?”
Hon. J. Warner: Yes, Mr. Speaker, to have dialogue, two sides must dialogue. You cannot remain fixed in your position. The minute you hear the other side, you want to get rowdy and noisy, and mash up the meeting, that is how things are done.
Besides blocking the route, supporters of the highway re-routers, the police have suggested that they have been the ones who have fire-bombed the house of one of the NIDCO employees in Penal. Also they are now going at people’s homes in the area, threatening them, and throwing bottles in their yard and so on. What kind of dialogue do you have? So today, I wrote the Minister of National Security a letter asking for police patrols in Debe and Penal areas, so as to try to restrain the highway re-routers from violence.
Let me read it for you. I wrote him and said:
Hon. Minister Brig. John Sandy,

It is with the greatest urgency I write to formally request your assistance with police patrols in the Debe and Penal areas. It has been reported to me by the Member of Parliament for Oropouche West, the hon. Stacy Roopnarine, that persons in that area are been threatened, victimized and their homes are being attacked.

Mr. Speaker, people in the area are being threatened, victimized and their homes are being attacked.

It is alleged that this is due to the protesters who are against the highway, and who have set up their camp at Debe, since the persons being targeted are those in favour of the highway.

Hon. Minister, an increased police presence in these areas would assist in protecting the people of Penal and Debe. And to this end, I suggest that the following areas be focused on: Gopie Trace, Tulsa Trace, Debe Trace, Suchit Trace, Ghandi Village and San Francique.

I thank you in advance, for your attention to this matter.

That is what we have reached to, Mr. Speaker. So because you object to the highway, does it mean that those who are in favour of it must not enjoy the peace and sanctity of their home? Does it mean that? And, therefore, I am saying again, that dialogue is a two-way flight. So I am saying, therefore, those who want to talk, must start acting like they are open to dialogue. And I am saying that on Friday, June 08, 2012 at 6.30 p.m., we also have a chance at dialogue once more. And I want to say again publicly, we invite the protesters on Friday at 6.30 p.m.

You know what they had gone to do? They had gone to stalk the Prime Minister, to see where she goes and so on. She went to a function at Parvati Girls’ High School in Siparia, one family I am advised——[Interruption]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Debe.

UNREvised
Hon. J. Warner:—in Debe, sorry. Thank you. One family I am advised, Mr. Speaker, of out 12, decide to block her. And that family by the way, I am also advised was trained by an oil company in Fyzabad; trained and sponsored. They stalked the Prime Minister, what level of behaviour is that? Whatever happens in a country there are those who would be for or against, but dialogue must always be the basis and the form by which we come to some consensus. [Desk thumping]

And, therefore, I am saying—let me make the point also, we have all the approvals required to build the highway. The Environmental Management Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (EMA) has said that they are looking after the public interest and there are no environmental issues. All the approvals we have and we decided to keep the impact on the environment to a minimum. We want to show the protesters that the place would be better off in the long run, than they believe. I understand their emotions, but at least I am saying let us talk, and they refused to do that. And to stalk the Prime Minister is not only a lack of respect, right, but for me—well, I think it is disrespect. For me, it is trying to put her in a negative light, and that is wrong.

So I am saying, therefore—and I want to make one last point also too. This project is being overseen by an interministerial committee headed by the Prime Minister. Having said so, let me now go back to this deficit spending before I conclude.

Mr. Speaker, in 2009, when the PNM, under the hon. Member for San Fernando East, Patrick Manning—and I hope he recovers quickly—when they declared a deficit in that year, the public and the Opposition raised their voices about it, Mr. Manning’s response then was:

There is nothing to worry about, the sky would not fall in.

In 2009, there was nothing to worry about additional funding; the sky would not fall in. They were confident then, that the country would recover and the economy
was good. They were saying then, that deficit spending was not a matter of doom and gloom, and today, in the fourth year, when we try to turn the country around, when against all odds, all the global indices suggest that the economy globally is still, of course, a cause for concern, we are trying to turn it around, Mr. Speaker, now they are preaching doom and gloom.

Let me say overall, our cumulative deficit position would never have been what it is at today, if the PNM had not wasted the money in the previous years. When the Member for Diego Martin North/East said we must stop blaming the PNM, I have said it before, and I say again, we shall blame them for a lifetime, Mr. Speaker.

In their time their mantra was that:

The global economy was the cause, they have to ride it out.

They were saying:

They have to make investment in the country, to do this, to improve the lives of the people.

They were saying that this kind of additional funding was needed to:

Ignite the spark that would get the economic engines turning again.

What is wrong today? Today, we are doing the same kind of additional spending, but we are not saying what they were saying. Let me make the point, though we are doing this, the point is, the global situation has not improved appreciably, and yet for all, through prudent management, we are able to still survive the way we are doing today. You know why? We are spending the money more responsibly. We are being more prudent. We are spending in productive areas. People are seeing where the spending is taking place, their lives are being touched and improved by the work of the Government and their expenditure, and that is the big difference.

But the biggest difference of all, is that we have a Prime Minister and a
political leader, who is second to none—[Desk thumping] and under whom, the fortunes of this country are in good hands. We have nothing to worry about.

Therefore, I am saying for the time being we cannot avoid deficit spending. We are spending the money in more meaningful ways, and we are not wasting money as the PNM did. So, while we incur deficit, I am saying to you and I am telling the House, we are not building white elephants. We are not building concrete jungles. We are investing money in the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

Miss Marlene McDonald (Port of Spain South): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to join in this debate, the Supplementation of the Appropriation for fiscal year, 2012.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I need to comment on certain statements by Members on the Government Bench. Now, with respect to the Minister of Finance, I believe—I sat here and I listened. I had no intentions of joining the debate, because it was very notice for me, and I needed to do a bit more research.

When I read the Bill, I realized that throughout the entire process—and listening to the Member for Tunapuna, the Minister of Finance—there is a problem with the budgeting process on the other side. That is to me one of the things that stood out, but more importantly is not only coming to this House and seeking to get $1.5 billion additional in expenditure, it is the fact that there is a concern that you are increasing the deficit, Sir, by your own admission, from $7.6 billion as budgeted to $8.9 billion. You recall for 2012, the revenue was budgeted at some $46.9 billion, the expenditure at $54.6 billion, giving us a deficit of some $7.6 billion. By this increased expenditure, we are now moving from that $7.6 billion deficit to $8.9 billion.

And clearly, listening to the Member for Chaguanas West, and Minister of Works and Infrastructure, clearly he does not understand the concept of deficit
financing. Because if he did, I would tell you what, it is not for the time being, we would be in financing deficit financing. Deficit financing is a tool that is used to stimulate an economy.

And Minister you are well aware—Member for Tunapuna—that this is for a period of time. Once you enter into deficit financing, which simply means you are spending more than you are earning. And how do you make up the different between what you are earning and what you are spending? You do so by borrowing. And this Government has shown its intentions last year through the Budget Statement that you are going to be borrowing $6.6 billion. Am I correct, Sir? [Miss McDonald turns to the Minister of Finance who nods] Good. So we are on the same page.

And I am saying here today, if the Member for Chaguanas—the Minister of Works and Infrastructure—is saying for the time being, we are saying there is nothing wrong, because you stimulate the economy, but you must find an exit strategy. What is the strategy to get us out of the deficit financing? What is the strategy? And that is my concern. You look across the world, and people go into deficit financing, but it is for a period of time. You must come out of that. You must be able to tell us what that strategy is. You just do not go in there and stay, and come back to Parliament. No. Not at all. So, I am saying to the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, you clearly do not understand what deficit financing is.

I am looking at the Member for Oropouche East, the Minister of Housing and the Environment. I want say to the Minister, he accused the Diego Martin West MP of totally ignoring—as he said, he knew about the arrangements between Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL), and Air Jamaica, but he sat and he said nothing. I want to say to you, Minister of Housing and the Environment, that Hansard would show—I was in Parliament back then—and the Hansard would show, that the MP for Diego Martin West, who is now the Leader of the
Opposition, took issue with the arrangements that CAL was going into with Air Jamaica back then. He did not agree with his own Government and he did so openly, and this was done in the House. And I think it is rather disingenuous to say that he was aware of it. Yes, he was aware, but he disagreed with the move.

Mr. Speaker, there were other statements made by the Oropouche East MP which I will deal with in time. In time, I will deal with it.

7.35 p.m.

I want to go to the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West. Mr. Speaker, I am glad you entered because you did say that the word “cabal” was unparliamentary and could not be used in this House. I took a note here when we were referred to as crybabies. I do not see any of my colleagues on this side as being a crybaby.

**Mr. Warner:** So what? I was right.

**Miss M. McDonald:** Member for Chaguanas West, I sat and I listened to you completely without any interruption. Please allow me my time.

What he also did was that he targeted Diego Martin West MP as well as Diego Martin North/East MP. He should have spent, in my opinion—so I do not have much to say about him—a little more time on the Bill. Tell us what are your views on all these and defend your Government’s position to come here to ask for $1.5 billion increase. Defend that! But what he sought to do was to attack the history of the PNM in office.

I just want to tell you that I was driving home on May 24 when you all were about to celebrate down Chaguanas. There was a lecturer on the air, Mr. Bishram Ragoonath, and do you know what he said?

**Hon. Member:** Bishnu.

**Miss M. McDonald:** Bishnu. All right. Thank you. What he said was that the UNC-led Government must stop this bashing and criticizing of the PNM’s
governance in this country. This country already adjudicated on the PNM on May 24 and now they must move on. You are now entering your third year.

Miss Cox: They have nothing to say.

Miss M. McDonald: Well, good. Member for Laventille East/Morvant, if they have nothing to say, move on. Because on the third year—you are now on your third year. [ Interruption ] What is it? We are already out. As the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara said, we did not leave—he corrected my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin North/East; he did not leave—we were thrown out. We were thrown out on certain things. Why do you all not then show us what the new governance is; show us what the new politics is. That is what is supposed to be done. Tell us. But we stand week after week listening about the PNM and what it did not do. [ Interruption ] Mr. Speaker, I do not want of use an unparliamentary word here this afternoon, but they can carry on.

Another thing the Member for Chaguanas West said was that repairs to NAPA totalled some $100 million when they assumed office. When did this happen? I have not seen it anywhere and I cannot see $100 million being spent to repair NAPA after May 24, 2010 and the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism did not make heavy weather about that in this Parliament. When did it happen? We just cannot stand and make these idle statements.

Mr. Warner: I will send it to you.

Miss M. McDonald: At least bring it. Do not just send it to me, put it in Parliament. Bring it here.

Mr. Speaker, community centres programme: I recall in 2009, there was a community centres programme which was initiated by the former administration. This was geared towards actually getting the contractors in the communities some jobs because they were complaining that only the bigger contractors were getting jobs. Additionally, entering the Ministry, there were numerous community centres
which were already approved and some of them already started that I continued, completed and new ones were started under this new programme. The Member for Chaguanas West said that there were over 50 community centres. When I demitted office, I left 52 community centres at varying stages of construction. There is a Cabinet-approved note on this. All the Minister had to do was to check the Cabinet Note and see what financing mechanism would have been put in place.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you something further. On Monday, April 15, I went to the Mango Rose Homework Centre, along with the Minister of Community Development, the Member for Naparima. The Member for Naparima said to me, both of us speaking: “I thank you for the good work that you have done at the Ministry because what we are doing now is finishing community centres and opening.” When the Member for Chaguanas West spoke there about the headache that the Member for Naparima is going through, I questioned that. There are other statements made which I will deal with as I go through my contribution.

Looking at this Bill, it was almost like déjà vu to me. It was just a mere five months ago that we were in this same position, this time looking at a supplementation appropriation for the year 2011, in the sum of $2.7 billion. At that time, I chastised this administration for its lack of fiscal discipline and predicted that they would come back. Well this is the first return for 2012. The one we spoke about was for 2011.

This request for this supplementation of the appropriation of $1,543,590,700, in my opinion, is symptomatic of a Government that has an insatiable appetite for the country’s resources. It shows the lack of ability or the will to properly plan the country’s programmes and activities. Whilst this is not new to this country; it is not new—so Member for Chaguanas West you are right on that count—when you look at the lineup of figures, all the Heads that you are going to increase, these figures should have been predictable. As I go through the
few points I want to make on at least four of those Heads, I would show you why I think they were predictable. They were all known. The question I want to ask is: why were they not budgeted in the 2012 budget? When you came to Parliament in October last year, why were they not included in the budgetary measure?

In my opinion, this sort of exercise shows a Government that cannot make up its mind about the country’s priorities and they are running—and I said it in my budget statement last year—this country as it is a game of cards, a game of “whappie”. We need to see a little more planning, Minister of Finance.

Basically, I think that we are oblivious—your Government is oblivious—to the internal as well as external shocks and risks that threaten our economy. They appear not to understand the desperate financial position in which we may end up. The Government has learned nothing from what has taken place in the Eurozone—and I have been following it very carefully. Greece, Portugal, Spain, Ireland—and to a lesser extent France—are on the verge of financial ruin due to massive deficits and runaway debt. Yet, for all of this, these are the policies that you choose to follow as a Government.

The policy choice is for a deficit financing for this Government. It was one of choice for the former administration also, but the difference is that there was an exit strategy plan on the part of the former Government and I am not seeing this exit strategy plan with respect to this Government and that is why I am concerned.

As I said, we had budgeted $546.6 billion in expenditure—$46.9 billion for their revenue and the deficit $7.6 billion. We are now seeing this figure moving to $8.9 billion. How are you going to fund this deficit? By borrowing? Is this what we are going to do? I say to the Minister of Finance this afternoon: this type of borrowing and deficit spending will have dire consequences for our economy over time. You are well aware of that.

Our debt-to-GDP ratio, when this Government assumed office in May 2010
was 38.5 per cent. It now stands at 50 per cent. Where is it now? If you take up all the borrowings which you got approved in this House in August of last year, we have the capacity and the ability to get to 60 per cent/70 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio. I have worked it out.

The point about it, Mr. Minister of Finance, is that the debt will create a loan financing obligation for Trinidad and Tobago and you do not have any new, clear-cut revenue streams to meet the financial obligations. What is going to happen? [Interruption]

You can answer when I am finished. When you are wrapping up, you can answer. Our huge fiscal deficit and this excessive debt can attract—this is the downside of it—international agencies looking at us; like Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s. They can even downgrade us, as they did with the United States. If they can do that with the United States, who are we here in Trinidad and Tobago?

I am asking Mr. Minister: what is your exit strategy, given the fact that we will be entering the third year of deficit financing? What is that strategy? That is all. I am getting the impression that—I do not want to say deliberately—this Government is mortgaging the future of our children. I am getting the impression that you are impotent and powerless to manage the country’s affairs. I throw it out. [Interruption] Yes, just like lollipop. [Interruption] [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to you. Let him take notes. [Laughter]

I want to share some figures with the Minister. According to oil-energy.com, the price of Brent crude has fallen from a high of US $125 per barrel in February 2012 to an average daily price of US $111 per barrel for the month of May. That is with respect to oil. I will agree with you that you all are skimming off the oil revenues because you had budgeted $75 per barrel US and gas $2.75. What I am seeing is that the price of oil is trending downwards and this is dangerous.
The picture worsens, Mr. Speaker, when one considers that oil-energy.com has indicated that the Henry Hub price for natural gas has fallen from US $3.25 per MMBtu in January 2012 down to US $2.50, and I have been tagging the gas price because we are a gas-based economy and I am looking to see if we can achieve our $2.75. I am always looking at that little thing on TV6.

7.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, Hansard would show that I am on record warning this Government of the predictable fall in gas price and effect it could have on our revenues. Now, they refuse to listen. I recall that earlier this year I came to this Parliament when we were dealing with the 2011—[Interruption]

**PROCEDURAL MOTION**

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 10(11), I beg to move that the House continue to sit until the completion of the Motion at hand, the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) (Financial Year 2012) Bill 2012 and Motions No. 1 and 2 under committee business.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

Miss M. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was discussing the change in the production of oil, et cetera, and I just want to share some figures here. When you look at our own economy the oil output continues to fall, and that is due to the aging fields and maintenance operations. Let me share some figures in the oil production:

January to March 2011, 96,865 barrels per day were produced. In January, March 2012 that figure went down by 14.9 per cent to 82,467 barrels of oil per day. And of course, there has been a decrease in natural gas production by some .7 per cent. And if you look at the petrochemicals you would see Mr. Speaker—and I
am looking at methanol, that is down by 8.1 per cent from the first quarter in 2011 when you compare it to the first quarter in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I was expecting that the Minister of Finance would have told us this afternoon, given the country’s fortunes and the decrease in what we are seeing oil production, decrease in gas production, decreases in our petrochemicals, I thought he would have come here this afternoon and tell us how would it affect our lives in this country, because at the end of the day that is what this is all about.

So I want the Government to clear the air on the following questions, I ask certain questions Minister: one, what is the country’s projected gross revenue position given the movement in the oil and gas prices? Because we are eight months into the financial year, so, I would have thought you would come this afternoon and say, this is the amount, this is the revenue, this is expenditure, this is what we want to do, et cetera. I thought we would have been given a little bit more information.

The second question I want to the ask the Minister, how will projected revenues and this new level of proposed expenditure affect the already huge deficit? Well I know that now, I have gotten that answer. Because it will now move, as you said, from $7.6 to $8.9 billion. Of course, my burning question to you Minister, what are the Government’s plans to systematically reduce the country’s deficit, and what is your exit strategy? I will like to get an answer from you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Speaker, there are none so blind as those who cannot see. On the last occasion, that was at the supplementation Bill for 2011 in January, I referred to the Central Bank’s Monetary Report for 2011, and I quoted the Governor’s warnings of impending danger and risk to the economy. On that occasion—hon. Minister I will never forget it, you denigrated me. You criticized me for misquoting what the Governor had said at that time, but today I feel vindicated. I feel vindicated by the
Central Bank’s May report. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, I am a responsible person, and I take no joy in what that report is saying. I am not a happy person today because of what has happened now in the economy not recovering. I take no joy in that because it will affect all of us as citizens of this country. It will affect my constituents in Port of Spain South; in will affect your constituents, Mr. Minster, in Tunapuna and so all 41 of us sitting here, so there is no joy. But I just felt that I should point out that I was accused of misinterpretation. It so happened that the Governor has come out now and stated exactly what was happening.

At that time, there was a little hemming and hawing but I could have seen the direction when I looked at the indicators. And what I normally do, I would look at the revenue earners in the country, and divide my revenue earners into the energy and the non-energy sectors and I would be able to get a picture of what we are doing. And I take time to do my research and when I come here I want to talk and not only share what I have found, but also share it with the national community, and my constituents in particular, Mr. Minster.

On May 24, while they were celebrating this is what turned up; Central Bank confirms recession. Big headline, big headline confirms recession. And I looked at Chaguanas, the celebration they were having on their second anniversary, and I said, but what are they celebrating? There was nothing to celebrate on that night, there was nothing. [Desk thumping]

Let me tell you what you have done in two years. The Minister of Works and Member for Chaguanas West held up a document stating how much they have achieved in two years. Let me tell you how people are feeling out there, I am on the ground, let me tell you what they are saying. In two years, Mr. Minister you all have blown $104 billion and counting. [Desk thumping] That is what you have done in your expenditure. In two years you all have managed to rack up a
combined deficit of $15.3 billion, but now have to add more. So it about $17 billion in deficit that you have racked up for two years. In two years they have killed off the entrepreneurial spirit in this country. Businesses in this country are afraid to invest. Let me read something, Mr. Speaker. I am reading from the *Daily Express*, Thursday May 24; a story by Asha Javeed—and the Central Bank Governor, and I quote,

“…the private sector representatives acknowledge that there are several Government initiatives geared to promoting new business investments. They concede, however, that the turnaround in the business is taking longer than expected because many business are still taking a wait and see attitude, given the weak export demand from the region and concerns about the security and industrial relations environment.”

That is what is happening, Mr. Speaker. Right now this country is waiting to exhale. We have not really settled down since May 24. You need to instill a sense of confidence in the business sector in this country. In two short years, they have succeeded in shrinking the economy from positive to negative; three consecutive years now of negative growth. In two short years they have dismantled the relative industrial peace that has existed in this country. [Desk thumping]

In two years—you would have your say, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. Mr. Speaker, protect me.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes. You have my protection.

**Miss M. McDonald:** Take notes! In two years they have brought hardship to the majority of citizens in this country. In two years, you have continued to tell untruths to senior citizens. [Desk thumping] Look what is happening to them.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone on the Government Bench would want the evidence of what I am saying here, let us look at the Central Bank Report for May 2012; growth projection reduced from 1.5 per cent to 1 per cent. I remember in January
stating that this 1.7 per cent could not be attained, it cannot achieve it. I said the
most that will happen is that the economy would remain flat, that is what I said.
But again, Sir, you insulted and you denigrated me, but I have prevailed. [Desk thumping]

Despite the fact that the Central Bank said that they have reduced the
expectations from 1.5 per cent GDP growth to 1 per cent, what they are saying you
may even have problems in achieving that 1 per cent because they said it is riddled
with downside risks. So, you are not even sure that you could achieve that 1 per
cent.

Mr. Speaker, the economy has experienced three consecutive year of
economic decline. I want to say tonight that we have long passed the stage of
recession. I want to posit here tonight; that we are in a state of depression. [Desk thumping]

The value added in the energy sector—and that is important because we are
gas based, that is the energy—declined by 7.6 per cent, crude oil production, I just
stated down by 4.8 per cent; gas production in the fourth quarter of 2011, down by
7.6 per cent; headline inflation, I see double digits in the first quarter in 2012.

And Mr. Speaker, do not talk about employment. Since we left office I
remember the figure was 4.8 per cent. Let me tell you, not for love or money can
you find what is the unemployment rate in this country. [Crosstalk] I will tell you
something more. You cannot get it out of CSO; when you turn to use the Central
Bank figures, you are being abused, so what are we going to use?

Dr. Rowley: Corporate propaganda!

Miss M. McDonald: We cannot do that. We need to have an independent body
where we will be able to get our data. That is why it is important that the CSO be
rejuvenated because we need to become a data driven society. That is what we
need to become. So we would be able to have clear facts. And we would be able
to go there and analyze our figures and do not depend on, as my leader said, the Government propaganda machinery. We cannot do that.

Mr. Speaker, no amount of expansion in the CEPEP can solve this unemployment. I am going to get down to CEPEP in a short while. [Desk thumping] Low investor confidence, sluggish credit demand has led to a build-up in excess liquidity reserves in the banking sector.

Let me tell you. In September 11, $4.6 billion, December 2011, that figure jumped to $5.7 billion, in March 2012, that figure jumped again to $6.6 billion, that is on the banking side. On the Central Bank side there were repeated reductions in the repo rate, until the repo rate came down by July 2011 to 3 per cent and it has remained stubbornly at that 3 per cent. As a result of that low repo rate there has been a reduction in prime lending in the commercial banks as low as 7.75 per cent.

8.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the bank deposit rate, where people go and put their little money and expect a little interest, is almost zero in the banks right now, and business demand for credit is still weak. Who has created these conditions? I would say that the blame rests squarely at the feet of the present administration, because they have not instilled a sense of confidence in this economy by their actions and their omissions. They have not! People are still waiting and saying they do not know what to do.

I deal with Port of Spain South and I deal with the people on the ground and there are cries. They are crying. As a matter of fact, they are saying that under the PNM, they still used to eat a little more food, but what is happening now? You all have driven business away, and that is what you need, Mr. Minister, to help build this country back. You need to work hand in hand with the private sector.

I want to hear the Minister of Finance publicly reject that monetary policy as a misinterpretation because I know that I am not misinterpreting the figures. The
buck must stop with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the entire Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to turn my attention to some of the Heads I want to comment on. The first one I want to look at is Head 61, Ministry of Housing and the Environment. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Member: I thought you say you did not prepare to talk.

Miss M. McDonald: I did not, but when the adrenaline is running I move with the flow. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, one would agree that the Government in Trinidad and Tobago is the biggest employer in this country. We agree with that. It is in this context that the objective of a Government is to create, not only jobs for its citizens, but sustainable—the operative word there is “sustainable”—jobs for its citizen. I have noted under Head 61 an increase in the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, of $260,500,000. In the notes it says for CEPEP. That is going to CEPEP to provide employment opportunities for persons in the lower socioeconomic bracket. This is a figure that was up, because what they got in the 2012 budget was $320 million and they are now getting $260,500,000 putting the figure now for CEPEP for 2012 to $580,500,000.

This was the very Government—and my friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, lamented the fact that this was the very Government who criticized—when they were in Opposition then—the PNM administration for introducing CEPEP. I was not in the House at the time, but I used to look at it on TV and read. Mr. Speaker, they claimed that the CEPEP people were a waste of human resources; they were like pigs feeding in a trough; and they were only painting stones at the side of the road. They were totally against this, and here is the same Government supporting this PNM’s initiative and talking about reform, and pumping much more money than the PNM had pumped in CEPEP.
Mr. Speaker, I shudder to think about the reward meted out to people, and I looked at it after that ill-fated state of emergency last year. They employed hundreds of people across the country—but I want to talk about my constituency—in this programme called Colour Me Orange. That was simply, to me, in my mind, “I am sorry for locking you all up without the evidence. I did not ketch any big fish. I only lock up all the little fry dries. That is all. I only lock up the little fry dries, and I had to let all of you out after”. So they came with this Colour Me Orange Programme and by Carnival Friday, Colour Me Orange turned to “colour me black”. Many of my constituents came crying on Carnival Friday saying that they were out of jobs. That was the end of the Colour Me Orange Programme.

I am quite sure that the Minister and this Government have taken careful note of the rumblings at Harpe Place in East Port of Spain, and the rumblings in Beetham, in Laventille East and West. What were they rumbling for? They were saying they want jobs, they want sustainable jobs. They do not want the Colour Me Orange or “Colour Me Black”. They do not want CEPEP or URP. They want to get sustainable jobs where they could support their families, not a job that is going to be there for three months or six months and then you kick them out and then they go back to a life of crime. You cannot do that. I would tell you, the expansion of CEPEP is to do just that on the East West Corridor.

Mr. Speaker, over the months, I have seen where the Government is doing the following: construction of a UWI South Campus in Penal/Debe, that is creating sustainable jobs; construction of an oncology centre in Penal, creating sustainable jobs; construction of a Children’s Hospital in Couva, creating sustainable jobs; transfer of key Ministries—the Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs, Ministry of Community Development, Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and YTEPP, all of them are being transferred from Port of Spain to Chaguanas and this is what the Member for Tabaquite had to say.

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I am reading from the *Guardian* dated Friday, May 18, 2012. Three Ministries to be built in Chaguanas and I quote:

“Rambachan said the move would lead to the development of rural communities and jobs for residents of those communities.”

More sustainable jobs for these communities.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is a good thing.

**Miss M. McDonald:** It is a good thing. What I am saying is, I see every citizen in this country ranking pari passu, and if those communities beyond—and somebody used it—south of Caroni bridge can get those sustainable jobs, what is happening to Port of Spain South? What is happening to Laventille East? What is happening to Laventille West? What is happening to Port of Spain North? What is happening to Diego Martin North/East and La Brea, et cetera? What is happening there?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sit and talk with the Government.

**Miss M. McDonald:** What is happening?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sit and talk with the Government and put your development plans forward.

**Miss M. McDonald:** Mr. Speaker, I ask this evening: where is the equity?

**Miss Cox:** No equity.

**Miss M. McDonald:** Where is the equity?

**Miss Cox:** None!

**Miss M. McDonald:** What about the youths in all these areas?

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

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

*[Mr. N. Hypolite]*

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Miss M. McDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you Member for Laventille West and to all my colleagues. Am I to assume that the people in my
constituency and other constituencies who sit on this bench will be getting CEPEP? Is that it? Is it fair we are getting Colour Me Orange because the Colour Me Orange Programme will be extended? The Minister has said that this afternoon. So we are going back into the Colour Me Orange and we are going into the ghost gangs.

The thing about with CEPEP—I could tell you about Port of Spain South. I have two CEPEP contracts there. I have one in the eastern portion and that is to take care of single women in the whole of John John, Plaisance Terrance, Africa, Beverly Hills and one in St. James, and the people in Sea Lots, some of my favourite constituents in Sea Lots East and Sea Lots West, there are starving young single women with four and five children. We are asking, where is the equity? Would we be getting a CEPEP crew going down to Sea Lots? I make my plea for my constituents this afternoon.

I want to look at—[Crosstalk]—Mr. Speaker, could you safeguard me from the Member for Oropouche East, please?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, you have my full protection.

Miss M. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism. When I said that the Government seems to be grappling with the budgeting process this is what I mean, because I was once the Minister of Culture. When we sit to prepare the budget, what would we do? You would look at all the holidays and celebrations during the course of the year. I had a little list of them here. I had Hosay, Spiritual Baptist Day, Easter, Indian Arrival Day, Emancipation, Divali, Independence, Republic Day, Eid and Christmas, so you have an idea of all the various holidays and people would be applying, and you also have a heading call “grants” for people who would apply during the course of the year for all sorts of reasons.

Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that the Minister—I guess it would be the
Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism—would have presented a budget that was reasonable and incorporated sums of money that would stretch across the year, but they have come back now asking for $5 million. The Minister said that this would be for Indian Arrival Day and Emancipation Day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I see no way here an allocation for Independence. I will tell you why Independence is so important to us this year. It is our 50th anniversary of Independence. Do you call it the Golden Jubilee? That is Trinidad and Tobago’s golden jubilee; moving from colonialism into independence, and we are supposed to be celebrating this with big style, pride and dignity, because that is what the father of the nation, Dr. Eric Williams, had in his mind.

I always talk this little story here. On January 24, 1956, the PNM was born. On September 24, 1956 we won the first election in this country, and the vision then is called the People’s Charter with the objective of attaining self-development. 8.20 p.m.

Mr. Roberts: Thank you, hon. Member, for giving way. I would like to let you know, if you are not aware, that the Ministry of Planning and the Economy has allocated already some $17 million for our 50th independence, our jubilee, plus several other ministries, 11 other ministries, including my own, have put aside $1.5 to $2 million. So overall it is approximately $36 million available to celebrate our 50th independence.

Miss M. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, because I am now hearing this. This was very, very secret. We knew nothing of it. If you are going to be celebrating the 50th anniversary, you need to be celebrating too the contributions made by Dr. Eric Williams. Once that is being done, Sir, you are looking at Port of Spain South, so if is one MP who is supposed to know, I am supposed to know.

Mr. Roberts: [Inaudible]
Miss M. McDonald: Do you have a plan? Do you have a programme of activities?

Mr. Roberts: Just call the Ministry of Planning and the Economy.

Miss M. McDonald: No, no, no, no, no. We are parliamentarians; we all sit here.

Mr. Roberts: [Inaudible]

Miss M. McDonald: All I am saying, Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, and Mr. Speaker I want this on the Hansard, that we wish, we hope, that now we have this information that it would be circulated to every MP, all 11 of us seated here, [Desk thumping] and the entire country; the entire country as the Leader said. Thank you very much.

Mr. Roberts: You are going very well. In fact, you are going better than—

Miss M. McDonald: Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, I will not respond to that.

Mr. Minister, as I said, again, we need to look at this Ministry carefully, because there is something wrong with the budgeting process. At this point in time, there is something wrong, because you could not have done a budget leaving out important dates like Indian Arrival Day and Emancipation, because from that $5 million I noticed that over $1 million went to Indian Arrival Day.

Mr. Warner: Bunji Garlin.

Miss M. McDonald: Bunji Garlin?

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Miss M. McDonald: Got what?

Mr. Warner: [Inaudible]

Miss M. McDonald: For Indian Arrival Day? [Laughter]

Mr. Roberts: [Inaudible] [Laughter]

Miss M. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, $2 million to Emancipation. I am saying that there are numerous other things coming like your Republic Day, plus other grants which might not—when I called the Ministry, they had a lot of requests in there,
but no money to pay. I think this is something we have to look at. That is the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism.

I want to look at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. Here is another example of an expenditure in the sum of $45 million, which should have been in the budget 2012, when we met here in October last year. Research will show that the site for the construction of the south campus in Debe, the sod was turned since February of 2011. If the Minister knew, together with the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, they ought to have known that some figure should have been placed in the 2012 budget.

So now, without any consultation, without any kind of plan as to how much is the overall cost of this and the phases and how long it would take, they have now come to us, six months after, asking us for $45 million, with no details whatsoever; absolutely no details. Is this how this Government conducts its budgeting process and by extension runs this Government? I am talking in a very plain and simple language, because I think what is going on is that we have to look beyond this. This is already here before us. We have to look beyond and see exactly what you are doing to improve what you are doing.

Remember you are the ones who rolled in to Government and said, “This is the new politics, this is the new governance structure. Transparency would be the order of the day.” Mr. Minister, I want to tell you this evening that bringing $45 million here for us to approve something that was not in your budget, and if you had placed it—well, the point about it is that it will now be placed in the 2012 budget. What is going to happen? I think you did not want to see what was going to happen to your deficit figure. I do not know. You see, by not putting it inside there and coming now, you leave me to make my mind run in all directions. You have giving me the impetus to let my mind run, Minister, in all directions.

Mr. Roberts: Rein in your mind.
Miss M. McDonald: I will hold it in due course. I want to look at the Ministry of Finance, which is my last Head, and just comment on a few of the figures. My colleague, the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke about it, but I will say it again. Mr. Speaker, $686,658,000 to facilitate the execution of an agreement between the Andean Bank and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. We have already committed over US $100 million in order for us to qualify to borrow a ceiling of up to US $1 billion, Sir, of up to US $1 billion? What are we getting out of that? I have to ask what my colleague asked: What are the benefits to be derived? You need to tell us, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I am becoming increasingly concerned about our ability to service this increasing debt burden. I spoke about it already. You are placing more and more debt on future generations, so I call upon you, Mr. Minister, to fully account to this nation about the borrowings and what you all have been doing. We need to know.

Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on just one more issue before I go to economic growth, the $40 million to provide additional equity to the Export/Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago. That is indeed necessary to do this, but I have a problem with the Government’s policy towards the SMEs. It is a dismal failure. In the 2012 budget the Government laid out its plan for development of the SME sector and the expansion, I think to introduce, a third fare, of the stock exchange, dedicated to the SMEs. But you know something, Mr. Minister? Not a single SME has come to raise capital, not one on the stock market, not one. I have been checking, I have been looking and I have not seen any. If you know of any, when you are wrapping up, you will tell me.

I turn my attention to a few other points on economic growth that I think I need to mention. We do not have sufficient information really on this $1.5 billion, because the Minister has just come here and spoke half his time on the Clico issue.
and did not give us a sense as to where the country stands right now in terms of its revenue, in terms of expenditure and what sort of deficit we have running right now. He has neglected to tell us what he is doing about the country’s revenue earners. Given our situation, I want to look at our revenue earners. Let us take a look at the energy sector.

Again, we divide our revenue earners into two parts: the energy as well as the non-energy sector. The energy sector comprises your petrochemicals, your oil production as well as your gas production. With respect to natural gas, the Central Bank is reporting that there is a decline in the energy sector, an overall decline, re. your natural gas production. This was affected by plant closures during the course of the period.

You would also recall that in my contribution to the budget debate last year, and this year in January, I spoke about the Ryder Scott reserve audit report which stated that our proven gas reserves have fallen by 7 per cent, from 2009 to 2010. So there is falling natural gas production, which also affects the petrochemical industry. It affects our ammonia production, it affects our urea production and it affects our methanol production.

Another point is that the trend for gas prices worldwide is down. The Minister had budgeted US $2.75 cents per MMBtu in his budget. We have not arrived at that figure as yet, since he made his statement in October. Mr. Speaker, additionally, natural gas prices should be reduced further, since there are other countries that have come on stream producing and exporting natural gas. If you consider the law of demand and supply, you will understand that once there is a great supply of any commodity, then prices will fall. So we have to look at that, Mr. Minister. So again, our oil production is down.

Growth was very miniscule in the non-energy sector. Given this situation, I ask a few more questions: can the Minister of Finance explain whether he is still
prepared to expect a 1.7 per cent growth in GDP for Trinidad and Tobago for 2012? We have also seen where the business environment has adopted a wait and see attitude. Can the Minister tell us what could be done to really stimulate this economy? And finally, can the Minister of Finance tell us the true state of unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I thank you.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod): Mr. Speaker, I wish only to make a couple of what I consider to be salient points in this very important debate.

First of all, I think that all of us here should take a more nationalistic, if you wish, view of the circumstances affecting Trinidad and Tobago at this time; indeed, as there are important circumstances affecting the rest of the world economy, which in turn affect us as a small developing country. We should perhaps take that position, rather than continue to ensconce ourselves in narrow political positions, party political positions I mean.

We came into office in 2010 and met situations that had been affecting us, even before the crisis that hit the world economy, principally the one that affected the United States economy.

Sustainable jobs in the Trinidad and Tobago context must depend on that most major area of your economy. It must depend, and it will depend for a long time to come on the oil and gas and petroleum sector. If we are going to provide those sustainable jobs from the energy sector, as the engine of our growth at this time, then one would have expected that when the going was better than they are now, when we had access to a lot of our own earnings, our own money, we should have been reinvesting in key areas of the energy sector and beginning, in a serious way, to invest in those areas that would take us away from our dependence on oil and gas and into these new economic areas. But what
happened?

For a long time perhaps, I certainly will continue to point to what had happened before we came into office, and what should have happened before we came into office.

8.35 p.m.

Let me hasten to make the point, any benefits that would come out of the oil sector particularly, will be realized between three to five years as a minimum of your investing in the particular activity. We took a lot of our resources—well, they took a lot of our resources when they were in Government—and invested in something about which there was no certainty on our part, rather than invest those amounts in that which, for years, we had considered to be certain, except that at times, and it is a cyclical thing, the price of oil will be low, and quite often it would have been affected by political decisions, and there are times when the price will be as high as it is now, and there were some occasions in the past when it was a lot higher than we are realizing today.

So we took a lot of our resources and invested in an idea that World GTL brought to us, rather than engage in an exploitation of those reservoirs that we have been operating in for some time and doing the kind of exploration, and then production work that will have us realize other reservoirs, so that we can be plotting a graph over time, perhaps in three-year phases to maintain, if not necessarily, improve our levels of oil production. So, open-eyed they allowed the production to fall as a result of natural decline and those natural declines were exacerbated by a lack of investment in proper maintenance of plant and machinery and employing better trained people and improving all of the time our training and development of our human resources.

So, we met a situation in which we had to very quickly put things together, or the Clico fiasco would have taken the Trinidad and Tobago economy to the
ground. That is the reality. And some $9 billion we are told today went into rescuing that, and the job is not done yet, the Minister of Finance said that, but we have made substantial progress in arresting further decline. Now it is against the background of that, with the central Government’s own resources being in not a very healthy state, against the background of that, we were faced with so many wage negotiations that did not just come about in 2010 after May 24th, you know; they had been there since 2007. Indeed, I have conciliated in two negotiations that had been outstanding since 2005 and 2007, and we were faced with that.

When one says today that we have disturbed—I think that is the word that was used—what was existing as industrial relations peace, that is to try to pull wool over the eyes of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Unions, some of them, indeed, the majority of them, had become so fed-up and people had become so cynical that even as the workers could have justified their cases, they were not bothering and they were hoping that somebody, something would happen that would change the order of things, to the extent that for the Summit of the Americas and for CHOGM, the Patrick Manning, PNM Government, was so afraid of being embarrassed with so many leaders, 34 of them in Latin America and the Caribbean, coming here and then for CHOGM, however many heads of governments, they did not want that kind of embarrassment, so they galvanized the state security forces against workers who wanted to take their cases now to bigger leaders in the world, and there was a clampdown against demonstrations and so on. [Interruption] They did that. And for a good while before the Summit of the Americas, a building at—where is there again; it used to be the Ministry of Labour and Small and Enterprise Development’s building?

Mr. Indarsingh: Riverside Plaza.

Hon. E. McLeod: Riverside Plaza. The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development was given marching orders, find alternative
accommodation, and Riverside Plaza, that building there had become the headquarters of the peace-keeping security services to protect the Summit of the Americas and CHOGM.

But there were about three unions, definitely three unions, that were showing signs of serious resistance against that, and they were identifying with their own particular issues, and what happened? The Government sought injunctive measures against those three unions: civil aviation, transport and telecommunications. So that these unions, in observing the provisions of the law as set out in the IRA were essentially clamped down from engaging in any kind of industrial activity. They would want us to believe, Mr. Speaker, that if there is an absence of war there is the existence of peace. That is not how it operates.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** They attempted to decertify them.

**Hon. E. Mc Leod:** Yes, threatened them, “we would decertify you, come out and march and you would see.” [Interuption] That is what happened. That is what we met. That is what we met, and that we just ended a strike, a 90-day old strike, certainly is not enough to claim that we are in a situation of industrial relations war. “Ol’ talk”; nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

A single sparrow, I think, does not a summer make. One strike and we had some demonstrations in 2010, towards the end of 2010, and somewhere in 2011. But you know, Mr. Speaker, it is 67 industrial relations disputes, collective bargaining related, that have been reported in the conciliation system as identified in the Industrial Relations Act, and all of them were outstanding when we came into office.

**Mr. Roberts:** All?

**Hon. E. Mc Leod:** All of them, and there were offers of zero, zero, one. Indeed, I think there were two settlements; one by one by one—67 came to us.

Mr. Speaker, it is a distinct pleasure, and I consider it quite a privilege for
me to report, in the face of all that has been said here, that of the 67 that came to us, 37 have been settled—\textit{[Desk thumping]}—in 24 months. \textit{[Interruption]} No, I said 67. There are three that are unresolved and have since been referred to the next place, the Industrial Court. There are 18 that are ongoing in conciliation. May I make a correction, Mr. Speaker? It is 57 that were reported to us; 37 settled; three unresolved; 17 are ongoing in conciliation now, and there are 10, I think, reported to me, that are still at the bilateral discussion level, and we have officers in the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development who are well tuned now and are waiting to give assistance to employer and union as the case might become necessary. In 24 months. And it is not just ordinary, as we would sometimes describe them hourly-rated people; we have senior staffers; they have people at managerial levels, and who had become so disgusted with what had been happening previously.

So that, I must give the lie—is that a parliamentary word?

\textbf{Mr. Speaker:} It is unparliamentary.

\textbf{Hon. E. McLeod:} It is unparliamentary? I am sorry, terribly sorry, Mr. Speaker. \textit{[Interruption]} I must establish the falsehood of what has been reported as a very troubling industrial relations time. And of course it is bothersome. It is bothersome that people were heated up and they would take some time to cool. You see, they did not talk with anybody. They did not want to talk with anybody. We have to engage—and I started off by saying, that we should more often find it necessary to identify with what is good for Trinidad and Tobago, and not necessarily what is good for a particular political party, if we want to build a society based on equity, justice, fairness and all of that. \textit{[Interruption]}

\textbf{8.50 p.m.}

When the Opposition comes here and talks about unemployment in the East-West Corridor—that has always been a problem. It has always been a problem.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, full employment.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: You dreaming.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Point Fortin, I am hearing you very clearly and loudly again. I am appealing to you for the second time for the evening, I do not want to do it for a third time. Just take notes and when you get your chance to speak, you refute, but not whilst you are seated. Continue, hon. Minister of Labour.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We can have another debate on what is full employment. We are fooled all of the time with all kinds of statistics and so on. For the third quarter of 2011, the official information is that unemployment stood at 5.2 per cent, down from 5.8 per cent. In the third quarter of 2010, it was at 5.9 per cent. And I question it sometimes, because I see the retrenchment notices in accordance with Act 32 of 1985, the employer must also advise the Minister of Labour before he effects retrenchment, if such retrenchment would involve more than five people I think it is—trade union, practitioners—[Interruption]

Mr. Indarsingh: More than five.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: So, I see them.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You are talking loudly.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am only giving advice, constructive advice, not rabble-rousing.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And I find that for every notice that crosses my desk, too many people are put on the breadline. But other people are either not having themselves checked in the statistics or they are being employed somewhere, because there are other programmes. But a whole lot of these programmes are not necessarily the sustainable programmes that would provide the kind of sustainable jobs that we want to provide. You think we are happy here about “Colour Me Orange”. We are not happy about that. But that is a stopgap measure that we must implement if we do not want people to be crying every day. [Desk thumping] And when we are told
that there is rank unemployment in the East-West Corridor, we are not being told anything that is new, it has always been so. [Crosstalk] I do not think anyone wants to leave it like that. I do not think you wanted to have left it like that in May 2010.

**Hon. Member:** It was not so.

**Dr. Browne:** You are the Government now. [Crosstalk]

**Hon. E. Mc Leod:** A lot of us could read, but we do not understand things, Mr. Speaker. Nobody is identifying that in the county of St. Patrick where La Brea resides, where Point Fortin resides, we have always had the highest level of unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago. And I am identifying a geographical area that has contributed more than perhaps any other area by way of the oil that we produce to satisfy the needs and requirements of Trinidad and Tobago. And it has to do, Mr. Speaker, with our having refused—with their having refused to engage in such reorganization of the economy, that we would have been taking people, first of all into serious consideration, and organizing our economy in tandem with our move to developing our human resources. But that is not what they were about. But the same industry over whose failure they were superintending, as they tried to put in place the Petronas model—none of them knows—[Interruptiption]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** About what?

**Hon. E. Mc Leod:** —about the Petronas model. You know that?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** You wait.

**Hon. E. Mc Leod:** You do not know anything about that. In Malaysia their Ministry of Energy is really responsible for every single thing that has to do with the development and building and construction and so on, so that the President of Petronas has been seen on many occasions as being more powerful than the Prime Minister of Malaysia. San Fernando East wanted to introduce that model here. It would have taken place if they had won the 2010 election.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Absolutely not.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Point Fortin, this is your last warning, otherwise I will ask you to withdraw from the Chamber for the rest of the evening.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Gladly.

Mr. Speaker: What did you say? You apologize to this House, apologize and withdraw the remark that you just made.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: For what?

Mr. Speaker: The remark that you just made, withdraw. Withdraw what you said. You said what you said.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What is it, Sir, what is it?

Mr. Speaker: All right sit down. Member for Point Fortin, withdraw from this Chamber for two hours and take a rest in the lounge.

[Mrs. Gopee-Scoon walks out]

Mr. Speaker: Continue hon. Minister.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was their intention, Mr. Speaker, to bring Petrotrin, Trinmar, NP, NGC into one “maco” company and they were going to introduce their efficiency levels on the basis of a drastic reduction in the manpower staffing of the company.

Hon. Member: [Inaudible]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: No, well you did not have that discussed at home. [Laughter] Thirty-five hundred workers across these companies would have been retrenched. That was their plan.

Mr. Warner: PNM style.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Because they address the question of productivity by cost reduction and more essentially reduction in manpower staffing and the suppression of wages as much as they would be allowed to. That is how they intended to go. And today the situation was going to be perhaps real industrial relations more than

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tension, because I know workers who will not have taken that. I will like to let you know that at that time that they were planning this thing, I was still in that earlier incarnation and we would not have taken that—of course not.

Hon. Member: [Inaudible]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: When we break for tea, I will talk to you.

Mr. Roberts: Gladly he will help you.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: So if we are going to talk about sustainable jobs, Mr. Speaker, then there is a whole lot that we need to do. Yes? We were told here this afternoon, that whereas there were three oil rigs engaged in 2010, when we came into office, today, there are 12 rigs—[Desk thumping]—engaged. And Members should know that the price of oil on the international market, high or price low, if you are not producing the particular commodity that price means nothing to you. So the high price, that ones were fetching on the international market, did not mean much to Trinidad and Tobago.

It is true that our production fell by some 20 per cent, and it is not all of that fall that can be reasonably attributed to natural decline. It is that people were thinking of the kind of modern economic development that was being copied after Petronas in Malaysia and that concentrated on gas and gas to liquids and doing just 25 million standard cubic feet, I think, to produce how many barrels of diesel. Of course, if it had worked the diesel was going to be really great diesel, but we went into that not being sufficiently in command of the knowledge as to what would be produced and I think we were conned by one or two local, but greedy people and a smart man from elsewhere.

So we found ourselves between a rock and a hard place. And we heard from the Minister of Energy a couple weeks ago who seemed—it is my view—to have assured all of us in the Parliament that better days are coming. The oil business does not just turn overnight, except perhaps in the case of pricing; it takes a long
while to bring oil to the surface and what was reported to us some time ago, maybe a month or two ago, I found to be cautiously ambitious, that the new find in Soldado will be brought to the surface in just a few months. We are assured that that will happen. People are working assiduously to ensure that it happens.

9.05 p.m.
So the mistakes were made a long time now and what we are attempting to do is to correct those mistakes.

I mean, once you have to contend with the American production of Shale gas you are in trouble: We went into that kind of arrangement, too, without properly thinking out where Trinidad and Tobago wants to be in the next 10 years. That is how you do the oil and gas business. You do not just come by a whole lot of gas and decide to lock yourself into a particular market when you know that those with whom you are locking in yourself in an arrangement, have gas. You think anybody has more oil in the ground than the United States of America? But, the US is going to exploit everybody else’s oil—at high prices and all—and it is a wasting asset. When our oil and gas are no more, we have to go to who used to be a purchaser of our oil and gas for us to get oil and gas, if that is where the technology and economy is going to remain. Then, you pay what is determined by the United States of America for US product. That is what happens.

In 1973, when these 13 OPEC countries got together—was it in Venice or Algeria? Do not hold me closely to the particular location. Libya was one of the biggest exponents then, on how you address your own national circumstances. The analysis was made by the Colonels’ emissary—Lalaison—that when we buy your Caterpillar tractors to do agricultural work in our country, we pay the price that you determine.

Dr. Rambachan: Massy Ferguson.

Hon. E. McLeod: Or Massy Ferguson. We pay the price that you determine.
When you want to buy our oil we are paid a price that you determine. That was yesterday, today it is a different matter, we are going to determine the price of our commodity, and the whole world went into a problem. That is when you begin to assert yourself. When you calculate that this is what I have and I can use what I have to compete against you, then you could really talk about being independent and taking such measures that you can back up on the basis of what you have.

[MR DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair]

At that time in 1973, if I remember correctly—I used to be an exponent of this matter on the platforms in 1975/1976—we were in receipt of some $3 for our indigenous crude. We did not have the personnel and machinery in place to properly measure what was being exploited out of our ground. So, the multi-nationals paid us what they felt like paying us, but we have come a long way. We have come a very long way.

The price then moved after that Vienna Conference. It moved substantially to the point where one was moved to say, in 1978, that money was no problem and that planning had lost its mystique. Then is when we started to degenerate. Then is when we should have been planning, more carefully, than we had done until 2010 when this people’s Government came into office and we started to take a different look at planning and organization. [Desk thumping]

So that the times are tough and we are into—Is it deficit budgeting you say or deficit financing? However you say that; I did sums and simple arithmetic, I do not know about the big terms and all the calculus and so on that you all talk about. We are in tough times but we feel assured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that things will change for the better. Indeed, we are already on the road to changing the important economic realities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Port of Spain South raised the question about Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs). As you are aware, that is a matter that
falls under the portfolio of the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. Indeed, some expansion have already begun to take place, in 24 months.

We launched two business incubators under the Integrated Business Incubation System (IBIS) Programme: one in Sangre Grande and the other in Siparia. The IBIS Programme began, really, in September 2011 and we have approximately 40 clients being selected and interviewed for Sangre Grande and Siparia; they are in training, as we speak. Accommodation has been identified and these two incubators are expected to be fully operational this month.

We are considering, at this time, a community-based incubator for Point Fortin, Tobago and San Juan/Laventille/Barataria, as a cluster; but that would depend on our having the kind of resources that would be necessary. The Minister of Finance will tell you how often I plead with him to get some of his limited resources to do all that we might want to do in this regard.

We are advised, and we verily believe, that this is the way to go. If we are going to engage in economic transformation; if we are going to remove or reduce our reliance on oil and gas; if we are going to transform the economy, then we have to be making better workers of our people; and from among them we must be identifying entrepreneurs; people who, themselves, will become businessmen and businesswomen. In the process of operating their businesses we would be providing the next 10, 15 or 20 jobs; however many—I think up to 25, you continue to be a small and micro enterprise.

Of course, there were certain incentives that were enunciated in the Minister of Finance’s budget. Well, the report is that nobody has yet sought to exploit that facility on the stock exchange, but that does not obviate the very good intentions of the Government.

The Fair Share Programme: As people set up their little businesses and so
on, they now have a guarantee of up to $1 million in business with a Government ministry, an agency, state enterprise and so on. [Desk thumping] A lot of this would relate to what we must do with the procurement procedure and Central Tenders Board and all of that.

**Hon. Sharma:** And it is open to every citizen of this country, not PNM alone.

**Hon. E. McLeod:** Very well.

We raised the ceiling of the Nedco loans and moved from $100,000 to $250,000 for first-time borrowers; and $500,000 for second and third-time borrowers. This time it is not happening as has been reported to us about the occurrences last time under the previous government. People walked into the office and got loans; some of them turned out to be grants. We have had to take action to have people service the loans they got. We are not going to call names here because there is supposed to the bank and it’s clients’ confidentiality and so on. [Interruption] The hon. Member agrees with that? The Member’s name is not on the list, however.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 24 months, to the end of March 2012, Nedco had disbursed 10,418 loans valued at $249,520,392.15. [Desk thumping]

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [Hon. A. Roberts]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. E. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people have become more excited in the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development. There are people who are excited about our getting this thing on the road and continuing to keep it in a roadworthy condition and so on and we are seeing development after development after development.

What we need to do—what the last administration failed to do in a measure
of almost obscene arrogance— is to bring all of the social partners together. Notwithstanding the little schisms and so on that are going on now, I still think that people believe in their Trinidad and Tobago and they want to contribute to making this a better place. We have to engage them. The Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, after months of discussion with the Minister of Finance, Minister of Planning and the Economy and Minister of Housing and the Environment, at the end of this month, indeed, on June 26 and 27, we are going to host the launch and implementation of our social dialogue process, for want of a better way of describing it.

9.20 p.m.

We have been talking with the International Labour Organization, and the ILO has a number of experts and authorities on a number of issues in which we must get engaged. We have been talking with them. Today I got confirmation that the director of our region is going to join us—I do not recall her name right now. We are having some three experts from the ILO office in Geneva; we have invited persons from the Caribbean who themselves, back in 1992/1995, engaged in designing and bringing into operation some social compacts and so on, and there would have been in the construction of their systems, the 100 per cent engagement of each of the social partners, and we want to hear them. We want to benefit from their experience. We do not intend to reinvent the wheel.

We would also have experts from Government, business and management: Singapore and Mauritius, and we are going to involve key ministries with a responsibility for driving this economy forward, whether it is science and technology and so on. And that is one area that I do not know that anybody mentioned. That is an area that has been moving by leaps and bounds, and you can
well identify economic activity in the training and development of your people at tertiary and higher levels, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we are announcing this evening that later this month we will have the makings of a social dialogue process that we should all be committed to, and that will see us identifying the core issues, serious problems, and how we move on the question of productivity; how we engage the unions and other stakeholders in a process that will identify what is our ability today to deal with so many different claims, and how we will deal with a proper distribution of the load that we have to carry. And having carried that load and dispensed with it, how we are going to distribute the fruits of our labour so that we can have a more equitable society; so that we can have more satisfied people; so that we have more conscious people, more Trinidad and Tobago loving citizens, that will take us beyond the next 50 years of our independent development.

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

Mrs. Joanne Thomas (St. Ann’s East): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: “Ah like de outfit, man.”

Mrs. J. Thomas: Oh, thank you. Mr. Deputy-Speaker, I just want to tap on two points of my colleague, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. I heard him mention that he received, or he met 57 agreements when he went into the Ministry, and he solved 37. Now, in my book, for someone who is considered a guru in industrial relations and bargaining agreements, for me, I consider that a bare pass.

Hon. Members: Ohhhh!

Mrs. J. Thomas: That is in my assumption, for someone who is considered a guru. Then he also mentioned about a lot of letters coming to him with persons
who are being put on the breadline. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a simple analysis: if persons are being put on the breadline, then businesses are not doing that well. [Desk thumping]

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I really speak on the Member’s comments, I have to say that it is unfortunate what just took place with my colleague, the Member for Point Fortin, because when I listen to Members on that side, in particular the Member for Couva South, I could have hardly hear what the Member for Point Fortin was saying, because of his utterances. But yet my Member—but I respect the Speaker’s decision and I abide by it.

Hon. Members: “Doh” challenge the Speaker.

Mrs. J. Thomas: That is why I say I respect the Speaker’s decision and I abide by it, because I am a law-abiding citizen. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have reviewed the numbers on the adjustments to the budget allocations and, you know, any normal person, any one of us here, when you see an increase in budgetary allocations the first thing that comes to mind is: how does this impact me and my constituents? How does this impact the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to look a bit on some figures I received—a report from the CSO’s office on exactly how our economy is doing. I refer in particular to the index of retail prices, because this is what impacts the average citizen in our country. I will give a comparison to December 2010. The “All Items index” was increased by 5.7 per cent. Food and non-alcoholic beverages were increased by 12.3 per cent; alcohol beverages and tobacco by 0.8 per cent; clothing and footwear by 2.4 per cent. [Interruption]
Now, I do not want the Member for Couva South to disturb me. So, Member for Couva South, if you would please keep quiet.

Dr. Browne: Exactly! Exactly!

Mrs. J. Thomas: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask for your protection.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please do allow the hon. Member for St. Ann’s East to speak in silence, and do abide by the Standing Orders 40 (b) and (c) please. Continue, Member.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We look at housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, there was an increase by 2.5 per cent, and rent was increased by 9.4 per cent. If you would just allow me to read from that same report on the subhead: “Food and Non-alcoholic Beverages”, and this is just for the month October to November—a one-month comparison. The index for food and non-alcoholic beverages increased from 431.3 in October 2011 to 444.2 in November 2011, reflecting an increase of 3 per cent.

Contributing significantly to this increase was the general upward movement in the prices of cucumbers, oranges, hot peppers, melongene, avocado, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, sweet peppers and other vegetable oils and salad dressing. However, the full impact of these price increases was offset by the general decrease in the prices of celery, Irish potatoes, dasheen, ripe bananas, canned vegetables, onions, grapefruit, garlic, packaged rice and apples. So it goes to show, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this increase was much more than 3 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I want to highlight—you see where the highest increases took place? Twelve point three per cent in food and non-alcoholic beverages and 9.4 per cent in rent, and then we have 2.4 per cent in clothing and

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footwear. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is the boast that we are the mecca of the Caribbean.

**Hon. Member:** Correct.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do our citizens feel and live as though we are the mecca of the Caribbean?

**Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** I guess not. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see there are protests all over as regards higher wages, and one can understand from the figures I just gave. For example, just this week, NIB protesting for higher wages.

**Hon. Members:** “Wha wrong wit dat?”

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** And what is most significant, people everywhere are feeling the hardship of our economy—every single sector. Imagine the hardships have now reached the financial sector. Who would have thought that we would have seen employees in Republic Bank protesting?

**Mr. Sharma:** Is not the first time. What foolishness is that?

**Hon. Member:** “When last dat happen?”

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am speaking and I did not ask for any help. [Desk thumping] Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know why? This is because the basic necessities of life: food, clothing and shelter over our heads, these are the things that have gone up significantly and people cannot live comfortably. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look again at another aspect of the CSO’s report and the value of imports and exports and the balance of visible trade. Let us look at the report for the period January to May 2011 and we are comparing it to January to May 2010,
and we see an increase in the import bill and a slight increase as well in the export bill.

For the period 2010 we saw imports of approximately $16.8 billion as compared to 2011, of $21.2 billion. Exports moved by an average of $2 billion. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from that said report our major trading partners are firstly the United States, averaging about $13.8 billion in exports and $5 billion in imports. Following right behind is Caricom, $4.7 billion in exports and a mere $328 million in imports.

We also do quite a lot of business with Brazil, Colombia and Spain, and I go to that said report. In Brazil we have imports of $1.7 billion and exports of $880 million. Then we look at Colombia: $3.4 billion in imports and $1.0 billion in exports. Then, you know, I saw this country and I never heard of it and it was strange that we are doing so much trade with this country; a country called Gabon. It was new to me and I am seeing imports of $3.6 billion. Then we have the Russian Federation of $1.5 billion in imports.

So it draws the question: When last have any of the Government’s initiatives resulted in trading opportunities of significance to the local businesses? This reminds me of an experience I had with a staff member. This particular staff member always made a fuss about the type of bonus he got at the end of the year, because he has so many degrees. He has a PhD and an MBA. But do you know what shut up this employee, Mr. Deputy Speaker? A simple question was asked: How have you converted these degrees to the company’s bottom line? It is the same kind of question I am asking this Government: how have all these initiatives impacted the average citizen of this country? [Desk thumping]
I also want to ask the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure—I am fully aware that no increase in adjustments were given to his Ministry, but based on the allocations that were previously approved, I just want to ask him of two major areas in my constituency which I took him on a tour of, the La Hoe Road in Laventille Road and the La Canoa Road. I just want to get an idea, when will these be will addressed? Because I too—if there are increases in the budget allocations—want to feel some level of impact on my constituency.

9.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention, one “little” area with regard to our 50th Anniversary celebrations. It is all over the newspapers that one particular entertainer would be paid a significant amount of money to produce a CD, which will be used for the Olympics, et cetera. I ask the question: What about our other entertainers who contribute so much to our culture? Is it that the Government only has eyes for one person? [ Interruption]

Mr. Sharma: Me?

Mrs. J. Thomas: I ask that there be equity and that all persons are made to feel a part of this country where they were born and grew up.

Mr. Speaker, because, you know, in 1962, when we gained Independence, for the celebrations aspect and the culture, there was a competition—I believe the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara who was very much informed of all these types of things—among all the artistes and in that time, soca was not as popular, it was calypso and Yul Brynner was the one won. Do you recall? You are fully aware of all of these— [ Interruption]

Mr. Roberts: I was not born. I might look old, but.

Mrs. J. Thomas: What I am saying is that it was all-inclusive. They included
everybody. Everybody have to feel a part of being part of this country. I just want to put this out to the Government and especially to the Minister of Planning and the Economy, who is coordinating all these efforts. Of course, I heard it was mentioned to our Chief Whip that the constituencies would also be part of it. So, we wait, and, of course, our burgesses are listening and I am sure they too would be excited with regard to how they play a part in this celebration.

On a positive note—[Interruption] yes, I do, you have to give the positive too—I want to thank Hon. Minister Bharath for the enhancement he would be doing to the Las Cuevas fishing—[Desk thumping] I really do appreciate it. The residents and the fishermen of Las Cuevas, we are very happy because it is something we have been lobbying for. I just want to ask other Ministers to follow suit like Minister Bharath.

I particularly asked the Hon. Minister of Education about the early childhood centre, which he promised the residents of Maracas and Las Cuevas. He said it was going to be constructed. Since last September construction was supposed to have started. Of course, the residents are still waiting. I just hope that this early childhood centre for tiny tots, that these tiny tots “doh have time reach” teenagers before we get our early childhood centre. [Interruption]

Dr. Gopeesingh: As soon as we get a site with land, I would try to build it.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Government will build it, not me.

Dr. Browne: Your correction is noted.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Mr. Speaker, a question was asked in the Finance Committee meeting by my colleague, the Member for Point Fortin, for a breakdown of communities by constituency that would benefit from the increased allocation under the CEPEP programme. The response was, the Chairman stated that the information would be provided by the Minister of Housing and the Environment.
And I have looked at all my reports that I have gotten and, you know, there is no information on this particular question and it is minuted and it was promised that the Minister of Housing and the Environment would supply that information.

Because, I heard the Member for Oropouche East talk a lot about CEPEP and, of course, that big adjustment that he is getting. But, just this morning, a resident where I live called me, and they asked: “Joanne, is CEPEP still functioning?” That is in St. Ann’s, in my colleague for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West area, because you—no CEPEP, even in my constituency in St. Ann’s East. Then you wonder, all these increased allocations—[ Interruption ]

**Dr. Rambchan:** Start a factory.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** How is CEPEP—then, of course, he mentioned that they are hiring more contractors and fewer gangs. Do you know what that means? More bosses and the average man in the street “eh getting no job.” [ Interruption ]

**Dr. Browne:** Friends and family.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** It is just, you know, just colleagues getting contracts.

**Dr. Rambchan:** More areas.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** It is just thought-provoking. I just thought I would mention that because, in some of our areas, apart from the people who—[ Interruption ]

**Dr. Rambchan:** Now you know how it feels.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** And you say now I know how it feels and that should not be the case in governance. [ Desk thumping] That should not be the case. The people of this country voted for this Government, overwhelmingly. Okay, let the people at least feel that I did stain my finger for a reason, because I am benefiting. But, right now many of them want to go and have surgery and cut off their finger. [ Interruption ]

**Miss McDonald:** Exactly!

**Hon. Member:** Help them cut it off.

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Mrs. J. Thomas: It should not be PNM did this and the PNM did that.
Dr. Browne: You are no longer in Opposition.
Mrs. J. Thomas: The persons voted. Our citizens voted this Government and I think they should stick to their word. They promised certain things. Let us make the people of this country feel like citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [Interruption]
Dr. Rambachan: But they are all citizens.
Mrs. J. Thomas: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to make this few comments, and with these words, I thank you.
Mr. NiLeung Hypolite (Laventille West): Thank you kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I just want to make a couple of comments. I would like to start by stating that the more things change, the more they remain the same. [Interruption]
Miss McDonald: That is right.
Mr. N. Hypolite: A new sheriff comes to town but there is no noticeable—[Interruption]
Miss McDonald: Mr. Deputy Speaker, protection for my colleague from the Member for Tabaquite.
Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, please do allow the Member to speak in silence.
Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no noticeable impact on the crime situation, on the economy, on unemployment, housing, the traffic situation and I can go on, and on, and on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, two budgets, over $104 billion in expenditure and we are here once again looking at approving a further $1.5 billion. The Member for Chaguanaas West made mention that there are no headlines indicating “where the money gone”. But, while there are no headlines indicating “where the money gone”, we could have seen a headline on May 25, 2012, indicating: Minister takes $1.1 million bribe.

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Dr. Browne: Yes. Where that gone?

Mr. N. Hypolite: So, it seems as if there are some papers that some of the Members on that side tend to read.

But it further indicated that that particular Minister, a religious individual, did not only go after that bribe, but he also had his attorney. So, I just want to identify with the fact that there may not be any headlines asking for “where the money gone”, but it was that headline that requested, or that headline that stated, that a Minister takes the $1.1 million bribe.

But, there is also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, other headlines such as: No big dealer and MTS Chairman defends company’s rental of cars imported by his firm. There are other headlines such as: Chairman rents vehicle for $20,000 a month; and you get headlines along those lines.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to look at a number of items under this particular Supplementary Appropriation Bill, and the first one I wish to look at is the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism. This particular Ministry is requesting a further $5 million. And I wonder why a further $5 million, when it is that this Government boasted about some 220,000 persons coming into this country for the Carnival season that just went. And I ask myself the question: If we have some 220,000 persons coming into this country, which will increase the population of Trinidad and Tobago by 15 per cent, and if these individuals all invest into this economy $3,000, we are looking at some $6.6 billion passing through this economy. So, why request a further $5 million? Is it that the information given then was not correct and it is a matter of fooling the people of Trinidad and Tobago once again, bearing in mind that particular Ministry had close to $90 million at their disposal for the Carnival season? Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is matter of the Government not telling the population the truth and the full truth, and I think that is not fair to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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I want to also touch on another issue, and that is the issue of national security. You have the Ministry of National Security asking for a further $63 million. I would have expected that if any of the Ministries that would have requested a much higher figure, it would have been the Ministry of National Security. I would have expected that the $260 million that was requested under the Ministry of Housing and the Environment would have been requested under the Ministry of National Security. But, what we are seeing is that the Ministry of National Security is requesting $63 million for the purchase of helicopters. And, while they are requesting $63 million for the purchase of helicopters, we are also seeing where the murder rate for 2011, as of today—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: 2012.

Mr. N. Hypolite: 2011, as of today—well the corresponding period of time—would have been 165. To date, we have some 173 murders. And, while sitting, I got a text indicating that two other persons got killed at Maracas and one is in critical condition at Port of Spain General Hospital. [Interruption] Maracas Bay, earlier on today. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has now gone up to 175. I am saying that we need to put a “little bit” more concentration on the crime situation in this country. It is significant to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the number of females. The text that came in, indicated that it was a husband and wife who got killed. Not only that, but earlier on in the week, well actually over the weekend, there was another murder that took place in a Laventille community. And, yet again, another female was involved. I just want to put on record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that maybe, just maybe, the $63 million should have been a “little bit” more, while we look at the crime situation in this country.

Every time we come to this House, we hear the same cry over, and over, and over again on one particular person and a particular name called Calder Hart. When I look at Mr. Hart’s CV—allow me to read a certain part of it. It states:

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“Calder Hart is one of the foremost authorities on infrastructure development, finance and mortgage in the Caribbean. Having devoted almost his entire life, through public service, to improve the lives of the citizens in Canada, Trinidad and Tobago and the greater Caribbean, he currently consults to foreign governments, high net worth individuals and private corporations in the Caribbean, Canada and in developing countries around the world.”

It goes on to state:

“An economist by profession, Mr. Hart was recruited to set up the Home Mortgage Bank in 1986, where he held the position of Chief Executive Officer until his retirement from the bank in July 2006.”

In 1986, when Mr. Hart was recruited as the CEO of the Home Mortgage Bank, the People’s National Movement was not the Government of the day; it was the NAR. And Mr. Hart spent 20 years as the CEO of that particular company; 20 years. And he served under the UNC Government, and also the PNM Government. And for some strange reason, this particular Government of today continues to link Mr. Hart strictly to that of the PNM, failing to recognize that Mr. Hart worked with the NAR—[Interruption]

Mrs. McIntosh: He was hired by the NAR.

Mr. N. Hypolite: He was hired by the NAR, worked under the UNC and also that of the People’s National Movement.

Miss McDonald: Then we adopted him.

Mr. Sharma: When he get corrupt?

Miss Thomas: “It start with all yuh.”

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Deputy Speaker, he spent 20 years at the Home Mortgage Bank. But, between 1992 and 1995, he was instrumental in being a member of the Task Force for the Housing Steering Committee and the Urban Development Task Force for the Housing Steering Committee and the Urban Development
Authority. He stimulated growth in the construction industry and also that of housing and settlement; one reason why he would have played an instrumental role in some of those boards under the People’s National Movement Government. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was under the NAR that he was recruited and also worked very, very hard, from what I gather, under the then UNC.

In the constituency of Laventille West—and I wish also to identify with the greater Laventille community, which is also known as the East Port of Spain Development area. We are faced with a number of challenges in that particular area. And my colleague for the constituency of Tabaquite made mention of something just now: “You feel how we feel”. I am a bit disappointed. I am really a bit disappointed. I normally would look up to you.

[Interruption]

Dr. Rambachan: I told you how you all treat us.

Mr. N. Hypolite: I normally look up to you and why I am a bit disappointed is because, under the PNM, when we look at community centres, I could remember Mayaro constituency having some four community centres being handed over.

[Interruption]

Mrs. McIntosh: What about Chaguanas?

Mr. N. Hypolite: And Laventille West got one.

Dr. Rambachan: Marginal seat.

Miss McDonald: Siparia got three. That is not marginal.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Is it Siparia or Chaguanas that also got three?

Miss McDonald: Siparia.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Siparia got three. All right. As is now, Laventille West has two—[Interruption]

Dr. Rambachan: Poor representation, man.

Mr. N. Hypolite:--community centres to be completed and the Member for

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Naparima, the Minister of Community Development, indicated that he has no money to do those community centres. One of those community centres is the Beetham. And every Monday morning, you can hear ills being spoken from Members on that side about the Beetham. And what the people there are requesting is the community centre to be completed so that they can have some of their activities done.

Another such community centre is that of Pelican Extension. The Pelican Extension Community Centre is also approximately 70 per cent completed. “Mind you”, Beetham is about 80 per cent completed. [Interrupt]

Dr. Ramadharsingh: We are finishing it just now.

Mr. N. Hypolite: We are finishing it? The Member for Caroni Central indicated that they are finishing the community centre. I wish to know when.

While I am on the Member for Caroni Central, I wish to thank the Member for going to my dear friend who turned 104 in January, whom he had promised to assist. May I state that, about three weeks ago, the Member did live up to his promise and went to that particular lady and promised to complete her house. And that promise was for the house to be completed—the renovations to be completed, in three fortinights. I just want to make mention, my dear friend, that the three fortinights are coming up very, very soon, and in a week’s time I would be paying a visit to make sure that you live up to that—[Interrupt]

Dr. Ramadharsingh: You are pushing it.

Mr. N. Hypolite: You are pushing it. Okay. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have our community centres that we want also to be completed, and definitely my friend, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, who will probably speak next and the first thing he will say is Calder Hart and Calder Hart and Calder Hart and the PNM and the PNM and the PNM. May I also say to you, Member, that the Member for Diego Martin North/East congratulated you for the assistance in his constituency and the
recreation grounds.
In January, 2010, $300 million was approved by Cabinet for the development of the constituencies that surround Laventille, such as Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West, Port of Spain South, and Port of Spain North. And inside there, we had a number of recreation grounds, a number of sporting facilities, basketball courts, we had playing fields in general, and I am only asking that you also do the same, as you have done for Diego Martin North/East, in the East Port of Spain community, and give to us what we have been requesting for the past two years for our recreation grounds to be developed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the East Port of Spain Development Company falls under the Ministry of Local Government, and the Ministry of Local Government would have indicated that each councilor at the various corporations would receive some $500,000 to be able to get a number of projects completed, and more so projects pertaining to the paving of roads.
To date those councillors are still awaiting the funding for those projects.

10.05 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the East Port of Spain Development Company, in 2010/2011 requested some $27 million, $7 million more than a contract that was supposed to be handed out to refurbish the Chaguanas Administrative Office of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation—$7 million more. To date, the East Port of Spain Development Company has not received that $27 million.

In 2011/2012 they requested some, it think, it was $39 million. It is my understanding that they still have not received that second request either. What that $27 million in 2010/2011 would have been utilized for? The development of east Port of Spain, such as retaining walls for the Laventille Road; upgrade for the Laventille Road and trying to widen that road a bit; the Desperadoes pan yard, upgrade of that pan facility; drains. Such as, the Beetham Gardens, Pashley Street,
St. Joseph Road and Belmont Valley Road. All those were drains that they were looking at to do some work on. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the drainage work alone would have cost some $1.9 million, to do work on those drains.

Community enhancement work east Port of Spain, recreation facilitates, the Beetham Gardens, they were requesting $2.5 million; Soogrim Trace, $1.5 million; Point Pleasant Park, $1.2 million; Morvant Savannah, $150,000; all coming to $27 million. And today, they have not received any of that funding.

I wish to again put on the record that the Member for Fyzabad and Minister of Local Government, instead of coming here and giving some cheeky remarks when serious business is being conducted, he should look at finding the money to put into the East Port of Spain Development Company. It is only $7 million more than the $20 million that was supposed to go to some friend and family down at the Chaguanas Borough Corporation, to refurbish that Corporation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, I would not be long. I just want to end by indicating that in the east Port of Spain community, we have a lot of good things and a lot of good people that come out from those communities. I wish to identify one such good person, a young girl by the name of Chantel.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Chantal Innis.

Mr. N. Hypolite: No. Chantel Jacob. I just want to read part of this article.

That is why 16-year-old Chantel Jacob wants the country to know that positive things do come out of her community, one that is mostly regarded as a breeding ground for criminals and social illnesses. The St. Francois Girls College pupil [Desk thumping] has done her family and community proud after conquering the 2010 Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate exams with eight grade ones, five of which carried distinctions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of other individuals who can share in this kind of success coming out of the Laventille/East Port of Spain community.
I also want to make mention of another one. This one is, Janelle Bharat. Janelle Bharat is a young lady who is into pageants. In 2010, she held her first Miss Teen Confidence Queen Pageant. She was 19 years old at that point in time. She approached the Minister and the Ministry of Art and Multiculturalism for some assistance. She did not get any such assistance coming from that particular Ministry. Nonetheless, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the help and assistance from a number of supporters she was able to bring off that particular pageant. It was a very successful pageant, I must say. It was held at the SWWTU Hall on Wrightson Road in, 2010. She had it in 2011 and in 2012 somewhere going down to the month of November she will be having such a pageant again.

I refer to her as the next Donald Trump, because of the kind of spirit that she has. But, we are failing her because when these persons come forward with programmes that can assist the building of individuals and of course, assisting in the removal of the anti-social behaviour of others within the community, we are turning our backs on them and we are giving to our friends and family very, very, freely.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I close I want to make mention of the Beetham Gardens Police Youth Club. Also, the other youth clubs, such as the Chinapoo Police Youth Club and the Morvant Fire Youth Club. These are positive organizations that can assist in the whole reduction of crime and criminal activities in our various constituencies. That is why maybe that $63 million should have been a bit more, so as to help such clubs and such organization as the Beetham Gardens. At that particular club which is located in the Beetham itself, you have a number of young persons who are into chess and table etiquette and they are into music. In fact, the Minister of National Security and the Ministry of National Security donated some musical instruments to that particular youth club after, of course, they received musical instruments from the US embassy.
So, we are in a position whereby we are requesting a further $1.5 billion. After two years, this Government would have utilized some $104 billion and whereby it is said that under the People’s National Movement we utilized some $400 billion and there is nothing to be seen for it, I wonder whether or not the Members on that side who are—no disrespect—wearing glasses, if they are blind. Because, when I look at where we are standing here today, this contributed towards that $400 billion that would have been expended. The same NAPA of which it is said that over $100 million dollars would have been spent after the Government came into office, is another PNM project. That is a project that to date is utilized every single week. And it is utilized every single week by this same Government.

Miss McDonald: You cannot get a space.

Mr. N. Hypolite: The Hyatt is yet another project by the People’s National Movement and they are always in the Hyatt. In fact—

Miss McDonald: They love the Hyatt.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—I am certain they would have already registered to go across there to sleep tonight.

Miss McDonald: That is right.

Mr. N. Hypolite: It is not a project by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago alone, it was a project done by the People’s National Movement Government. [Desk thumping] And we are proud of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can go and on and on. But, I am certain the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara will assist me as he stands and starts to identify with all these projects and all the overruns. At the end of the day, the fact of the matter is, the Government right now is led by the United National Congress, they have partners, be it the COP and others and they are the Government of today and they need to stimulate this economy. They need to start being a bit more honest to the people of this country, especially to our elders.
There is only one thing I would like the Minister of Finance and the Member for Tunapuna to identify that is, while all this amount of money is being expended, where is the revenue coming from?

10.20 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we speak about oil and gas but there is one other major area of revenue of which the people of Trinidad and Tobago are becoming more and more sensitive towards and that is property tax—something that is as if it is off the radar. But, it is something that needs to be brought back on the front burner because it is a way of bringing revenue into the fold of things, and it is also something that members outside there, the general population, is requesting on a daily basis. With that, I thank you. [Desk thumping]

The Minister of Sport (Hon. Anil Roberts): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At this juncture, all I can say is “wow”. It is indeed a pleasure to join this debate for a short moment. I would not normally bother to respond to my colleague from Laventille West, but he made some startling revelations and some leaps of logics that I am forced to sort of deal with one or two of them, so let me do so quite quickly and succinctly.

First of all, my colleague from Laventille West just made a point that this building in which we stand here today is a PNM project, and the Hyatt where you may go and spend some money in a hotel or eat some food, some sushi or have a beverage, is a PNM project. The NAPA is a PNM project; the Tarouba stadium is a PNM project, and it does not matter how much money you spend to do a project, once it is finished, it is there. So never mind that the waterfront was budgeted at $2.2 billion and went up to $4.3; never mind that $2 billion was wasted. Never mind that Tarouba was budgeted at $175 million and is now at $1.1 billion, soon to be $1.3 billion if it is ever finished. Never mind that NAPA was $110 million over as confirmed by UdeCott. Never mind that the artist coalition after it had been
completed and the stage—remember people fell down in the stage while performing, the buttons were not working and the lighting required another $60 to $80 million to complete it—never mind that. Because, according to my colleague from Laventille West, once it is finished, it is a PNM project and it is brilliant.

I might need bread; I might want to buy bread for my constituents. Am I going to buy a loaf of bread for $20,000? No, I would not do that. I might like—I mean, you know, I might want to get transport—[Interruption] I am looking good, yes, we have taken back this colour from you all; it is too precious a colour to let the PNM spoil it. [Laughter] I might want to buy a car to transport myself but I would not go and spend $25 million on a car. If I spend $25 million on a car, I would have wasted a certain amount of money.

There is something called ‘opportunity cost’ and that is what the PNM does not understand. Every dollar wasted is a dollar foregone in hospital beds or medicine for the children, or children getting surgery when your former Minister of Health, Jerry Narace, said, “Children dying, they need $1 million, take $60,000 because that is PNM policy; you cannot get a dollar more”. But, I am saying, if you had saved $2 billion on the waterfront, you could have saved 1,000 children’s lives at $1 million; 2,000 children lives at $1 million each. You could have saved for the overruns on the waterfront. If at Tarouba, you had saved that $1 billion, that could have been 1,000 children’s life-saving $1 million surgery; that is the opportunity cost. So do not come here and tell me about we are in this building. So what! What do you want us to do? “Allyuh done waste out de money—doh use it?” But do not stand here and be proud of it when you know that a man was overspending. [Interruption] You will be proud because that is why you will remain on that side. [Crosstalk] You are also proud of Calder Hart.

But, anyway, moving right along. I mean, the Member for Diego Martin Central may find lollipops are very important, but would he spend $10,000 on a
lollipop? No, a lollipop is $3.00.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not allow this foolishness to take place. Standing Order 36(5). I do not know if we need to do some cocaine testing in the Parliament. Standing Order 36(5). Disgusting Member! You cannot stand here and make that kind of contribution.

**Mrs. McIntosh:** He is quite right.

**Hon. A. Roberts:** Excuse me.

**Miss McDonald:** Whole night you talking about lollipop. *[Laughter]*

**Hon. A. Roberts:** But wait, look, I am eating powermint too.

**Hon. Member:** “Yuh doh like lollipop?”

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Speaker is on his legs.

**Dr. Browne:** Test you all for cocaine.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member!

**Dr. Rambachan:** Unparliamentary language.

**Dr. Browne:** Exactly.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, just stick within the purview of the Bill and let us continue.

**Hon. A. Roberts:** No problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Moving right along. The Member for Laventille West came here today, again, and for the first time, I was shocked, absolutely shocked, that the Member would try to come here and say that Calder Hart came here in 1986. I do not know what he was reading from because that is not a résumé; that is something that looks like it was concocted and written by Calder Hart or somebody very close to him, maybe Ho-ming—*[Interruption]*

**Miss McDonald:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, Standing Order 36(5). You cannot say that his work was concocted by Calder Hart.

**Hon. Member:** Nonsense!

**Hon. A. Roberts:** Excuse me, I am going to explain please—anyway, Mr. Deputy
Speaker, you rule.

Miss McDonald: No, if I am standing—if I am on my feet, under Standing Order 36(5), then you are supposed to sit. Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, please do curb the language and let it be within the purview of the Parliament. Continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Let me continue, please. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Member for Laventille West went to his phone and started to read out something that purported to be a résumé, and it started off by saying that Mr. Calder Hart is an expert in consultancy and in Caribbean affairs and all that. That is not a résumé, my good friend from Port of Spain South.

He also went on to say that Calder Hart is an economist. Calder Hart has a Bachelor’s degree in economics. It is a big step away from being an economist. I do not expect the Member for Laventille West to know that. That is a first degree; that is an undergraduate degree. You do not become an economist until you reach somewhere by PhD. So please, do not come to this House and call Calder Hart an economist, and to suggest that he came here in 1986, and therefore, it was the NAR who brought Calder Hart, and he worked with the PNM and the UNC at the Home Mortgage Bank. That is all very interesting.

There is one little problem. The problems with Calder Hart started in 2003 when the PNM was in Government, and in August 2003, your now Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Diego Martin West, was the Minister of Housing, I believe or integrated planning where UdeCott fell under. It was in that time that Calder Hart moved just from a Home Mortgage Bank undergraduate degree holder to being a super member of boards. He was on 10 boards under your People’s National Movement. He was the Chairman of the three First Citizens Boards which included First Citizens Asset Management, First Citizens Investment—in charge of over $3 billion of First Citizens’ assets. He was the head of NIB in
charge of all this pension money that you are talking about. He was the Chairman of the Home Mortgage Bank. He was the Chairman of the TTMF. He was the Chairman of UdeCott. He was executive Chairman here and there, and that is where the problem started.

When these problems started—I do not expect the Member for Laventille West to know about it because “he is ah just come PNM”—and each Member of the PNM, who were Members of Parliament, went one by one to the then Member for San Fernando East and the Prime Minister, what he chose to do is to ignore all their complaints, and get rid of them one by one. Just ask Pennelope Beckles; just ask Camille Robinson-Regis; just ask Roger Boynes; just ask former Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, Diane Seukeran; just ask the former Mayor of San Fernando, Ian Atherly when he complained bitterly about Calder Hart, what happened. We cannot ask poor Ken Valley now but he would have let you all know long before what took place.

So when you come here and talk about Calder Hart in this Parliament and talk about him in such glowing terms as the Member for Laventille West would try to do here, I think that is rather insensitive; it is disrespectful to the population who has gone through an Uff enquiry of which lawyers were paid the same thing that they are getting paid now in a Commission of Enquiry. If you would like to get paid that, maybe you should change from a CEPEP contractor and go and study law because that is what people get; look, just ask Port of Spain South. You study hard; you get paid big money.

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 36(5).

Hon. A. Roberts: What is that? You are a lawyer!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What is the improper motive?

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Deputy Speaker, he made mention that the Member for Laventille West is a CEPEP contractor. It is wrong.
Hon. A. Roberts: You are not? If you are not a CEPEP contractor, I withdraw. You never were? It is not something to be ashamed of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member said that you accused him of being a CEPEP, do withdraw and continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: I withdraw already. It is not true; never was; no problem. But, are you a lawyer? I do not want to make any mistakes. Anyway, we are on film so I will behave myself.

Now, moving right along. That he will come in this Parliament here when a man like Calder Hart, not only embarrassed the People’s National Movement, not only brought down a Government, not only squandered millions of dollar, but to come here in this debate and try to hold up Calder Hart as some bastion of integrity in education and brilliance, Member for Laventille West, shame, Sir, shame! Moving on, I do not want to take too long.

Mrs. McIntosh: Get to the Bill.

Hon. A. Roberts: I do not need your assistance. Maybe you should have asked for the assistance of the former Member who was here in D’Abadie/O’Meara when she was the Minister of Finance, and she took out her money and forgot to tell “all yuh” over there to do the same. “Yuh should have asked her for help; I do not need no help”.

Talking about that, the Member of Laventille West, before I go to Diego Martin West, went on to say that in January 2010, the People’s National Movement Cabinet approved $300 million for Laventille and you are now calling upon this Government to enact that myth of a programme created by your former Government. I forgive the Member for Laventille West because he was not a Cabinet Minister, and he has no idea how Cabinet works, but I will edify you a little bit now.

A statement being made and the Cabinet Note going through and saying

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$300 million for Laventille, it could be $3 billion, it could be $3 trillion, but, what has to happen after that is that the Minister of Finance, the then Karen Nunez-Tesheira, who was quite busy with the Clico matter, needed to put in an allocation in her budget, $300 billion, or if it was a three-year programme, maybe $100 million, to start this Laventille initiative; she did not do that. Or, maybe she should have come in a mid-term, mid-year review and ask for a supplemental appropriation to fund those projects in Laventille; she did not do that. Maybe she could have come for a variation in terms to provide some money for Laventille; she did not do that. So that $300 million that you are talking, Cabinet Note does not exist, did not exist and was just another attempt to hoodwink the population by your People’s National Movement Government. So please, understand how Government works before coming in this Parliament and casting aspersions.

Next point. You looked across at the Minister of Sport, Member for Laventille West and you said, “Come on, give me recreation grounds”. Well, I will just let you know that right now in Trinidad and Tobago—while I would like to do all, and I believe there are about 470-something odd grounds to be done—there are 94 recreational grounds across Trinidad and Tobago, and already the Member for Diego Martin North/East has shown that he is getting. If I can say out of all the parliamentarians, he may not be my favourite, but I do not care because we are here to serve people, not to play politics. [Desk thumping] So he has some grounds going, he was forced in this Parliament to say, “Congratulations”. All over Trinidad and Tobago, there are grounds going on.

Let me just say—and you would be very interested in this, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West—the President’s Grounds has started. I do not know if you have driven pass there, that is in your constituency, you must pass there every day, look to the right and see it. Now, furthermore, let me just say, there are three grounds under the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. The
last time I checked, that is a PNM run powerful corporation. Unfortunately, out of the 94 grounds that had started, three have stopped. Why? After full consultation, after cooperation, technocrats and engineers worked along with Sport Company officials, went and viewed these grounds at Coconut Drive, at St. Georges Grounds, and one more in Aranguez, under the San Juan/Laventille PNM Corporation. All of sudden your PNM corporation said “stop wor” because you did not tell us exactly what was going on and when the work started,” even though there was full consultation all the time.

10.35 p.m.

So, when you come in this Parliament and say” “People’s Partnership doh want tuh do work and doh want to serve PNM constituencies and so on”, we are not you. Do not judge us by your low standards. What you need to do is call your corporation and tell “dem rest meh nah.” If the people’s work is being done, it does not matter that the People’s Partnership is doing it, the grounds is for “de people tuh go and play football. De jogging track is fuh de people tuh jog and exercise. De pavilion and de change room is fuh de ladies tuh change and go and play dey football or dey hockey and so on. So, when “yuh want tuh complain call yuh own PNM myopic-thinking representatives who would like to stop people from being served by this People’s Partnership Government. Until then, ah think we should take ah deep breathe.”

Let us move quickly. I promised not to be long “yuh know.” The Member for Laventille West—“I eh reach Diego Martin—was brilliant tonight man, amazing. He said every Monday morning on this side you, hear people talking or bad talking Beetham? I would tell you first and foremost if you could find one Hansard comment from any Member on this side or on our Backbench over there, who has said anything bad, untoward or negative about Beetham, please, I would stand corrected and I humbly apologize, but never have I heard that and I pay quite
a lot of attention, especially when we are talking. I may fall asleep when some of
you all over on that side talk and I humbly apologize, but it is only so much one
human being could take. I can tell you that nobody on this side has anything
negative to say about people in the Beetham. In fact, Member for Laventille West,
I am appalled by your behaviour today.

“You take ah whole community and decide tuh come here and pick out one
or two people and say:  Eh, dey have good people in Beetham’.” We know that.
So, there is no need to take out one or two tuh show that people are good in
Beetham. This is like somebody back in Mississippi saying: Boy yuh ah racist and
the first thing dey say is: ‘But I have ah black frend’.” That is the same sort of
instance. How can a representative come and read out—I am very proud that you
took a few examples, but the mere fact that in your mind you need to pull out one
or two examples to say that an entire community is good, shows how the PNM
thinks about people. Do not use your thought processes and put it over on us. We
do not think so, okay. I do not think so and I have no reason to go through that sort
of myopic thought. [Interruption]

Mr. Hypolite: The people are not from the Beetham

Mr. Sharma: Where “dey” from?

Mrs. McIntosh: He never said they were from the Beetham.

Hon. A. Roberts: Excuse me, the point he made, when he started off his
introduction of that segment of his contribution, was every Monday morning,
check the Hansard, that we have something bad to say about Beetham. He then
gone on to talk about people from his constituency to show that they are good
people who come from his constituency and I am suggesting to you, the mere fact
that he thought it necessary to do that is an indictment on what he thinks about his
own constituency. That is totally unnecessary.

Moving on to the Member for Diego Martin West now. He said: “Do not
talk about the past.” That seems to be the mantra of the PNM now. We are in Government now. Yes, the People’s Partnership is in government. Do not talk about the past because we are in government. Well, let us think about that “ah lil bit”. [Interruption]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Do not remind them of their sins.

**Hon. A. Roberts:** Let us use an example. We recently debated the Children’s Authority Bill. If a child has been abused during the most susceptible age between two years old to six years old, abused in any way, verbally, physically, or sexually, and that child reaches 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 you cannot just treat that child and say: “move on” and solve the problem within a year or two years. It takes a sustained approach to understanding, therapy and counseling to understand and unlearn those emotions that would have been taught through the abuse and then, as time goes on, you would progress. So, you cannot forget the abuse and just move on. So you would “just tell ah child: Forget all dat abuse you got and press on go and compete with all the other children”? You cannot say that, because where the child is where—[Interruption] right, the country was psychologically—thank you taking me segue into my next point—beaten and battered by Patrick Manning, the Member for San Fernando East, and his Government. This is what the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre was trying to explain to you.

Do not think that for a moment the PNM is a labour Government. The PNM told labour, through its Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, when oil was $147 a barrel, when—I am glad you know the MMBTU now—gas was US $13.91 per MMBtu, it is now US $250, it was $13.91 per MMBtu—the Member for San Fernando East told labour “tighten yuh belt”, 2005, tighten “yuh” belt. [Interruption]

**Mrs. McIntosh:** What are you telling them now?

**Hon. A. Roberts:** What we tell them? We have completed 37 negotiations. You
“doh” listen to statistics? Statistics do not matter to the PNM. You all do not care about statistics and facts. “You just come in the Parliament and talk, talk, talk fren and family, fren and family, whole day”—statistics, 37 out 57 of negotiations, not from 2010, from 2007. The last time I checked my historical record the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in 2007 was the People’s National Movement who failed to negotiate or “sit down” and address any labour issues. So, when you see—let us take it logically now 57 groupings needed to settle negotiations since 2007, the PNM is saying now, let us follow it, that the protests across Trinidad and Tobago are at a frenetic pace because the People’s Partnership is anti-labour and disrespecting labour and not wanting to negotiate with labour. That is your position. It even hurts me to try to wrap my mind around that logic to actually make it come out of my mouth, but that the logic you all are saying. Yet, you look at the facts, zero out of 57 negotiations completed from 2007 under the PNM, no protest, no real big protest. Right?

We also heard about the CHOGM when things were acting up, strong security forces, injunction, and court to stop people protesting. Here it is now, the People’s Partnership Government, under trying circumstances after Calder Hart, Ken Julien, Uthara Rao and the rest of them frittered away the money you all seem proud to have just thrown away, but no big thing. Some people are proud of different things. But, in those trying circumstances, our Government has completed 37 of 57 negotiations and there are protests.

But let me put it to you in a logical way, there are protests because the people know that we will listen on this side. We will listen. We are not abused. The people who are abused by dictatorial tendencies, by smelter protests and said: “De whole country doh want smelter”, from Miss Yvonne Ashby in Chatham. “De only man who wanted smelter look him dey. Boy yuh hide in ah green—yeah, you and Kublalsingh but he was not hiding in the green pick up wid you when yuh
dodge de people down in La Brea.” The whole country did not want smelter. Yvonne Ashby, “all ah dem down in Chatham come up intuh meh boy La Brea by Union. Dey all on the radio, television, environmentalists, economists, everybody said waste ah time.” Yet, the former Prime Minister said: “Yuh doh want smelter? Take three.” So, you see where the psychological—we became a battered wife syndrome. We were a battered population. We were afraid, the population—[Interruption]

You would not know. You were teaching and doing very well. You were not battering anybody. You were uplifting students and making them pass, St. Francois. You were not in politics then. “So, just take ah little education now and leh we go easy, right?” So, when people saw “that when yuh open up yuh mouth and yuh” speak out against the Patrick Manning, Member for San Fernando East regime, that you are battered and beaten and you get nowhere.

When you can see that “ah” man like your political leader now, the Member for Laventille West dare to open his mouth, a strong Rottweiler, a bastion of a strong man, a politician, well educated, he opened his mouth and complained about Calder Hart. What happened to your leader? He was fired within 22 minutes. He was fired by phone. If a man as strong as the Member for Diego Martin West could be fired for speaking out, you really feel the other people in this country were going to speak out against the former Prime Minister?

“Doh” say because there are protests now it is because we are anti-labour. The statistics show you that your Government did no negotiation. Hilton workers were still working on 2002 salaries. When it was 18/18 Hilton workers—the ladies ironing “and thing”, cooking and cleaning—they worked on 2002 salaries. It reached 2010 and PNM did not solve anything. Here it is, this Government has conclude 37. We are now going into negotiations for 2011—2014. But, there are protests; yes and that is okay because protest is a way of voicing your opinion,
because they know over here we will at least listen. We may not agree all the time. The facts may say that we have to do that, that is the best decision. We take the decision, but we listen.

The Member for Diego Martin West had the audacity in this House to talk about the Clico issue, to say that this Government, after the Minister of Finance says that 85 per cent of Clico’s policyholders/investors have been satisfied; their claims have been satisfied. He had the audacity to come here and say, first and foremost: “Well, it cost $9 billion. Our plan would have cost $10 billion, so no big thing; same thing. Ah billion dollars yuh know. Ah billion dollars to the PNM means nothing.” This is why you could make the statement, the Member for Laventille West made. So, if the building cost ah billion more, so what? Ah thousand million dollars tuh de people out there. You have tuh win ah Lotto. Yuh know how hard it is tuh win Lotto eh? Eh, every Saturday or Wednesday, whenever it play, you have tuh win ah million dollar Lotto, ah thousand times, tuh make ah billion dollars and tuh de PNM dat eh no big thing.” Well, all right. At least we save “ah billion dollars.” But what is even better is that the going concern will continue. Because of the intelligent plan, the hiving of the poor working assets, the not strong assets and the functioning of the core business, that Clico is now a phoenix rising. So, therefore, people who were unable to get their money out so fast—[Interuption]

**Mr. Sharma:** Marlene too.

**Miss McDonald:** Hello. Stop that. Stop it!

**Hon. A. Roberts:** I did not say anything. Do not deal with him. I am on my legs, Member for Port of Spain South. Those who did get their money out fast, relax because your money is safe now, because the People’s Partnership has come and protected you. [Desk thumping]

Now—[Interuption]

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Mr. Sharma: So you can go shopping in Miami.

Hon. A. Roberts: What the Member—“yuh” know what is funny? The Member for Diego Martin West stood there and had the audacity to talk about Clico, and what he failed to remind the population was that the former Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, the former Minister of Finance, did not disclose and none of you knew, that she was a shareholder in Clico, 10,400 shares. What does a shareholder mean? A shareholder means that she was an owner.

Now, think about this for a moment. Here it was, the Minister of Finance did not disclose her interest and was an owner of shares of Clico, went into a negotiation with two other owners, Mr. Duprey and Mr. Monteil and the poor Central Bank Governor thinking that he had a teammate, did not realize that it was three on one, and so an MOU was signed on three on one basis; three owners. Poor Ewart Williams did not know, because nobody else knew. The Cabinet did not know that the Minister of Finance, who was supposed to representing the 1.36 million of us, because everybody was really touched by it even though people actually may not have had a dollar, sons and daughters would have been touched by it—the Member for Diego Martin West comes in here and talks about that MOU as if it was the best negotiated document in the history of PNM, failing to show that really and truly that MOU was ultra vires and moot. The Member for Port of Spain South would understand, because if I negotiate under fall pretenses and do not disclose my interest, the pecuniary interest, the whole argument could be made that the initial MOU was not good.

Furthermore, the PNM had spent $5 billion and only people who knew, went and “get dey” money. It appeared at that time, and when we came in, the Minister of Finance has told you, there was no end in sight for the money that the PNM would have had to put in. So, to come here and say it was $10 billion, no, because when anyone took a cursory glance at the last financials before the People’s
Partnership Government came in, the last financial statements of Clico was December 31 2007.

Now, not everybody could get to see those documents because Clico was not a publicly traded company. So, only shareholders were privy to those documents. Only the shareholders knew, for example, on December 31, 2007, that CL Financial was 92 per cent geared and that all their assets were encumbered to bondholders. Now, this is might not sound like a big problem yet, but in December 31, 2007 someone had just sworn in a month and one-half before. She put her hand on the Bible and she swore to be the Minister of Finance for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago but she was a shareholder. Therefore, when she took her oath on November 07, after PNM won the election in 2007, December 31 she got a stack of documents in her mail as a shareholder, 10,400 shares and those documents were the accounts of CL Financial and those documents showed that they were in a precarious situation.

So, for that Minster of Finance, up to today, to say that she had no advance knowledge, is disingenuous, she did not read the accounts, she does not understand accounts, or is just not the truth. You could choose A, B, C or D, but Trinidad and Tobago was put in jeopardy, possibly to a hold of $24 billion by this lady who was the Minister of Finance for the PNM Government and you all sit here and talk about deceit and lies and cannot listen and cannot understand and what? “Ratchifee” What ratchifee? I mean with a straight face. It is simply amazing that the PNM could do that. But wherever the former Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara is, I am sure we all wish her the best. Time “tuh” wind up? Good.

I am finished right on note. I think I have finished that. I would like to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been a pleasure and the People’s Partnership Government, despite the noise from the other side, which is quite soft anyway and quite short on sense, we will understand that we have a job to do to serve the
people of Trinidad and Tobago without fear or favour. So, when the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation want “tuh shut down ground so children cyah” play football well I think you all should call them and tell them that is not the way to go because the taxpayers’ money is for all and if the Minister of Sport of the People’s Partnership Government is fixing a ground for PNM constituency so be it, because we are all here to “goven” until the next election when and we will stay—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: “Goven”?

Hon. A. Roberts: “yeah govern in ah oven”—here until our next term and you would have “ah long time tuh” sit there and think about all your wrongs and how Calder Hart is not an economist and not a hero of Trinidad and Tobago.

Member for Laventille West, I challenge you. If you think Calder Hart is so good, nominate him under your name for an anniversary award for Independence Day. May God Bless. Thank you very much. [Desk thumping]

Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to say thanks for the opportunity to contribute to the debate, the Finance (Supplementary) Appropriation Bill.

The Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara ended his contribution to the debate by saying some things that were said on this side were short on sense. I would like to say that his contribution was short on sense. Why I am saying that is the Member does not really understand what cost overruns are all about. Even a primary school student can understand what a cost overrun is. If somebody sets to construct a house and they estimate that the house will cost probably $100,000 or $400,000 to build, what will happen is if cost in the construction material increases, the overall price of the house, in terms of construction will also increase. If the price, in terms of labour, increases, that too will push up the final cost of the house. I do not really understand the point that was made by the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara,
in terms of talking about cost overruns and the amount of money that is paid a the end, et cetera, et cetera. [Desk thumping]

Dr. Browne: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 40(b) and (c), I am not able to hear the Member, the volume of crosstalk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, Member, you have my protection, continue.

Miss A. Hospedales: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was also a shame—he talked about shame?—to listen to the contribution of the Member. He went all over the place. At one point in time I was thinking I was sitting in a comedy fest. At another time I was thinking that I was at a football match, where everybody was shouting at the top of their voice. The Member was shouting at the top of his voice. One thing I really have to conclude is that empty vessels make the most noise. [Desk thumping] That is one thing I must conclude; empty vessels make the most noise.

The people of this country have been able to withstand, over the years, natural disasters; a number, in terms of earthquake flooding, et cetera. Over the last two years there have been several disasters that have been experienced because of this government; disasters in terms of national security; disasters in education; disaster in the implementation of foreign affairs policy; disaster in the energy sector, all because of this UNC-A Government; and disaster in the tourism sector. So many people are talking particularly about the tourist sector, because of the grand stands or the stands that they are building here and there and so many other initiatives that really do not make any sense whatsoever—disaster in the health sector as well as disaster in governance and disaster in economic management.

The Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara talked about psychological abuse? This is psychological abuse. The people of this nation have been batter and abused psychologically over the last two years because of all the disasters they have had to face because of the UNC-A Government.
In 2012, there was a deficit budget that came before this House. The Minister of Finance came and told us that the budget was $54.6 billion with a $7.6 billion deficit. Those figures were presented in the budget debate of 2011. What happened, three months later in January 2012, the Minister of Finance came and told us that they needed an additional $2.2 billion. Four months later, we are here again. The Minister came back and told us that he needed to have an additional $1.5 billion. Today, we would like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell us whether or not the $54.6 billion plus the $2.2 billion was well spent and how was this money spent? I am asking this because the Minister told us that they were going to reprioritize their spending. I would like the Minister of Finance to also tell us why is there need for the additional sum of $1.5 billion when he said that they their spending priorities will change? He said they are going to make a choice to reprioritize spending to better serve the people. These two statements were made in the 2011 budget statement, but we have not seen any evidence of that.

Can the Minister of Finance also tell us whether the approximately $52 million that was spent on building the two stands in the Queen’s Park Savannah was well spent? We know what they are called. They are actually called cow sheds. No tender, no proper procurement procedures were actually followed with respect to the issuing of the contract for that particular project.

Can the Minister of Finance also tell us whether the $108.9 million that was spent by the Ministry of the Attorney General for forensic investigations and legal fees was an example of how the Government intends to reprioritize its spending? Can the Minister of Finance tell us also that the $35,000 per day that is given to the commissioner who is responsible for overseeing the Commission of Enquiry into Colonial Life Limited, the British American Insurance Company and the Hindu Credit Union, whether or not over $35,000 is well spent, the over $25,000 for the lead counsel, as well as the $12,000 daily fee? All these are daily fees, over
$35,000 for the Commissioner, over $25,000 a day to the lead counsel and over $12,000 to the junior counsel and over of $7,500 for the instructing counsel, whether or not those fees are actually examples of how they are reprioritizing their spending?

11.05 p.m.

Can the Minister of Finance also tell us whether the amount given to CEPEP, the $99 million in 2010, the $367 million in 2011 and the additional $320 million in 2012, the first half of 2012, and the additional $260 million in the second half of 2012, whether these amounts given to CEPEP is an example of changing your spending priorities? Can the Minister of Finance tell us that when he is winding up?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of us on this side have to ask: Where CEPEP gone? Many of my colleagues on this side can tell you that CEPEP does not exist in any of their constituencies. [Desk thumping] There are no CEPEP teams working in the majority of the constituencies that are represented by Opposition Members of Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even if, in probably one or two of our constituencies, it exists, we have to ask: Where has CEPEP gone? Because the type of work that was carried out previously by CEPEP, it is not carried out today. I remember driving into Port of Spain earlier on today, and from the time—normally when you hit the traffic lights at—I think that intersection there, leading to the Morvant Junction—and you are leading into Port of Spain, previously it used to be very, very, very clean. The grass was cut very low. The trees were trimmed, et cetera. I am driving into Port of Spain today and I am saying—as though these projects or CEPEP no longer exists in that area as well. The cutting of the grass and the maintenance of the area has been totally abandoned.

There have also been allegations of contracts being given to unscrupulous
characters or questionable characters. There has to be an investigation into the CEPEP workers. We also would you like to know whether or not—how many workers are employed with CEPEP at present, and exactly how many does the CEPEP intend to take on over the next few weeks?

As well, we would also like to hear from the Minister of Finance. We heard from the Minister of Housing and the Environment, but we would still like to know how many communities would these new CEPEP teams be going into, and whether there would be a proper geographical coverage of all the communities throughout Trinidad specifically?

Can the Minister of Finance also tell us whether they reprioritized spending, when over $24 million has been spent on travel bills by Government Members? Over $24 million! That is $1 million a month. So, over $24 million has been spent on the travel bill for Government Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is an apparent race for the accumulation of frequent flyer miles, and we have Members from all parts of the Government, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Trade and Industry, the Minister of Sport, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Trade, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communication—the Minister of Trade and Industry probably travelled so often—the Minister of Housing and the Environment, the Minister of Education. We would like to know exactly who is winning this race to acquire frequent flyer miles.

Can the Minister of Finance say whether or not the $24 million spent on their travel bill is reprioritizing their spending? And could that money not been spent or utilized on road patching, road paving, et cetera? Can the Minister of Finance also tell us how much money we would have saved as a country if the contract for the offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) were not cancelled? And how much money would we have to pay in arbitration?
Can the Minister of Finance tell us that? Because I am sure we would have saved a lot of money by maintaining the contract for the OPV’s.

Can he also tell us how much money has been paid to the lawyers who represent the State? Could not this money have been better utilized to pay the $63,072,700 required to meet interim financing related to the acquisition of the four AW139 medium turbine helicopters, better known as the air taxis, the reason for which they were purchased? They are not used for crime-fighting, but they are rather used as air transportation for Members of the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, can the Minister of Finance also clarify for us, the initiatives that would be used to revitalize the economy? He said that the measures they have taken are measures to buffer the economy. I would like him to tell us what are some of the measures they have taken to buffer the economy and whether any of the initiatives were measures implemented resulted in trading opportunities of significance to local businesses?

What does the Government intend to do about the drop in foreign direct investment? Earlier, the Member for Diego Martin North/East made mention about the fact that our foreign direct investment for Trinidad and Tobago has dropped significantly. Just imagine foreign investors prefer to go to the Dominican Republic, Bahamas and Suriname over Trinidad and Tobago. That must cause some red signals to go off, because of the fact that foreign investors are no longer interested in coming into Trinidad and Tobago, but rather seeking other places where they can invest. The Minister of Finance needs to tell us whether or not the initiatives, whether the things that they put in place, will attract foreign investors to the shores of Trinidad and Tobago. We have seen, over the last two years, a significant drop. Foreign investors are actually running away from Trinidad and Tobago, rather than coming. What do they intend to do to attract these investors?

We also have been told by the Minister of Trade and Industry that they are
seeking to expand markets in the Americas. But despite these claims of moving into bigger and better markets, what we have seen is a reduction in construction; a decline, basically, in construction, and a decline in the manufacturing and distribution sectors. These areas continue to be negatively impacted. Despite the claims that are being made that they are broadening or going into these markets and expanding these markets, et cetera, the construction, marketing and distribution sectors continue to be negatively impacted.

Not only that; there is an upward increase in the unemployment rate, a decline in investment spending, a decline in household income, a decline in corporate profits. All of these things are happening all at once. The Member for Tunapuna, the Minister of Finance, stood here and said: “No, we are not in no slump.” He was referring to an economic slump. “We are not in a recession. So, whatever reports have been made are not factual reports.” That is far from the truth, because the facts are here to show that various sectors in the economy are being affected negatively.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we were to look at data for the fourth quarter of 2011 and the first quarter of 2012, if it were made available, we would realize that there might be a decline in our gross domestic product (GDP). The Minister of Finance needs to be transparent and accountable. The Government, as a matter of fact, needs to be transparent and accountable and they need to tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago the truth about the state of the economy and stop trying to be deceptive by not letting them know the truth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other thing I would like to talk about is the fact that the—I would like to ask the Minister of Finance as well to tell us whether there is a national poverty reduction strategy. The reason I am asking this is that there has been a report in the Guardian dated March 25 that stated that $2 billion to $3 billion of taxpayers’ dollars were spent in two years on a poverty reduction
strategy. I am asking: Where is the strategy? What strategy? We do not know about a strategy, at all.

The Minister of the People and Social Development is reported in this particular article as saying that after spending $2 billion to $3 billion in the last 22 months, the Minister is confident that T&T’s poverty rate is down. I am asking: How did he determine that the poverty rate is down? What were the measures or the indicators used to determine that poverty has been reduced?

He also said that, from the statistics in his office, those statistics have shown that what they have done has resulted in a reduction of poverty. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a report posted by the Ansa McAl Psychological Research Centre at the University of the West Indies, which said that, despite the Member for Caroni Central’s claim, poverty is a major problem in the country. And that is empirical research, not just going into your office and looking at some figures on a paper that somebody reported to you that you all would have given out 150 hampers and then deciding that: “Okay, because we distributed 150 hampers, poverty is down.” It was not based on that. It was empirical research that said that poverty is a major problem in the country.

The other thing that I noticed in this report, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that the Member said to the general public that the poorest are living among natural resources. He signified that the communities like La Brea, La Romain and Mayaro were among the poorest. I happen to have—I went to—just one minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just find—There is a report in the Survey of Living Conditions, on page 254. I am not sure if the Minister ever took a look at this. [ Interruption ]

**Mr. Ramadharsingh:** What year is that?

**Miss A. Hospedales:** I am not sure if you ever took a look at this.

**Mr. Ramadharsingh:** What year is that?
Miss A. Hospedales: I am not sure if you ever took a look at this. Sir, you still have not taken a look at it. In the Survey of Living Conditions on page 254—[ Interruption]

Mr. Ramadharsingh: What year?

Miss A. Hospedales: There is list of the communities from the poorest to the least poor. And the Minister, if he had done his research, would have been able to see that the poorest communities were listed at the top of the report. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member does not even seem to be aware of his own report; the report that is lodged with the Ministry of the People and Social Development.

There is also a report posted by economist, Indira Sagewan-Ali, which said that the $2 billion to $3 billion used by the People’s Partnership Government to reduce poverty was not well spent. I am asking the Minister of Finance: Can you tell us, Minister of Finance, whether or not this money is an example of how you reprioritize your spending?

She explained that putting money in people’s hands was a strategy that further entrenches dependency syndrome rather than putting one on a solid footing to lift themselves out. It was money not well spent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another researcher, a prominent researcher, Dr. Ronald Marshall, stated that one of the main factors, with respect to why people are remaining in poverty, is that people who are certified are not getting jobs, while people who are unqualified have been collecting two or three salaries, due to nepotism. That is what is happening under this current Government. People who are not qualified are receiving jobs—[ Interruption]

Hon. Member: Resmi Ramnarine.

Miss A. Hospedales:—and salaries, compared to those who are certified and those who are qualified who are not receiving any.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have not heard anything that can convince us that

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the Government is serious about breaking poverty and dealing with the issues of having a proper poverty-reduction strategy. They are not serious about enabling self-sufficiency. What we have seen is that, as stated by the economist, is a desire of the Government to cause dependency to be further entrenched in the lives of the members of this society. Thousands are on the breadline, not just a few hundred people, Member for Caroni Central, thousands of persons are on the breadline. And guess what happened? In 2010 a number of persons, after May 2010, who were on contract were sent home. Their contracts were terminated. Even before the contract ended, they were sent home. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what has been one of the factors that resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate. And once unemployment increases, you would find poverty increases. [ Interruption] Yes, so no jobs equals no money, equals poverty.

**Hon. Member:** And disaster.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** And disaster. Yes, that is it. That is exactly it. So, no jobs equals no money, equals poverty. No poverty-reduction strategy exists. They have no plan whatsoever for sustainable economic growth. This is evident by their choices.

The Minister of Finance again said they would reprioritize spending to better serve the people. That is what he said to us: they will reprioritize spending to better serve the people. He said that their spending priorities must change, but there has not been any evidence of that.

In the 2011 Budget Statement as well, the Minister of Finance told us that the infrastructure has been neglected at all levels. And that is what I am saying to the Minister of Finance. I am saying to the Members of the Government the infrastructure has been neglected at all levels, not just physical infrastructure but organizational and institutional infrastructure, without which we cannot possibly function effectively. These were the words of the Minister of Finance. This is
exactly what is happening today. The infrastructure has been neglected at all levels.

Just imagine, in many constituencies you have to wait two years for potholes to be patched, two years for roads to be paved, two years for rivers to be dredged; two years. And so many other things; two years for recreational grounds to be upgraded, for community centres to be built, for ECCE centres that were already scheduled to be constructed, for those to be built.

Another thing the Minister of Finance said was inflation, particularly food price inflation, is another pressing concern. What we are seeing is an increase in inflation, 9.1 per cent. That is almost double digit. What he also said is that inflation erodes purchasing power of those on fixed incomes, and we have seen that. There are many people today who, yes, they might be working, but they are unable to get by because they cannot afford to even buy food on a regular basis. After they pay their mortgage and utility bills, they cannot buy food and they cannot even purchase medication nor have any form of recreation. Their purchasing power decreases. Food price inflation is particularly dangerous for the poor, as many families struggle to provide adequate nutrition for their children. That is the reality that is taking place today.

Health care is another major issue facing our people. That is what the Minister of Finance said. Can you imagine that some people cannot even get an ambulance to take them to the hospital, apart from that, in a timely manner as well, in some instances? And apart from that he said the State is still way behind—and those are not my words. I am simply quoting with the Minister of Finance said. It is a reality. This is what is happening under this present UNC-A Government. He said:

The State is still way behind in providing adequate and timely health care to most of our people. The capacity of existing health care is insufficient to
meet our people’s needs. Waiting time for surgical and testing procedures are still far too long.

He says:

Basically patients still have to wait on hospital corridors. That is what is happening today. This is the reality of the health sector.

Apart from that, I am asking the Minister of Finance to tell us: Where is the Government’s proposed flood mitigation plan? In the budget statement of 2011, he said there was going to be a flood mitigation plan. But, again, we are not seeing the rivers dredged on a timely basis. We are not seeing the construction of sediment traps and check dams in upper reaches of priority water courses. We are not seeing that. We are not seeing drainage maintenance programmes mainly on the main, secondary and tertiary drains. We are not seeing that at all. Particularly, a lot of these works have to be done in the dry season. The dry season has come and gone and we are now in the rainy season and we do not expect it to be done now.

I remembered, in 2010, I sent in a request for a river east of Bacaday Junction to be dredged. Today, almost two years later, the river is still waiting to be dredged. And this is what they call their flood mitigation plan. This is their flood mitigation plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to talk about—the Member for Chaguanas East said that they are investing in the people. I made sure and took note of this particular statement that he made, because there was an article posted in the Sunday Express of April 15, this year, where the National Self Help Commission had a number of pages highlighting their achievement, et cetera. They said that they are restoring hope and they are improving living conditions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason I am raising this particular concern is because a senior citizen in my constituency, his daughter lost her life in a fire in
September of 2011. After the fire, he applied to the National Self Help Commission for a grant to assist in rebuilding, to get material to start rebuilding his home. Today, almost one year later, he has not received any form of assistance from the National Self Help Commission. Even though appeals were made to the Minister on several occasions nothing has been done.

Another senior citizen, this case occurred in October of 2011, where there were high winds and rain, et cetera on a particular day in October, and the roof of her neighbour’s house, it is a mansion blew—the entire roof lifted off and fell on her roof and damaged her roof. And, after they removed the debris and everything, she applied to the National Self Help Commission to get a grant to repair her roof, which is still leaking because she cannot afford to purchase the aluminum sheets. Today, almost a year later, she has not received any help.

When the Minister said that they are investing in the people, it should not just be some people, but it should be all people and these programmes should be for all individuals. The grants should be available. They said that it is going to be available for persons, particularly those who experience emergencies or who have experienced a crisis. But that is not the reality for the two senior citizens that I spoke about. Almost a year later, they are still waiting on National Self Help Commission grants that can actually be used to help them to get back on their feet. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is discrimination to the max. It is really, really, really, very bad.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to highlight a few areas in the constituency of Arouca/Maloney. Just before I go there, I want to talk about the fact that recently, we saw where the Ministry of the People, or the Government actually retracted on a promise that was made by their party during their election campaign, when they said that persons of pensionable age will now be—pensions will now be an entitlement. So, persons of pensionable age will now be entitled to
$3,000. What we have seen, over the last few days, was a retraction of that promise that was made to the senior citizens of this country who expected to receive $3,000 old age pension. But, what they are told now is that there is going to be a reduction in the old age pension because of the increase that they received in the NIS. This is an indictment on the UNC-A Government, because of the fact that they made a promise to the senior citizens of this nation and they have now turned their backs on them.

The Minister of Finance talked about change and the fact that they are doing things differently, their level of governance is different, et cetera, et cetera, but that is not true. The people of this nation continue to see through you. They continue to see through the deception. They continue to see through all the things that you all have done that are not grounded in truth. The people of this nation are really getting tired of the Government. They are getting tired of the untruths that are being told to them on a daily basis. There is coming a time when the Government will be faced with the judgment. There is coming a time, and I hope that they remember that.

Can the Member for Chaguanas West indicate whether there is any intention to address the flooding that has been taking place north of Arouca, particularly in the hills of Five Rivers, Kandahar, Lopinot, et cetera, that has affected the Arouca/Trincity/Bon Air Gardens and Maloney areas? I would like the Member to indicate to us whether there is going to be any study on the drainage works that need to be done for those areas, et cetera.

Can he also tell us when would the traffic management plan for the Eastern Main Road, Trincity Central Road, Cane Farm Road, be implemented? Additionally, can the Minister of Education indicate to us when—last year I filed a question in Parliament and the Minister of Education indicated to me that the ECC centre for the Bon Air Gardens community would be constructed in April and for
the Maloney area, it would be constructed in October of 2011. We are now going into another year and we have not even seen any sod turning or no form of material going onto the land, et cetera. He also indicated that they are looking at the option of constructing an ECC centre in Trincity, but the issue there is acquiring the land. I have an alternative for him. The residents of Trincity, including, of course, myself, we have all agreed that we do not want any High Court or Judicial centre in Trincity. So, they can use the land that is allocated for the purpose of that previous building for the ECC centre.

I would like to ask the Minister of Sport, who is not in the Chamber at this present time: when will the Clayton Ince, Henry Street Recreational Ground, as well as the Bon Air Recreational Grounds be upgraded? Prior 2010, all those grounds were listed to be upgraded. I have brought several questions and wrote a number of letters asking him exactly when it would be done, and to date, we have not gotten a concrete response.

A request was also made for the construction of a retaining wall that runs parallel to the Bon Air Phase 2/Phase 3 community. The land is being eroded on a continuous basis because of the river. The Ministry of Works began some work in 2010, prior—2009/2010, and they did not continue the work. I am asking the Minister of Works to tell us when exactly would the work continue along that particular river?

11.35 p.m.

When will the construction of the community centres for the Bon Air and Trincity areas begin; that is for the Minister of Community Development. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure I mentioned it before, the issue of patching of the holes, just imagine residents have to resort to patching their own holes. There was an instance where taxi drivers in the Maloney community, patched their own holes—a big hole—using cement. This is an indictment on the Government, because they
said, they were going to give change, they were going do things differently, they were governing in a different way. They said that they were going to do it differently and today, we are still waiting two years later for roads to be patched and paved. This is really, really an indictment on the UNC-A Government.

What the UNC Government fails to realize, is that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are looking at them and they are listening attentively. One day they will get the opportunity to dip their fingers and say: “No,” to the UNC-A Government. Again, they will be judged for the untruths they have been telling the people of this country, and the fact that they continue to be unrepentant, and they are not desirous of changing their ways. At end of the day, they will witness the outcome of their continuous lack of transparency and lack of accountability.

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

**Mrs. Patricia McIntosh** (Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West): [Desk thumping]

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to make a contribution to the Supplementation of the Appropriation for the fiscal year, 2012.

As my colleague, the Member for Port of Spain South, stated in her contribution, participating in this debate gives me a feeling of déjà vu. We came here in September to debate the $54.6 billion budget for 2012, and just five months ago, in January 2012, we also came here to debate a supplementary appropriation of $2.7 billion for the fiscal year 2011.

On both occasions, the Members on this side of the House expressed grave concerns over the Government’s over spending, and lack of financial prudence in managing the budget, and we were very concerned, given the scarce economy in which we were operating. Today, we are here to approve further spending to the tune of $1,543,593,700 and our concerns remain the same; they have not changed. The Government continues its spending spree as though there is no tomorrow, sinking our economy further and further into the red. The hon. Minister of Finance
tried to allay our fears, but I am not sure to what extent he succeeded.

In 2010, when this UNC-dominated Government assumed the reins of power, this country’s debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio, stood at 38.5 per cent. In 2011, the debt to GDP ratio stood at 50 per cent and in 2012, it is liable to increase to 70 per cent, given this Government’s intention or proposed intention to borrow $6.6 billion from the Andean Development Bank.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government seems to be continuing the practice of spending more than we are earning. In 2011, according to the Ministry’s budget statement, the revenue was $41,283.7 million. Expenditure was $49,015.9 million, and the deficit was $7.7 billion. In 2012, the revenue was $47 billion, expenditure was $54.6 billion with a deficit of $7.6 billion.

Now that this Government is proposing to continue to borrow and to spend, it seems that in 2013, we shall continue along a path of a deficit budgeting, and unless this Government can come up with a viable exit strategy, we shall be going into three years with signals that our debt to GDP ratio will skyrocket, and in this global economic meltdown, this could spell disaster for our economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do appreciate, especially in these difficult financial times, many governments engage in deficit financing for a limited time. This cannot be long term, and that is done as part of a recovery plan to rejuvenate or jump-start the economy. A responsible government will always have an exit strategy to take the economy out of its predicament, and the Minister of Finance must tell us just how he proposes to do that.

He told us all about the Government’s management of Clico, but I do know that there are several persons who still have their cases outstanding before the courts. And while the hon. Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara feels that they saved $1 billion, vis-à-vis the PNM’s plan to rescue the Clico shareholders, I do know that the larger shareholders still have their cases to be heard before the court, and it
could very well—those large shareholders the monies invested in Clico could well amount to that $1 billion.

[MR. SPEAKER, in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, he owes it to the citizens of this country, he owes it to the taxpayers, to tell us how he plans to take us out of this financial abyss. Are we just going to depend on luck for a windfall from oil and gas revenues and from oil and gas royalties? Are we going to depend on that? And if we get a windfall from oil and gas revenues what will we say, that “God is a Trini?” And be very happy about that?

Are there any foreign direct investments looming on the horizon? We want to know? We want to know what revenues will be accrued so that we can get out of this abyss in which we seem to be sinking. This Minister of Finance must give us the assurance that he and by extension his Government, are not spending the patrimony of our children and grandchildren.

For the past few two years, the Minister has come to this House for us to approve budgets and supplementary appropriations for the respective fiscal years. But, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister never gives us any real account of the money so far disbursed, and what the public wants to know, they want to have an idea, they want to have tangible proof of the extent to which previous allocations have been successfully deployed in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

When the hon. Minister presented this Bill to Parliament on Friday, May 25, 2012, Members on this side requested repeatedly for a breakdown of the allocations to the respective Ministries. Members on this side wanted to know how the monies will be spent; we asked for specifics. We wanted to know how these increases will positively impact the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

The only thing we do know, that we are sure about, is that the cost of living is skyrocketing, inflation is rising. Food inflation in the first quarter was 20.3 per
cent, causing headline inflation to jump to 11.8 per cent. Unemployment is high, we all know it is high, especially in the PNM constituencies, we have our constituents coming to us by the dozens, complaining that they have no jobs and they can find no jobs. But we do not have any figures as my colleagues pointed out for unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, we know that crime is on the increase. I think we have now reached 175 murders as of June 04, today, and this is in the 176 days so far for the year. The comparable toll for last year was 165. What is this UNC-dominated Government saying about this? And more importantly, what are they doing about this?

It is the old news now, the previous speakers, especially those on this side, all expressed that the Trinidad and Tobago economy is in a slump. The Governor of the Central Bank, Mr. Ewart Williams, having projected in the Bank’s biannual Monetary Policy Report (MPR), on Tuesday, May 23, 2012, a grim forecast for economic growth in 2012, thereby confirming the concerns of the People’s National Movement over the inability of this UNC-dominated coalition to effectively manage the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, at a news conference on May 24, 2012, at the Eric Williams Financial Complex, the Governor said that the Bank had revised its growth projection for the economy for 2012, from 1.5 per cent down to 1 per cent. Our country’s economic well-being is in a large part dependant on the performance of the energy sector, which contributes 43 per cent of our GDP, and 80 per cent of our export earnings, but the sad part is that oil production is at its lowest level down 18 per cent from 2010. The refining subsector declined by 15 per cent and LNG output declined by 16 per cent. In addition, the performance of the construction and manufacturing sectors declined over the last six months. Furthermore, public sector investment programmes fail to stimulate the economy as was anticipated.
Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from a newspaper clipping here, and I am quoting from the *Newsday* May 25, 2012, page 13:

“At a news conference at the Eric Williams Financial Complex in Port-of-Spain on Wednesday, Williams said the Bank had revised its growth projection for the economy for 2012 from 1.5 percent down to one percent. He said the economy was in a slump and had recorded negative growth for the last three years. The Governor cited the possibility of global contagion if the Greek financial crisis is not resolved; an antagonistic industrial relations climate; slow implementation of Government projects and the private sector adopting a ‘wait and see’ approach because of concerns about crime and the industrial relations climate.”

Mr. Speaker, I would like to stress that again, because with all the talk from the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I would like him to know that among the reasons disaffecting the growth of our economy is “an antagonist industrial relations climate.”

**11.50 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak about the three main areas that the governor identified that were exerting this negative impact on our economy. They were: contagion from the Eurozone through trade and remittances; prolonged and antagonistic industrial relations; and crime.

I know that the Members on the other side do not like to hear me talk about labour relations. When we debated the Miscellaneous Provisions (Maternity Protection and the **Masters and Servants Ordinance** Bill, 2012 and I brought it up, they got very annoyed.

I think that we were elected to come to this Parliament to assist in the management of our country and to represent our constituents. When we come here we try to help, we speak the truth and look for the best solutions to problems; but it
seems that whenever Members on this side say anything that the others do not like to hear—they think it is not in their best interests when we say certain things—we have very negative repercussions from that side. The public is noticing because they are speaking about it. I am going to say what I have to say because I was elected to say just what I have to say.

I would also like to refer to another Newsday article of May 26, 2012 “Cause for concern…”

“Headline inflation, which is driven by increases in food prices, has increased from 9.1 percent in March to 11.8 percent in April…

In response to the increase in inflation, Planning Minister, Dr Bhoe Tewarie”—one of the Ministers of Government—“and former Minister in the Ministry of Finance Mariano Browne said the rise was cause for concern.”

So the hon. Minister of Finance is trying to allay our fears that there is no cause for concern—everything is nice and hunky-dory; they are doing well—but we have one of his Ministers and one of our previous Ministers, who I must say is an authority on finance, Mr. Mariano Browne—[Laughter] He is; he is. He is recognized throughout the Caribbean as an authority on finance—and their own Minister saying there is cause for concern.

I will quote what they say:

“Commenting on these increases, Tewarie said, ‘Anytime you have double digit inflation, there is cause for concern. We are concerned about inflation anytime it rises. Saying it is important to keep a close watch on both headline and core inflation…”

So he is concerned and we know that the Government is concerned. So they must not come here and pretend they are not concerned and pretend that all is well and hunky-dory because all is not well. Members on this side have all right to express
grave concern about our economy.

“Browne said the increase in inflation was ‘worrying’ as it followed the release of the Bank’s monetary report for April which showed the 2012 growth projection for the economy was revised downward from 1.5 percent to 1 percent.

Browne said the country needed to be concerned about what seemed to be a situation where stagnation in the economy was taking place alongside an increase in inflation. With regards to future economic growth prospects, Browne said, ‘This does not send a good signal.

Against this background and taking other economic indicators into consideration which show that the domestic economy is struggling to get into recovery mode’...’

This is what we are concerned about; it is struggling to get into recovery mode.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak on the main points the governor cited as inimical to the economy. The first is the contagion from the Eurozone through trade and remittances. We know that the Eurozone is in crisis. We know what is happening there. We know that Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, which is Europe’s third largest economy, France and Germany are all seeing their economies slow to a standstill as the crisis widens. Even America, we are seeing how they are battling with their economic challenges in respect of their debt.

As we said, the economies in Brazil, China and India that were growing at a rapid rate, are now showing real signs of slowing down. I am not just saying this because I feel to say this. In today’s Business Guardian, we have a headline, “Global economy at risk as US, Europe and Asia slow”. Why should we not be worried here? Why should we not express our concerns and our worry? Why is this Government telling us, “Do not worry; we have everything under control?” Nobody, no one in the rest of the world has anything under control except Trinidad
and Tobago. We are really God’s country. We alone seem to have everything under control. Everybody is struggling, but the Minister of Finance is telling us we have everything under control and it is not true. I am not saying he is not telling the truth, but it just is not true.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that on the whole the global economy appears to be sliding into deep recession similar to the economic downturn of 2008. When I had made a contribution in the debate on the supplementary appropriation in January, I had read out the warning of the Managing Director of the IMF, Christine Lagarde. I am going to read it again. Christine Lagarde had warned:

The world economy has entered a dangerous new phase and a threat to the world economy is as serious today as it was in 2008 when the world recession loomed.

Mr. Speaker, the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is not insulated from those of the rest of the world and, therefore, we will inevitably feel the repercussions. We will feel the backlash from this global economic fallout. I am definitely not convinced that our Government is paying sufficient attention to what is taking place around us in every single country. Everybody is struggling; even the large superpowers.

I am saying this because I am seeing that we are continuing to overspend, borrowing to finance that overspending, which is exactly what these countries did which caused them to be in the situation they now find themselves; in the economic predicament they are now experiencing.

I want to look at—and I know my dear colleague, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, would not like what I have to say about this—this is the second reason that the governor gave as having a negative impact on our economy—the prolonged and antagonistic industrial relations. Why are we hiding from it? We have just
come out of a huge—I will call it huge; what other word can I use for it—TCL strike, which adversely affected the construction industry, in particular, and the economy in general.

The hon. Member stood and said how many industrial relations cases he settled; how well they did and how many cases in the PNM were left unresolved, but he was, in his former incarnation, the union leader. I thought he was a very good union leader, but apparently he was not very successful in his negotiations under the PNM to have resolved all those cases, or seen them resolved. What were you doing, hon. Member? You were there. [Interruption] I am saying just that.

Mr. Speaker, the present trade union rumblings speak to a disquiet in the national community and tells us that all is not well on the labour front. It is not well at all. More than two months ago, the Movement for Social Justice, a partner of this UNC-dominated partnership, called on the Prime Minister for discussions in an effort to resolve several issues that they deemed inimical to good labour relations in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Movement for Social Justice identified 10 points for discussion. I said today I would not quote these 10 points because it is late, but after the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre spoke, I am going to quote every single one of them. Here are the points that they are trying to speak to the Prime Minister about.

The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre—every Member who spoke on that side gave the impression that all is well. Things are nice. Little things are going on; little hiccups; a little labour hiccup here. It is not a little labour hiccup at all. Why did the MSJ not attend the celebration at Centre Pointe Mall? Why did they not go to the retreat in Tobago? It is not a little hiccup; it is a big problem. You know why? I am going to point out point by point because you brought it up.

Their first point is that they want to see a settlement of negotiations. You see, he pounded the PNM. That is all they do. Before I go on, we sit here and we
are punished every day that we come here and we take it. We are punished and I am not even saying that we do not deserve it. I take it and we take it handsomely because we were voted out and that is why we are here.

You are going to hear why you should be punished. They would like to see a settlement of negotiations in a fair and equitable manner consistent with the free collective bargaining process. This is under your Government, “eh”. They want to see a fair share of state resources to communities and equitable distribution of jobs. This is what we have been talking about here—unfair distribution of state resources and inequitable distribution of jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a pin there and say that while this Government can punish us—and the people have already punished us by voting us out—this Government has no right to punish the people, and that is what they are doing and when we talk about unfair share of state resources to communities and inequitable distribution of jobs, that is what we are talking about. This is what this Government is practising.

The Member for Tabaquite said, in response to one of the Members over here: “Well, you see, that is how we used to feel”. That is how you used to feel? What are you telling me by saying that? That this Government is managing and governing by vendetta? By vendetta against the PNM?

I will stand and here and preach against that because it is not of God. It is not of God to treat people like that. We cannot do that. We come here and celebrate all our religious occasions. We talk about God and about being fair to people and from darkness into light and so. Even if, I will even accept it, let us say whatever ills the PNM did, so you will punish PNM people because of what the PNM did? Is that of God? I know why God put me here. I will stand to defend those people till the day I die. I will not allow you all to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the third point the MSJ would like to see is reduced rights of
land tenure. [Interruption]

**Mr. Speaker:** Member, please!

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** Let me go ahead. Mr. Speaker, I will not even take him on because those are the things that come out of his mouth very often.

- Reduced rights of land tenure and massive increase of lease rates to farmers without consultation;
- Governance process of Constitution reform and local government reform addressing state sector governance, cutting out all forms of discrimination, political victimization, corruption, nepotism and patronage;

One of their Members is stating this—the same thing I am saying; just do not take it from me. That is what one of your Members stated. That is why they are not with you all right now.

**Hon. Member:** Which one? Which one?

**Ms. P. McIntosh:** If you do not know, you are not even in the partnership.

**Hon. Member:** I do not know. What are you reading from? The same letter?

**12.05 a.m.**

**Hon. Sharma:** Which one?

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** If you do not know, you not even in the Partnership.

**Dr. Ramadharsingh:** Where are you reading from, the Louis Lee Sing letter?

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** The other one is:

- Getting rid of odious systems of contract labour in the public service and state sector.
- Privatization especially of Petrotrin, Trinmar acreage and First Citizens Bank.
- Advancing the agenda of labour law reform.

No. 7; the protection of the livelihood of fisherfolk.

No. 9; implementing the cultural sector’s agenda as committed to in the
manifesto.

You see, they are breaking the promises of what they said they would do in the manifesto. And the last one,

establishing a policy position so as to stop the use of force by the police service to frustrate intimidate and stop the legitimate and peaceful activities of civil society including peaceful protesting by workers and the rights of the media.

The hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre stood here and said that the PNM used to crack down on labour protest and never allowed labour to protest, action especially when we had CHOGM and the other big function we had here. What is it, hon. Member? [Crosstalk]

Hon. Sharma: Tunapuna Hindu School bazaar.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: The Summit of the Americas. How the PNM cracked down on them. But their own Member now is talking about establishing a policy position so as to stop the use of force by the police service to frustrate, intimidate and stop the legitimate and peaceful activities of civil society including peaceful protest action by workers and the rights of the media. These are the points that they want to talk to your Prime Minister about and she has refused to see them about these points. And you want to tell me about the PNM. If this is happening to you, what are you saying about this now? This is not the PNM in power now, you are in power. It is mind-boggling, it is baffling.

Mr. Speaker, this UNC-dominated coalition’s efforts to stifling the labour movement in this country are nullifying much of the progress that has been forged in the field of labour relations over the years. However, under you, Sir, and it is creating the undesirable kind of labour environment that we are currently witnessing that will do more harm than good to our already uncertain economy. It is negatively affecting our economy.

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I would like now, to talk about the last point that the Government made that has affected the economy in a very negative way, and that is crime. The state of emergency and curfew that was imposed from August to December 2011 on our nation was nothing—

**Hon. Sharma:** You have nothing new.

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:**—but placing of a weight on the lid of a pressure cooker which when lifted, would release the steam. That is exactly what happened, Mr. Speaker. The state of emergency only served to suppress criminal activity and once lifted unleashed a resurgence of crime, the likes of which we have never before seen in this country, unprecedented. They came into power saying that they are going to eradicate crime, in how many days they will eradicate crime. It went down because you put a lid on the cover just like in a pressure cooker. [Crosstalk] Because you put it in a pressure cooker, and when you took the lid off and the weight off, all blew up in your face. [Crosstalk]

As I said, to date, 156 days in the year, the murder rate stands at 173. We have also seen an increase in domestic violence, in rape cases. Only last night I was looking at the news, and saw a family was attacked by intruders, the wife was beaten and raped and the elderly parents beaten. There is a rise in petty crimes, larceny—it might be simple—predial larceny in areas where you never saw this, and carjacking.

Mr. Speaker, I know because in my area we have a problem with that. I had to approach the Minister of National Security to send a team to talk to a group of people in my constituency about this budding crime in the constituency because we are afraid it will escalate to higher proportions.

I would like to quote from the newspaper. This is the *Guardian*, page A(5) on May 29, 2012:

“Top cop: Murders on the rise again”

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At least he is admitting it now. Oh yes, he is admitting it. “Murders on the rise again. The top cop failed to identify the reason for the increase in the rise in crime saying that there was no singular cause.

Of course there is no singular cause, there are many causes. He went on to say that the recent spike—he calls it a spike “eh”—he said was really out of the ordinary. Its creeping, it is going, it is increasing. It is no spike, it is increasing crime rate. But said the police were working to reduce it. One possible cause he identified for the spike was that a shipment of guns could have entered Trinidad and Tobago.

You know, I had to smile very wryly when I read this; a shipment of guns. This he says, after this Government had dismantled the security systems that the PNM had put in place to safeguard our borders and to protect our country, sending back the OPVs that are now used in Brazil and the helicopters, and dismantling our SAUTT unit. And he says now that possibly, a shipment of guns could have entered our borders.

**Hon. Sharma:** Why yuh smiling?

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** I was smiling at the irony of it because our borders are left exposed to criminals, and exposed to all this crime by this Government. That is what they did. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote also “murders on the rise”.

**Hon. Sharma:** You said that already.

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** The Members on this side—Mr. Speaker, I would return to my quote later—had warned this UNC-dominated Government that the state of emergency was not a panacea for crime, and once removed would result in a resurgence of crime. Unless this Government addresses the crime situation in this country, the economy will continue to decline since foreign investors would not consider Trinidad and Tobago to be a safe and enabling environment in which to

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conduct their business. Even our businessmen—I heard them; I heard the people of DOMA expressing concern about the crime. Even our local businessmen will not be encouraged to expand their businesses. Some may even choose to discontinue their operations here. Many of them would like to leave the country.

**Hon. Sharma:** And go where?

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** Mr. Speaker, it is so bad.

To successfully address this untenable crime situation, this UNC-dominated Government must end the same thing that the MSJ—the points that they are calling for—must end the neglect of the disadvantaged citizens in inner-city areas; areas which breed the crime.

**Hon. Sharma:** Like where?

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** They must end the discrimination against, and the political victimization of poor inner-city, young people especially, who have no jobs. I heard the Minster of Trade and Industry callously advise them, they should go and find jobs. And I want to ask him today as I am here today; where, Sir? Where are they going to find the jobs? If you can tell me where they are going to find the jobs, I am going to come to you after and you can give me a list. Because when they come to me in their droves showing me the CVs that they have sent out and getting no reply—sometimes I assist them in writing those CVs and they get no replies. This Government is doing nothing to create employment in the inner-city areas. [Desk thumping] And callously tell them go and get jobs as though they are just sitting there doing nothing, as though they are worthless people. You go and get jobs, get up and go and get jobs, and they are trying to get jobs. That is why we had the uprising in “the Harp”. Mr. Speaker, if this Government is not careful, we will get more and more uprising and the neglect of the inner-city. You know, I heard—[Interruption]

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Port-of-Spain North/St. Ann’s West, you are going in a
direction that we in this Parliament would want you to be very careful of. This Parliament is not about treason, it is not about sedition, it is not about corruption or subversion.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Can I use protest? Mr. Speaker: What I am saying to you—well, let me put it this way; no one has raised the issue of crime in this debate. You are the first person who has taken a quote from the Governor of the Central Bank and make it into a debate here. I would like you to stick—[Crosstalk]—well I am now ruling. I am saying stick to the Bill and show me when you are speaking the linkage between what you are talking about and what is in this Bill. The only matter I am seeing on national security is the acquisition of some helicopters.

Nowhere there is talk about crime on the scale that you are going. So I am asking you, if you want to talk about crime demonstrate to me and this House the linkage under national security allocation and that line you are going on.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, I think it is $63 million that has been allocated to national security for crime. My point is this, we are speaking about the economy that is in a slump, and one of the reasons the economy is in a slump is because of the crime situation in our country. [Desk thumping] It is affecting investment. And I am advising the Government how we can get out of this crime situation. [Desk thumping] Even the top cop in the newspaper article advised that we have to find a solution to this crime. I would really like to quote him again about what he said:

“we have got to look at the affected…”—this is the top cop, this is in the Express, page 4, Tuesday, May 29, 2012.

“we’ve gotta look at the affected youth and create opportunities that goes past mere survival needs but rather opportunities for them to reach their potential.

He said that he even spoke to some of the young men in so-called
disadvantaged communities and what he found disturbing was that 20-year-olds did not see any future for themselves but rather they wanted opportunities to be extended to those young men younger than themselves, but this is where this group, especially the business and religious groups, can help because these young people have a lot of potential but they just don't have the opportunities to use this potential.”

The point I am making, and I am saying again, if the Government does not handle this crime, our economy will not be revived.

Mr. Speaker—

**Hon. Member:** With those few words…

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** No, not with those few words at all because I have much more to say. *[Desk thumping]* It does not matter if we it go to 5 o’clock in the morning. The Government is here today to seek approval for further allocations to certain Ministries. And they want this approval to the tune of $1,543,090,700. I suppose that these moneys will come from the Consolidated Fund. I do not know if they will use the moneys accrued from increased oil revenues because I know in the 2012 budget oil was pegged at $75 a barrel, and however prices rose to $98 a barrel, and at times as high as $150 per barrel. Mr. Speaker, I expect that this windfall would help fund this current supplementation of the appropriation, but my burning question remains—*[Interruption]*

**12.20 a.m.**

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

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. *[Mr. N. Hypolite]*

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** Mr. Speaker, my question remains: how will these increases in allocation benefit the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? That is all I am interested

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in. How would it benefit the citizens?

I am just going to look at two headings—I would spare you all—and the first I would look at is Head 54, Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. It is proposed that they be allocated an increase of $45 million for a development programme. Additional funds are required to facilitate the implementation of phase I of the University of the West Indies Southern Campus. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Government want to establish a branch of the UWI Law Faculty in Debe. I have no quarrel with that.

**Mr. Sharma:** What if you do?

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** I have no quarrel. Just what you said: “You all have the majority, you all are in power, is we time now.” That is what you all said. If you want to establish a law faculty in Debe, I have no problem. My concern is with the growing tendency of this UNC dominated Government to remove all the educational opportunities from Port of Spain and its environs and transfer them to the UNC constituencies.

I heard the Member for Chaguanas West say that under the PNM—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Wicked!

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:**—everything was concentrated in Port of Spain, but that is changing. That is not going to happen again. It is true. I do not care what you say if it is wicked, it is the truth. I have the facts here. You can say what you want.

I should like to address the relocation of the COSTAATT headquarters from Port of Spain to Chaguanas. It is one thing to decentralize the headquarters—again I have no problem; decentralize your headquarters. What it means is that the people in that area, of course, will have ready access to administrative services and everything, because the headquarters will be there. They would have ready access to the administrators and everything, so that they could expedite their matters to enter into COSTAATT, et cetera.

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But what I want to ask the hon. Minister is, will the campus itself—I mean the institution where the students receive the curriculum, where the curriculum is delivered to them—the institution that is located on Albion Street—you see, that is in my constituency—I want to know, if when they say remove the headquarters—presently, the headquarters is on Albion Street—will the entire campus headquarters: the teaching facility, be removed to Chaguanas? Will all the students who are attending the Port of Spain Campus on Albion Street—

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not want to interrupt your flow, but I would like you to connect. This allocation that you are referring to is for the south campus. It has nothing to do with COSTAATT. If you want to speak to that, bring a Matter on the Motion for the Adjournment and we could discuss that, but you cannot import a matter that is in the atmosphere and just bring it here. I am saying that you must connect your points. If you want to deal with the southern campus, deal with the southern campus, but you just cannot deal with COSTAATT, just so.

Listen, now is 12.24 a.m and I am going to be very tight. I want you to be relevant or I am going to ask any Member to take his or her seat. We are going into repetition and we are going into strange areas that are not connected with the matter that is before us. So, I am asking you—I am pleading with you, I want to hear you—if you can connect whatever you have to say with the particular matter that is before us. COSTAATT is not before us. So, please, stick to the campus and if you have nothing to say on the campus, go on to some other matter.

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** Okay, Mr. Speaker, I would take your guidance. I really felt that the allocation for the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education should have addressed other things rather than just the campus, and I was going to link it to that point, but since it seems to be a very, very, sensitive point [*Desk thumping*] with this Government—Mr. Speaker, you are in control and I respect that. This is your jurisdiction and I respect that, so I shall have to defer to you but,
as you said, I will bring a Motion on the matter.

Mr. Speaker, let me look at the other Head that is distressing to me, and that is Head 61, Ministry of Housing and the Environment. I hope that you will see the relevance of what I have to say on this particular Head. It is proposed that $260,500,000 be allocated to the Ministry of Housing and the Environment as with current expenditure and it says here in the notes that additional funds are required to meet cost associated with an expansion of the operations of the Community-based Environmental, Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) to provide employment opportunities for more persons in the lower socioeconomic bracket across all communities as approved by Cabinet on December 01, 2012.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Oropouche East said that his contention was not with the CEPEP project itself under the PNM, his contention was with the management of CEPEP under the PNM. I took that, but the Members on that side—I was not in politics at that time, but I remember during their election campaign—so maligned this project initiated under the People’s National Movement saying that perpetuated a dependency syndrome among the people, keeping them in bondage. They cited programmes such as CEPEP and URP as one of the reasons for crime saying that such programme did not instill within the disadvantaged, a spirit of independence, but rather kept them oppressed and robbed them of their self-esteem. I remember very clearly.

When this Government assumed office in 2010, these Members continue to come to this honourable House and continue to malign the PNM for the CEPEP and URP programmes, adding that the PNM used thugs and criminals to manage these programmes. What is this Government doing that is different? Nothing! Because I know as a fact that there are thugs that are managing the CEPEP teams as they call it.

I had a man come to my office and tell me—he is managing a team—he said
he is doing nothing, it is a ghost gang. He swipes his card and gets his money and
he has nothing to do. [Crosstalk] It is the URP. In St. Ann’s there is not a single
CEPEP team and there are ghost gangs. [Crosstalk] I will say when I put the
question to you, hon. Member, in this Parliament about the CEPEP teams in Port of
Spain North/St. Ann’s West. I would say exactly what you said.

When this Government came into office, they sought first to dismantle
CEPEP terminating those who were previously employed under the PNM, and then
they began to revive the programme employing all those who they perceived as
party supporters, because the PNM people would come to me and tell me that they
went for a job with CEPEP, but they could get none, because they were perceived
as PNM supporters. It is true.

In addition, to compound matters, this Government implemented their
brainchild, the Colour Me Orange Programme. It is a seasonal and degrading
occupation, and is nothing more than an effort to temporarily satisfy the hunger of
the masses and quell their indignation and anger and discontent; a very humiliating
treatment of the disadvantaged. This one is deemed to keep them in bondage.

Mr. Speaker, what could these temporary jobs do for these people to better
their lives? What banks can they go to and ask for a loan? You know, they live—it
is like rolling for a month or two and they do not know when next they will get a
job. And, today, they come to this honourable House, after lambasting the PNM
over CEPEP to seek an increase in the financial allocation to expand CEPEP.
What hypocrisy and what lack of imagination and creativity in not being able to
develop a sustainable employment plan for our youth where they could experience
the dignity of making a meaningful contribution to society while earning a living.

The Member for Oropouche East said that he is going to nurture, develop
and educate them, and as he was speaking there, I thought it was the Minister of
Education speaking. I thought he was speaking about his character development
programme, and I thought probably the hon. Member for Oropouche East had an
insight of the imminent Cabinet reshuffle on his appointment as the Minister of
Education. I thought he might be talking about that.

Dr. Moonilal: You want to fire me!

Mrs. P. McIntosh: I thought probably you might be practising in advance. I am
not giving way. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, I think the Government needs to be
more creative. If the PNM did not put in place a sustainable programme, you are
in power now, do it and show us.

Mr. Speaker, on March 23, 2012 in this honourable House, I posed a
question to the hon. Minister of Housing and the Environment about the status of
CEPEP in my constituency, Port of Spain North/ St. Ann’s West and I would like
to quote from the Hansard. Well, firstly, the hon. Member lumped all the areas in
one. He said:

“...For today for the northern constituency areas...”

He put all the northern areas in one: Barataria, Diego Martin Central, Diego Martin
East, Diego Martin West, Laventille East, Laventille West, Port of Spain North,
Port of Spain North, Port of Spain South and St. Ann’s East, mostly PNM
constituencies, the environmental work area:

Whereas at May 2010 there were 31 contractors, I am pleased to announce
that for this area today, there are, indeed, 41 contractors operating in the
north with an overall coverage of 41 contractors as opposed to 31 as
obtained before. We are in a position to indicate to the hon. Member that it
is expected on completion of the review of the CEPEP programme by June
2012, it may be that more teams may be necessary in the constituency area
of Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West and we will be in a better position to
offer increased services in June 2012. I thank you.
Mr. Speaker, I also read in today’s *Express* newspaper on page 3 where the Chairman of CEPEP, Adesh Deonarine:

“confirmed that the environmental enhancement company was running on the last of its multi-million-dollar annual allocation because of an increase in contracts given out over the last year.”—He said—‘There has been an increase in the number of contracts in the last two years. We need more money because we are increasing the amount of contractors in the programme,’”

Deonarine said in a telephone interview yesterday that:

“…while he inherited just over 100 contracts,”—the hon. Minister said 31, he said that he inherited 100—“that figure has now doubled to 200.”

The hon. Member said 41, he went from 31 to 41, Mr. Deonarine said he went from 100 to 200. I do not know which one to believe, because the numbers are not meshing at all. There are close to 10,000 people working with CEPEP now he said. I would like to ask: Where are these 10,000 people?

Mr. Speaker, I personally conducted investigations into my constituency as to the existence of CEPEP groups or teams, as you want to call them—you do not like to use the word “gangs”—in my constituency. In St. Ann’s there are none. I walked St. Ann’s, I spoke to the people; there are none. We have areas like Ariapita, Fondes Amandes, Simon Valley, St. Ann’s Main Road. These areas have a lot of bush and a lot of vegetation; there is none in Cascade and in Blanca, another area with a lot of vegetation. But there is a floating group I understand. Three of the young men from the Blanca in Cascade get work now and then with a floating group that comes from outside of the constituency, but there is no dedicated group in the constituency.

I can identify one group in Belmont and one in the Harpe in East Dry River,
the same Harpe that I referred to where the people protested and rose up for jobs. [Interruption] That is my constituency; the Harpe is my constituency, where the people protested and burnt their tyres and so on for jobs, but there is one CEPEP group there. So in the whole of Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, a very large constituency, I have two CEPEP groups. I am advised by my constituents, which I said before, that there are many ghost gangs, people collecting money and doing absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, two CEPEP groups for a constituency as large as Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, where there is an immense amount of vegetation, where the President and Prime Minister reside; a constituency where many of the major energy sector companies and major banks have their headquarters; a constituency where all the diplomatic missions are located.

Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West is a constituency that is overgrown by bush right. Since the dismantling of practically all the CEPEP teams, since this UNC-dominated coalition came into power in May 2010, my constituency is slowly becoming a constituency that is a haven for mosquitoes and rodents to multiply and a place for criminals to hide, and it is the truth. We are overrun with mosquitoes. The San Juan/Laventille region is another area where there are very few, I think there is one—I was informed there are no CEPEP teams in that area, and we would like to know why. Again, we have a lot of mosquito infestations because of the bush that is allowed to grow, and all of this is thanks to this UNC-dominated coalition. [Interruption]

I am saying plenty things new to the public, because I am very aware that I am speaking to the public. I am educating the public through the Speaker. [Interruption] They are going to see it when it replays. I am very aware that they are going to see it. I should like to respectfully advise this UNC-domination coalition—[Interruption] very respectfully—that it cannot continue with its plans
for national development to the exclusion of some segments of our population. It will create an imbalance that would be inimical to national development. The neglect and alienation of and discrimination against the disadvantaged inner city citizens of our society will only aggravate the crime situation. I want to warn this Government that this crime situation left abated will cripple our economy, the same economy I am talking about here. Developmental programmes defined by political victimization, nepotism and cronyism will invariably result in very negative consequences for our national development in general, and our economy in particular.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister of the People and Social Development (Sen. Dr. Glenn Ramadharsingh): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to this Bill, at 12.41 in the morning—the last speaker was very liberal and wanted to carry us for a longer period. I do not know if I would want to do that [Crosstalk]—on this Appropriation Bill that was brought here today by the Minister of Finance to continue the transformation exercise that was started on May 2010 by the People’s Partnership.

A lot has been said and a lot of arguments have been put forward. Many of them are contradictory in themselves and many of them are repeats. There are repeat offenders here tonight, who continually cycle the same arguments, regurgitate the same propaganda, hoping that somebody else would believe it, except them. However, the truth of the discussion is that there have been the challenges that face the Government. The Minister of Finance has been able to confront these challenges head on.

We hear the adage, “Let us not go back to the past,” throughout the Bill. Let us not go back to the past. Why not? It has just been two years, we are still reconstructing parts of the economy and the society that have been broken hurt,
and traumatized by PNM rule for eight years, that went on unabated. If there is no doubt about it, you could hear it in their own contributions, the suffering that is taking place in their own constituencies, the wailing and pain that their constituents feel because of that eight years of neglect and they are finally seeing the light, and getting recreation grounds, getting support from the Government. You can hear it in their contributions.

Hon. Member: Preach it!

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: They speak the truth, but in pieces and parts. [Laughter] But when you take them all together, the composite whole is that you hear that this Government is performing, the wheels of Government are finally turning and delivering to the people in the remotest parts of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Rambachan: You brutalized your people.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: But you must be amazed at the intellectual dishonesty of the Member for Arouca/Maloney, who holds up a document—[Interrupt]

Mr. Speaker: I am sure you could use more elegant language; please, please.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: I withdraw; I withdraw.

The maneuverings of the Member for Arouca/Maloney, who held up a document and asked if I ever read the survey of living conditions, knowing fully well she was holding up a document that was written in 2005, seven years ago, and quoting “gilibly” from it about the poverty levels in Mayaro.

Hon. Members: “Gilibly?”

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Quoting in a frenzy from a seven-year-old document, knowing fully well—[Crosstalk]

Miss Hospedales: I talked about what you said. You should tell your Minister of Planning and the Economy not to quote from the same document. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: You know, it is the PNM that refused to do a
survey of living conditions since 2005. They never cared about the statistics. They never cared about the research. They never cared about guiding public policy by doing investigative social work. They stand and quote from the document that speaks to their inefficiency, that speaks to their disinterest in social research, [*Desk thumping*] and creating relevant public policy.

I want to inform the Member that it is the People’s Partnership Government that has commissioned, after seven years, a new survey of living conditions in 2010 and 2011 that will be available for intellectual digestion by the social researchers of Trinidad and Tobago.

They say that we have no plan. We have given them a manifesto which they love. It is the only book some of them have. [*Laughter*] I see them coming with their bags and the only book they have in them is the manifesto of the People’s Partnership. In fact, the PNM did not have a manifesto in that election. They knew they were coming out. If they have one, it is the best kept secret. In fact, I understand it was torn on some platform somewhere, and that was the last copy. [*Laughter*] We do not have a plan, and they are holding up the manifesto everyday, everywhere they go.

Further to that, I want to inform them that after seven years of running in all different directions in social development, with several Ministers, we brought the IADB here, under the guidance of the Minister of Finance, to streamline and harmonize the programmes so that we could have consolidation of all the products and services available in the Ministry. After shopping away grants to all different Ministries, we have grants in every single Ministry. We have grants in the Ministry of Housing and the Environment. We have grants in the Ministry of Sports, all over the place, in Community Development also, like a free for all. We are finally going to put structure. We are going to put systems that will work, no wrong door. You walk in one door and you are shopped away, and services will be
streamlined. That is the order that they are calling for and that is the order that the People’s is putting into systems and Government in Trinidad and Tobago. [Crosstalk]

They may not have noticed, because I know that they have lots of business to attend to when the day comes, so they are very busy, and the amount of complaints they are hearing, it seems as though they are interacting with a lot of people. But we had the Ministers of Social Transformation from all over the world here just a week ago, and you are asking us for a plan? We are engaging in learnings of international best practice. We are exposing ourselves to the success and critical success factors that have been experienced in parts of Latin America in confronting the fight of poverty, poverty eradication.

We engaged the University of Trinidad and Tobago in that conference. Their contributions were electrifying. We engaged Prof Karl Theodore of the Health Economics Unit. He came and shared with us learnings from all over the world and the fact today that health affects poverty, and poverty is affected by health.

12.50 a.m.

We are learning now that the NCDs (non-communicable diseases) the impact they have on our economy, on the health of our people, we are examining all of these things, we are looking at the proportionate contribution that education is making to poverty alleviation. The fact that a 1 per cent increase in education can lead to 100 per cent increase in the quality of life of a person in the period of 10 years. And the type of education that we are speaking about is not only to go to university or to get a PhD, but to learn to read, to learn to write; the quality of life. We are looking at all of these things. These are empirical research that is being done in Trinidad and Tobago, but we are guided by the scientific data that is being looked at. It may be a study on a small community and what has happened to them
over a period of time, but we are looking at it. We are looking at the learnings, and I say this because if it is one thing, this Government has a plan and we are working the plan. That is why this Government can account. [ Interruption ]

If fact, I just want to say that all that work that took place in the conference led to the Port of Spain declaration—[ Desk thumping ]—and, so now we have contributed to the international dialogue on the development of the people of this region and other parts of the world. When we look at the schedule in the Bill, an Act to provide for the Supplementary Appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago—the first item 13: Office of the Prime Minister.

There are those of us who champion the cause of social justice, and the People’s Partnership manifesto speaks to social justice and poverty eradication. We must always be able to reflect on the social justice that has been created by the People’s Partnership. The first act is to ensure that a child that requires life-saving surgery does not die because they were born in a poor home. That is social justice. So that a labourer who has a child that requires life-saving surgery will be able to get from the Government a million dollars to save the life of his child. [ Desk thumping ] That is social justice.

You would remember the days when you may be in Form 5 or Form 6 and someone comes into the classroom and puts up a dazzling instrument on his/her table and begins to play games or open up Microsoft word, and all the other children would huddle around this wealthy kid eager to touch the knob to peep at what is happening because they could not afford to have a laptop. Under our Prime Minister, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, you do not have to come from a wealthy family; you do not have to win the lottery; you just have to pass the SEA exam, and every student has a window to the world, a window of opportunity from which they could elevate their life, and they can engage in any form of education or empowerment that they choose, learning a foreign language, talking to people in
far-away countries, and we see that is the beginning.

It is the eventual aim of this Government to ensure that we have free Internet access in every part of Trinidad and Tobago so that there would be true equality with the use of the electronic capabilities that we live in in these times.

So, we are travelling a road. The Minister of Finance has started the process and the engagement for pension reform, and we are coming to pension because a lot has been said, a lot of inaccurate information is already on the table that we would clear up in a while. Pension harmonization that has been dogging the society for so long—a lot talk but no action—it is finally taking place by the Ministry of Finance. We say that the days are coming when you would have the application of biometrics to social development; the day when that would be the person would not have to go for a monthly check, but all their information will be on a card together with their fingerprint on a retinal scan so we can monitor—

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(1), please.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister of the People and Social Development, you want to link those points, and if you could point out to this honourable House the particular Head that you are referring to so that all of us would benefit from the linkage. We cannot go all over the place at this time. We have to stick to the Heads or what somebody else would have said and then say you are making reference to what “X” Member said. Otherwise, refer to the Heads and make the linkage for me, please.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadarsingh: Mr. Speaker, I was just really dealing with a few issues, the fact that they were saying we did not have a plan. They spoke a lot about the pension and the crime and I was trying to link all of those.

In fact, I will try to streamline my contribution, but I would just say, when you look at the items in the schedule, the Minister of Finance who has slayed two dragons that the PNM allowed to rise, the dragon of CL Financial and the
implications that had for our economy, the Minister of Finance took some time, took some effort, some buy-in, but finally, it has been a great success story that we would tell in the financial development of Trinidad and Tobago. The HCU matter, those are acts of irresponsibility that were allowed under the PNM—lack of supervision, lack of monitoring.

Anyhow, the People’s Partnership Government came on a platform to change that and under Head 18 on the schedule, the Minister of Finance has put back the economy on track.  

[Desk thumping]  Under Head 34: Ministry of Transport; buses in rural communities, 18 busses coming in for the differently-abled and the elderly, outfitted, so that persons who are on wheelchairs can participate in the public transport system for the first time, because the People’s Partnership Government promised that we would bring back the differently-abled as equal partners in the society.  

**Mr. Sharma:** Excellent.  

**Hon. Dr. G. Ramadarsingh:** The Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education taking education to the people, taking education to the masses through decentralization is occurring now so that all persons in Trinidad—and you know, at the last ECLAC Commission, they said equity is the way for the world to go now. Because when you disenfranchise one part of the population, that inequality transcends itself into the health system, national security, and so equity will be the saving grace and the guiding hand that we will use and the philosophy to ensure that all the people benefit.  

[Interruption]  

So, Mr. Speaker, I would come to a point that has been beaten in this debate a lot and that is the senior citizens pension that is administered through the Senior Citizens Pension Act, Chap. 32:02; this is in the legislation of Trinidad and Tobago. This is not an ad hoc policy—and we looked on as a former Government tried to change it into a grant and we took it back and made it a pension to give
security to the senior citizens of this country, and it is still guided in legislation, it is not something that should be tampered and played with. And therefore, we brought a piece of legislation in this Parliament to increase it to $3,000 and it was the first benevolent act of the People’s Partnership Government, to take care of our elderly. Our track record on the treatment of the elderly, we are clear; 79,500 persons benefit from this, of the 102,000 persons who are 65 years and over.

The increase to the National Insurance pension meant an increase in income for over 15,890 pensioners. While that happened, 13,132 persons were supposed to be reduced by 1,000 because the law of the country states that if your income is $3,000 or more that is it, you get no money from the Senior Citizens Act; you do not get that. And we spoke, we went to the Minister of Finance and we said to the Minister of Finance, we may have a problem, and this is months ago. [Interrupted] This is to tell you about the proactive nature of this Government, when the budget was read and, we, the Ministry of the People and Social Development had to give effect to the budget, we met the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Finance agreed that this will not happen, and we took steps to correct it so that 2,738 persons who were not supposed to benefit from any further contribution from the Ministry of the People and Social Development were put back on the system.

So, what in fact we did is to save these persons from losing any money. What has happened and I want to make it absolutely clear, not a pensioner in this country receives a cent less than they did before this change was made. Not a single pensioner in this country, because of the decisions and the actions that we took. So, not a cent less. Further, if anything has changed, is the source of the income has changed, not the quantum. Anybody else who tells you something else, they are—

Hon. Member: Fibbing.
Hon. Dr. G. Ramadarsingh:—taking the opportunity to create confusion, and that is a political issue. But at the end of the day just as they did when they tried to convince the people of this country that there was something wrong with the $3,000 pension, the people at the end of the day would know the truth, because the policies are being put in place to help the people of Trinidad and Tobago. What the Minister of Finance did, is find an innovative way to utilize funds that laid idle so that we could look at further development for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, every single pensioner gets not a cent less, and I come off that issue.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, a lot of work is taking place because of the policies and programmes that have been put in train. We have heard the Opposition. We believe in listening to the Opposition; we have taken note of some of the concerns that are worthy, but we have been very disappointed by and large in the contributions. Some people spoke here today almost as if they were forced to or they were put on the spot and asked to really engage in a propaganda that they seemed not believe in. I have heard some of them very passionately on issues of finance, engineering and law, and today we heard some postured contributions, as if they were just putting on a show.

We also say that we are all stakeholders in this process, and everything we do must result for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If you want to see the betterment of Trinidad and Tobago, that is our aim and our objective and we can work together to transform the lives of our people.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

1.05 a.m.

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffery (La Brea): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin my contribution by responding to the Member for Oropouche East. He produced a book with some signatures I guess, and he referred to a “Patrick”. He
seemed to be inferring that the Patrick was Patrick Manning. I want to put on record, that the Patrick that was referred to in that book that he has, was really Patrick Caesar, project manager from Tobago. Just for the record, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make that correction—Patrick Caesar from Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** It is in the book. You write in the book too.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** Mr. Speaker—[Crosstalk]—I gave everybody a chance to speak, I will like to get mine too.

**Mr. Speaker:** And you will have my full protection.

**Mr. F. Jeffery:** Mr. Speaker, as we looked at the presentation by the Minister of Finance, one could not help but wonder about the whole question of trust and the whole question of political victimization which I will come to in a while. Let me deal with Head 61: Ministry of Housing and the Environment, $260.5. Let me say from the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I am not impressed by this $260,500,000 million and I will explain why.

**Mr. Sharma:** It should be more.

**Mr. F. Jeffery:** While the amount is important, it is how that figure is disbursed throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, I want to read from the document:

“Additional funds are required to meet costs associated with the expansion of the operations of CEPEP to provide employment opportunities for more persons in the lower socio economic bracket across all communities approved by the Cabinet on December 01, 2012.”

I guess that is a mistake, it should be 2011. I am left to wonder, this “all communities”, is it all communities that were approved by the Cabinet or is it all communities where you have persons who belong to the lower socio economic bracket?

Mr. Speaker, shortly after this Government took office, CEPEP was stopped in two major areas in my constituency—-from Palo Seco to Erin and from La Brea...
to Salazar Trace—two large areas. The only reason I could see why no CEPEP groups were assigned is because those two areas are strong PNM areas, because in their areas, they have CEPEP groups, but those two areas, “uh, uh”. This is something that we need to understand, because you see it is instructive that in 2001, I think, the hon. Gerald Yetming, in his budget presentation, had warned about this whole question of discrimination, how it would hold back the society; it would prevent nation building and so on. I really want us to take stock about this whole thing.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be instructive to find out what are the names of those communities that were approved by Cabinet on December 1, 2011, because as it stands here, it means absolutely nothing for somebody like me in the La Brea constituency. You do not know whether your communities, Salazar Trace, Gonzales, Lot 10, Parrylands, Cochrane, Vance River, Sobo, Palo Seco, Rancho Quemado, Erin, are those areas on the approved list that was approved by the Cabinet. That is missing.

There is another issue. You could have a CEPEP group, let us say in a place like Aripero, and you say, okay, in Aripero you have Farm Road and you have Paria Gardens. Paria Gardens might be a PNM stronghold; Farm Road would have been a UNC stronghold. So in Aripero yes, we have a CEPEP gang, but where they are based, in Farm Road. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of things that help us to divide the society and we need to address and make sure that when we are doing this kind of thing, it is equitable.

The hon. Minister of Housing and the Environment spoke about CEPEP will contribute to the local economy because people could go to the shops, supermarket and market. That is true. And therefore, I wonder when they stopped the CEPEP groups from operating between Palo Seco and Erin and La Brea and Salazar Trace, did they not think that they were stifling, they were cramping the local economies
in those areas?

Trinidad and Tobago is a very small country, and while you may figure that by putting CEPEP in your stronghold and refusing to put it in other areas—let me give you an interesting scenario. You have a CEPEP gang operating from Aripero coming down into Rousillac. Good, so fine, but you do not put down any CEPEP gang in Union Village. But you know what happens? People leave Rousillac and come to meet friends in Union Village. They come to play cricket. When there are festivities they come down and are you saying that you are going to refuse to put a CEPEP gang inside there, and what is going to happen, when those people have to walk on the road rather than walk on the sidewalk and they get knocked down, who do you think would benefit?

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say, I have mentioned it on numerous occasions, that in the Palo Seco area the Member of Chaguanas West, he paved the road. There is no sidewalk, the edges of the road are overgrown with bushes, tall grass and those little primary school children have to walk on that busy Siparia-Erin Road to go to school. No amount of crocodile tears would appease the population down there if a child was to get knocked down on the road. I am saying, stop playing politics and deal with the issues of the people. The only reason you refused to put down the CEPEP group and no sidewalk, is because that area is a PNM stronghold. And I am saying that there is a price to pay for that. I just want to put on the record, let good sense prevail.

Mr. Speaker, let me go back to this one. The Minister of Finance spoke about 12 communities where they would be upgrading and you will have construction of fishing facilities, 12 of them—Blanchisseuse, Cumana, Fullerton, Otaheite, Carenage, Las Cuevas, La Ruffin, Point Radix, Grande Riviere, Salybia, Brick Field, Orange Valley; La Brea not there. That is the same place where you stop the smelter. And you know, Mr. Speaker, what is interesting, I just want to
put on the record, Dr. Kublalsingh had a small group that came to La Brea, and they were able to stop the smelter. Dr. Kublalsingh is down in Debe side with a much larger group. You know what I heard, you cannot afford to allow a small group to stop the development. And I am saying, poor La Brea, that did not apply to La Brea at all. I do not want to go back to that argument again. I have illustrated to this House, the real benefits of that smelter. I am not going to go back there. But I think that good sense should prevail. You know what, nothing is put in place after two years for the people of La Brea. Mr. Speaker, I want your protection in the back here.

Mr. Speaker: Members in the back, I am seeking to provide protection to the La Brea Member of Parliament. So I ask you to cooperate. Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. F. Jeffery: So I am saying in the absence of any development on the Union Estate, I want to recommend that serious consideration be given to the La Brea fish market and fishing port, because of the dilapidated state in which it is. Therefore I am recommending, to ease the plight of the unemployed in that area, that serious consideration be given in this regard. I have no objection for those 12 areas mentioned, receiving developments; I am saying let La Brea be number 13.

Mr. Speaker, we come to the whole question of the Minister of Transport. I heard Members opposite speak in glowing terms about the PTSC transport going in all kinds of rural areas and so on. I am glad. I have seen the buses go down into some nook and cranny to bring out people and so on. You know something, the township of La Brea is not benefiting. There are people in La Brea who are handicapped, and we have no provisions for them. I am saying that these people in La Brea have paid their dues to this country. They sacrificed, they toiled, so that we all could benefit. And I am saying, why is it so hard to put down a small bus to pass through the township of La Brea, to ease the plight of the senior citizens especially as they make their way?
The water taxi is also another sore point. You do not want to run the Water Taxi from Point Fortin, fine. I know, because I experience it very regularly, coming from La Brea the traffic jam that makes it almost impossible to reach to Port of Spain in under two hours—almost impossible.

1.20 a.m.

I am saying there is need for serious consideration to be given for the installation of the water taxi system from La Brea going to San Fernando and on to Port of Spain.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move to the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development. I am a little disturbed that no increased allocation is given to that Ministry. I would say why: Given the Government’s inability to lure foreign investment to come to this country, it would have been worth the while to inject more local capital into the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development to stimulate the domestic economy.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. Minister speak about the Fair Share Programme. I see in his document—I have a copy—on page 34, the launch of the Fair Share Programme and also the National Business Incubation System. I would read from the Hansard of Monday, August 20, 2007, in the Appropriation Bill, the Hon. Patrick Manning:

“In November last year, the Government implemented the Fair Share Programme…”

[Desk thumping]

So, it was not a launch.

Mr. Speaker, they also spoke about the launch of the Integrated Business Incubation System. Again, in the same Hansard of August 20, 2007:

“Nedco's lending portfolio is complemented by the Entrepreneurial Training and Incubation Centre (ETIC), which conducts business and management
training programmes, provides advisory services and business incubation facilities for small and micro enterprises.”

All I am saying is that I have no problem with complimenting the Minister for keeping those programmes, but I do not think it is fair for him to operate as though it is a new initiative of this UNC-led coalition because, really and truly, that is not the case.

Mr. Mc. Cleod: Would the hon. Member give way?

Mr. F. Jeffery: No, no, I am on the floor.

Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make is that the state of the economy, with unemployment rising and the whole question of rising inflation, is cause for concern. Given the time, being 1.23 a.m., I say, here and now, that I do not support the allocation of $1.5 million for the supplementation of appropriation for the fiscal year 2012.

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

Dr. Amery Browne (Diego Martin Central): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the protestation by Members opposite and I had occasion yesterday evening—because it is now morning time—to remind a few Members opposite—I think the Member for Caroni East was a witness—that when we were in government and the UNC was in Opposition, they certainly had no consideration for time, but would spend their full duration in seeking their duty under the Constitution, to hold the then government to account. We had no issue with that. So, when Members on this side rise and seek to pursue that same duty under our Constitution, Members should not be grumbling and rumbling, et cetera. They should be glad that they have the opportunity to hear a little from a sector they may not have been listening to in the past. I just wanted to put that into perspective.

[Interruption] I shall do exactly that. I am referring to you. I am glad we have
educated those on the back Benches.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the contributions that went a bit earlier and I want to say that in some cases I was quite disappointed. Of course, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara has his own style and one just wonders how a style of disrespect could be pleasing to the constituents of any sector in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] I just wonder.

If you listen to the Government very carefully, there were some things that the Minister of Finance did say that would have found some merit in the rationale listener, but then there were some other things that we need to point out and correct, and I hope he would accept the corrections here today. There were other examples throughout the Government’s contributions that made it clear that this Government has no desire to be held to account. Every time a Member on this side would point out an error or area that requires a different type of attention, the response from the Government is one that indicates they are very sensitive. They do not realize the purpose of Parliament; they do not realize the purpose of democracy and to recognize that their every action and word would be held to account and that is why we are here in the lower House of Parliament, but they do not desire to be held to account.

I listened to all contributions and they appear to be fixated on the People’s National Movement. As I told a few good colleagues on the other side, they are obsessed with the PNM. If you listen to them carefully, Mr. Speaker, as I know you do, the PNM is their goal standard in politics. [Desk thumping] Every time they are caught or the spotlight is put on the errors of this Government, the first thing they do is to start talking about the People’s National Movement; but, that is in stark contrast to their discourse prior to the election when the promise was of something new. It was not just the COP parroting that, it was all Members. Something new; change was promised to the population and when you hear them
now, change is not what they have been able to deliver; certainly, nothing positive for the citizens of this country.

Mr. Speaker, they also appear unable to admit or recognize that they have not done a good job of managing the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] We would have, at least, wanted one or two of the speakers to acknowledge that the circumstances in which our citizens find themselves are very difficult circumstances today, but we get a sort of glib response from the Government as if all is well; right across every sector; every ministry is performing at full speed.

When I looked at the variations here, I remember the Prime Minister boasting, very early on, that she had demanded one-year plans from every single Government ministry and demanded accountability from ministers—this is in the early heady days when it was going to be an easy job. When the Prime Minister gave a brief appearance today, she asked, “Where was the Member for Diego Martin North/East?” Then she disappeared again. So, she is not here but, hopefully, she may be listening.

We see the hodgepodge approach to governance and finance, and the lack of planning, and my question this morning is: How many of those plans were received? Why do they not share those plans with the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Parliament, so that we can properly adjudicate on the performance of the Government? They always say that we are too critical; we are too harsh; we are not measuring them fairly, et cetera, but maybe, this is unfair because it is my suspicion that very few ministries have ever submitted such plans. [Desk thumping] I am not saying that in the absence of information.

Mr. Speaker, we heard about that in the first year and, if it was a one-year plan, one would have expected a second one-year plan, at least, or maybe a two-year plan, but we heard none of that talk, subsequently, because the veneer has

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faded away and governance has descended into horse trading, infighting, repayment of financiers and that is the reality and they come to Parliament and try to put a happy face on all, when behind the scenes is a lot of divisiveness. Sometimes you would hear Government ministers almost berating or attacking the Ministry of Finance because it is just about my sector as opposed to looking at the big picture. I am not going to go too much further into that; I am sure the Minister of Finance is well able to speak on some of those issues.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West, the Leader of the Opposition, was quite correct when, early in his contribution, he had some remarks for the Minister of Finance. He characterized the Minister of Finance’s comments orbiting around the recent statements by the Governor of the Central Bank as unfortunate and went on to elaborate a bit more. He was kind enough to allow the Minister of Finance to rise—I am sure, in the end, he is going to do some further damage repair—who, basically, denied, at all, giving any impression that he was attacking or rebutting the Governor of the Central Bank.

Words have an effect and if you look at the Trinidad Express Newspapers of today, on the front page, the question asked is “What slump?” This is an article by Ria Taitt and there is a very nice photograph of the Minister of Finance, with the national flag behind him; he almost look presidential or prime ministerial. I quote from the article:

“Don't use the word ‘slump’ to describe the Trinidad and Tobago economy.”

I am quoting the Minister of Finance.

“I say here today ... Trinidad and Tobago is not in any slump,”

he

“thundered yesterday as he piloted the Supplementation of Appropriation Bill in the House of Representatives… The term was used by Central Bank Governor Ewart Williams to describe the Trinidad and Tobago economy.
One week ago the Governor had stated: ‘We've had negative growth for three years. That's our challenge…”

We have had negative growth—not for three quarters, you know; for three years.

“‘That’s our challenge: how do we get out of that slump…’”

Mr. Speaker, I do not think the Governor of the Central Bank—I think he is a very deliberate man and he considers his words very carefully before he utters them, but they were not to the satisfaction of the Minister of Finance and he choose to come to the Parliament to basically rebuff the findings, the warnings and remonstrations of the Governor of the Central Bank. So, he did take issue with those words. He may regret that, but that is what happened and, certainly, that is what the *Trinidad Express* has conveyed.

So, if the Minister was correct and that he was only trying to correct sensationalism of the media, I am just inviting the Minister, when he is winding up, to do a better job of correcting that because the media has covered what was said today, as a rebuttal of the Governor of the Central and that is not something that should be passed over lightly. This Government has been accused—rightfully accused—of shattering confidence in the economy even before they became elected. There are Members opposite who are involved in meetings with international agencies, designed to lower confidence in the economy of Trinidad and Tobago and these were widely covered in the public discourse. I am not going to dwell on the details of that.

They have now come into Government and have became victims of their own rhetoric because those opposed still affect us today. That confidence is lowered even further if you now have some sort of debate, discourse or rebuttal taking place between the Minister of Finance who is a very important person in a country structured in the way that Trinidad and Tobago is structured, or should be, and the Governor of the Central Bank. When one casts doubt on the findings,
views or remonstrations of the Governor, one is casting doubt on the Central Bank, and when one casts doubt on the Governor and the Central Bank, one is lowering confidence in our economy. It is an area that I would recommend that the Minister of Finance seeks to, maybe, treat with in a quiet fashion with the Governor as opposed to coming into the Parliament and saying things that can be interpreted as a rebuttal of the Governor of the Central Bank. I am not sure this is the best place for that.

1.35 a.m.

Then the hon. Minister of Finance went on to—and he is not known to do this very often, but he gave us a smattering of statistics from other countries, trying to add some validity to his earlier sentiment that we were experiencing blue skies in Trinidad and Tobago. I do not know if anyone was in any way—any fears were assuaged by—or concerns were assuaged by those statistics from other countries. And it seems now that the global picture is very relevant to our situation in Trinidad and Tobago. Again, if you listened to them when they were seeking office, that global situation was completely and totally irrelevant to the situation in Trinidad and Tobago.

So he gave us the statistics from other countries, et cetera, to back up the blue skies finding, and then said words to this effect—and he could correct me if this is not a direct quote, but I did try to take some notes. In summarizing all of that, the picture he was trying to paint: “We in Trinidad and Tobago should all have a sense of comfort.” He used that phrase, “a sense of comfort.” I think that was basically—I mean, he was piloting the Bill, but the real purpose, given some of the recent outputs that have been taking place on the economy—the real purpose of his contribution today was to try to convey that sense of comfort. I am not sure
that is the main job of a Minister of Finance, especially in troublesome and troubling economic times.

Just on the issue of the Central Bank Governor, the Minister of Finance’s comments in some way were made to look quite good or quite lenient when one takes into consideration the comments made by the Member for Chaguanas West in the public forum when he appeared to very deliberately imply that the Governor of the Central Bank was somehow sinister in his timing, or there was a very unfortunate and disastrous coincidence between the timing of the Governor’s statements on the economy, which I believe is the man's job, and because it was inconvenient to the two-year birthday celebrations of his UNC—this hijacked UNC coalition Government.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** “I doh understand.”

**Dr. A. Browne:** Hijacked! Talk to Basdeo Panday about that word. He will explain it to you. I know you all are friends.

Mr. Speaker, that is what the Member for Chaguanas West was saying, and when you have that type of representation coming from the Government or when a Minister speaks, the words are representative of the Government. The Government is speaking, and I heard no denial, rebuttal or correction coming from the Prime Minister or anyone else on that side. It is almost as if they are unable to correct the Member for Chaguanas West. But the citizens are listening to all of that. People are paying attention now like never before, and this is not something that should be encouraged at all.

So I want to tell the Minister of Finance that that sense of comfort, there is no comfort zone in Trinidad and Tobago for any citizen today. The only ones who
are comfortable are either asleep, unconscious or—

**Miss Hospedales:** In denial.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Well, unconscious is in denial—asleep, unconscious or corrupt. Those are the three categories of comfortable citizens in this country right now, and this Government, when you listen to their contributions in this debate, they appear totally disconnected from reality.

And I looked at the increase of expenditure to the Ministry of National Security: $63 million out of a $1.5 billion increased expenditure. And what was that $63 million for? Helicopters for use by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, and if the opportunity exists, for the security services of Trinidad and Tobago, and they cannot deny that that is exactly how these helicopters have been used in the past.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5).

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, sustained. Hon. Member, there is nothing in the document I have before me under “National Security” that mentions the name of the Prime Minister. So that is really reflecting on the Prime Minister, both in terms of conduct and character, and I ask you to desist from that course that you are treading and travelling. Okay?

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your guidance, but it is on the public record that national security helicopters are being used for the transportation—the domestic transportation—of the hon. Prime Minister.

**Miss Hospedales:** That is correct.

**Dr. A. Browne:** That is one point. It is also now on the record of this Parliament in this debate that $63 million is being utilized for the purchase of additional
helicopters. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it is a stretch—it is certainly not an attempt to impute anything improper to the Prime Minister, but to suggest that we need to pay some attention to how that expenditure will be utilized and whether it will be utilized for the further security of our citizens, or for transportation for public officials. But I will be guided, Mr. Speaker, and I will move on from that point.

But I do not think, especially in light of the contribution of the Member for Caroni Central, that the issue of crime should be passed over without at least a few comments from this Member of Parliament, because I remain very, very concerned, and the citizens, despite the smiles of the Member for Couva South, that is the number one concern and priority of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and it is the very strong content and the very vigorous promises that were made on the campaign trail, particularly with regard to crime and corruption, that led to the persuasion of a large number of citizens.

So that is something that in any debate will arise, certainly in this debate with increased expenditure to the Ministry of National Security and the comments about a comfort zone, or all citizens should be feeling a sense of comfort today. We must consider that the murder rate at this point is now significantly higher than it was in 2011, in defiance of predictions made by this Government. We are now at 174 and counting and June has just begun.

Mr. Speaker, this comes in the wake of some very draconian actions taken last year by this Government; removal of civic rights, et cetera. We realize that was all done in vain. It was all done in vain, and the Government itself must have realized that by now. I am not going to dwell on that much longer. But if
Members of the Government feel a sense of security in those circumstances, that sense of security is not shared by members of society or members of the public.

Then no one on the Government side has denied that the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is in decline today. That is a simple statement of fact, and I heard no denials from the other side, but there was an attempt to sugar-coat. We do continue to face a situation of declining revenue and in spite of that the Government continues to increase expenditure.

I suspect the Minister of Finance does not want to do so, and he does have some degree of a track record—certainly when he was not as much of a politician—of being a bit more prudish, if not prudent, in how he views a balanced economy. All that has changed, probably under the pressures of high office, and we continue to have declining revenue and increasing expenditure. We continue to see very little or no sign of diversification of the economy. We continue to see very little or no sign of proper planning by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and these large variations and requests for increase of expenditure are symptomatic of that poor planning.

We continue to see no evidence of innovation, and if we saw Ministries making unusual or unplanned expenditure in the pursuit of innovation or in the genuine pursuit of diversification or inspiration—to trigger inspiration—we might have been somewhat encouraged. But that is completely absent here, and you are hearing talk about CEPEP and who is pushing CEPEP in what constituency and, you know, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the neglect that they claimed existed in a few constituencies due to CEPEP imbalances is now global; is now throughout Trinidad and Tobago, because even the constituencies which are heavily burdened
by CEPEP contractors at this time—and they have been boasting about that—those constituencies are now neglected as well.

So I do not know what these contractors are doing, and I think the Member for Oropouche East spoke very early in the debate, and some of what he said has already been responded to, and I really do not want to pay much attention to it, but just maybe to give a word of advice. He is not one to take advice at all, but to give a word of advice.

The Member for Oropouche East is very clever, and I believe he understands the psyche of the media in this country quite well, and I believe he understands the psyche of some of the lower level denominators in society quite well. So every time he presents in the Parliament, he seeks to introduce a thin element of scandal. And I do not want to say that to impute anything improper, but that is what happened today. So previously, there was talk of cookies and cookie monster, in a nice, humorous way, but it is quite deliberate, and we got that again today. “Thank you, Patrick.” And it took the erstwhile Member for La Brea to point out to the national community—those who are asleep now, or those who are awake now, who may have been awake early yesterday evening—to recognize that those insinuations by the Member for Oropouche East were—I do not want to say deceptive, Mr. Speaker, because it seems that that word is falling out of favour in the Parliament, but were very, very unfortunate.

I expect we will get more of that kind of presentation in the future, but that is why we need a vigilant People’s National Movement at every corner and every move. [Desk thumping] And it should come as no surprise to anyone that we believe nothing that the UNC says in or out of this Parliament, because every time
they are put to the test they are proven to be talking just utter foolishness.

That was an example of wanton foolishness right here on the *Hansard* record, and smiling across. Mission accomplished, because it has now made it into the media as an implication against a Member on the other side—very skillfully and cleverly executed by the Member for Oropouche East. But I suspect when we look back in history will not have such a kind eye to those types of contributions. The Member for Oropouche East should blush at least for the decision to present that material in the manner in which he presented it—very, very unfortunate.

So, as I said, I would not dwell on it. But that was not the advice, Mr. Speaker; that was the correction. The advice I have for our colleague, the very ambitious Member for Oropouche East, is with respect to CEPEP. Every time he stands here in the House, one of his staple aspects of his contribution is a nice discourse on CEPEP, and today he gave us the usual rundown of CEPEP contractors and the General Council, a lot of, again, very foolish talk. I say very respectfully, completely foolish talk.

But one thing that was missing, at the end of all of that—and we are correcting CEPEP; we are increasing the number of contractors; we are decreasing the number of teams, et cetera. The thing that was missing that we as thinking citizens would have wanted to hear is: this was the problem before and we have now put in place, Minister of Finance, a transparent system for the selection, monitoring and evaluation of CEPEP contractors in Trinidad and Tobago.  

*Desk thumping]*

1.50 a.m.

So you cannot stand here in the Parliament and talk about the PNM General Council being CEPEP contractors, when you do not reveal who the current
contractors are and how they were selected. If this Government were to adopt the language of the Congress of the People—if it still exists in the Government today—the minimum they would do is to try to establish some sort of system that would demonstrate to the population that this is not just a recycle of what they were criticizing before, but this is something genuinely different and refreshing. And, something every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago can have confidence in.

That has not been done to this day. That will not be done before the next general election in Trinidad and Tobago—which could be anytime. And I assure you, we have no reason whatsoever to be confident in the manner in which CEPEP is being administered by the Member for Oropouche East, the Minister of Housing and the Environment. 

I am not just saying that in an empty fashion but I am challenging the Member to respond in a more responsible way so that the citizens can have more confidence in what he is saying about CEPEP in the future. Anything else is just gimmicks, “ole talk” and politics as usual. But, what can we expect from the UNC besides exactly that?

So, I am not sure where the comfort zone is. I am not sure which citizens are comfortable. As I said, I gave three categories of those that might be comfortable. I want to challenge the Minister of Finance and Members of the Government, we are talking about the economy here. Let us be real. Walk into any business place in Trinidad and Tobago and ask a few simple questions. The Minister of Finance knows what I am saying. Now, he may be trying to make it otherwise. He may be hoping it will be otherwise. But, there is a grim reality that everyone who is listening to this debate is aware of. You walk into any business place and I do it. I go into a bookstore. I talk to the owner, I say listen, how are things going? Is business better now than before? Was business better before 2010? Is it better now? How was last Christmas? Was it better than the Christmas
before? Was it worse?

Mr. Speaker, in every single instance the response was consistent. The businesses are doing worse now that it was before. [Desk thumping] I am not happy about that. But, that is the reality. This last Christmas was much worse than the Christmas before. And that applies to all establishments: the restaurants; the parlours; the supermarkets; the bakeries and the rum shops, you name it—the roti shop, everywhere. I said it before and I am going to have to repeat it today. For a number of reasons the private sector and the business sector has always done better under the People’s National Movement than under any other administration.

Mr. Speaker, that is relevant to every citizen because the economy benefits, employment benefits and the citizens and their families benefit when these businesses do well. So, I would tell the hon. Minister that there really is no comfort zone. How could there be a sense of comfort when the Hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre told this House that youth unemployment is now above 18 per cent?—and he would correct me if I am misquoting him. He said that in a very forthright manner. Not in this debate, in a previous debate—above 18 per cent. [Desk thumping] [ Interruption]

Mr. McLeod: You did not hear me say that.

Dr. A. Browne: Youth.

Mr. McLeod: No. I said that youth unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago has moved from 13 per cent to 15 per cent.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, how can we feel a sense of comfort when youth unemployment is rising and is now moving past 15 per cent? There can be no sense of comfort under those circumstances. I thank the Minister for the additional information.

Speaking about conditions of employment, relevant to the economy every
week there are now protest in front of the Parliament. A lot has changed in this country. Today, it was the day for the Domestic Workers Association. I understand the Minister had a brief exchange with some of those individuals or someone from the Government did before coming into the Parliament. They have a very simple request and I would just mention it while I am on my legs; for the ratification of ILO Convention 189. [Desk thumping] They say this is a simple request. It is special to Trinidad and Tobago because members of the association, domestic workers from Trinidad and Tobago actually participated in the drafting of this Convention. So, this is something—

Mr. McLeod: Would you give way, again?

Dr. A. Browne: Minister. I may allow you shortly.

Mr. Sharma: Give him a chance, “nah.”

Dr. Rambachan: Come on, that is your elder.

Dr. A. Browne: That is not why I am giving way.

Mr. McLeod: I did not want you to mislead yourself.

Mr. Indarsingh: Consistently.

Mr. McLeod: That call for ratification of ILO Convention 189, is a call that had been made previous till today.

Dr. A. Browne: Did I say otherwise?

Mr. McLeod: You should be aware; I think you are aware, that the ratification of any Convention done by the ILO must have a relationship with national law.

Mr. Sharma: Correct.

Mr. McLeod: Domestic workers are not considered workers within the meaning of the Industrial Relations Act framed by the People’s National Movement. We are moving now to regularize that. It is only when that is done we could talk about ratification of that Convention. Thank you. [Desk thumping]

Dr. A. Browne: You are welcome for the generous time that was granted. Mr.
Speaker, I may not need it but I request—[Crosstalk]—additional time. Now, you see the value of a calm and rational response from a Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development in Trinidad and Tobago. And one would commend that type of response when dealing with our trade union colleagues and his trade union colleagues, including, I believe it was, Mr. Lambert, recently. If that was the kind of calm, rational response that the Minister would generate on all occasions, I think the temperature in the labour sector would be much lower and much more harmonious today. [Crosstalk]

No, that is the reality. So, I thank the Minister for that clarification. I think the individuals who were protesting outside today—[Crosstalk] They were, they had placards. I asked them what they were there for, they said they protesting the lack of ratification of this Convention. If you had spoken to them, Couva/South, you would have found that out.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** They spoke to me.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, I suspect they would benefit from further communication with the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and the Government. I also suspect that the Government and the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development would benefit from further communication with those very workers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** How come you never know that when you all were in office? How you all could—

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, again—

**Mr. Speaker:** I will ask you to address me.

**Dr. A. Browne:** But you are not protecting me from his interjections. If Point Fortin—

**Mr. Speaker:** No, No, No. Ignore him and address me. I shall protect you.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you. Every time they interrupt I feel a sense of pity for the
Member for Point Fortin, I wish she was here today but—

Dr. Moonilal: “She sleeping comfortably.”

Dr. A. Browne: I wish she was here to benefit from the rest of the debate. Mr. Speaker, I will move on because I really do not want to take up too much of our time. I have to come to the energetic Member for Caroni Central and some of the things that he mentioned today.

Dr. Rambachan: Address the Speaker.

Dr. A. Browne: I am addressing the Speaker. The Member for Tabaquite continues to interrupt me.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Alright. Okay. Member for Tabaquite, I am hearing your voice, so could you observe Standing Order 40(b) and (c). And, Member for Diego Martin Central, address me.

Dr. A. Browne: I appreciate it. Mr. Speaker, it is almost like sometimes the Government they draw a straw poll and they take turns. Somebody is going to be the troublemaker each time. So, today the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development is nice and calm and Tabaquite is all hyper and carrying on. I do not know what is going on, on that side.

Mr. Speaker, we were talking about the confidence in the economy and the fact that some of the outputs of the Members of the UNC-led coalition has contributed to the damaging of the confidence in the economy. Mr. Speaker, the Government is not blameless in this regard.

The Minister of Finance and the Member for Oropouche East referred on a number of occasions to enhanced social protection. There was mention of the NIS issue, as well. And somehow in their contributions Members on the other side continued to avoid the reality, that over 160,000. senior citizens in Trinidad and Tobago, in our country were deceived on multiple occasions by the outputs of this Government. [Desk thumping].

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That reality would continue to haunt them every time they speak about the issue of senior citizens. We need to talk a little bit about that today because it has been made relevant by several contributions opposite. So social protection, the NIS issue and then the Member for Caroni Central in a very brazen fashion—

**Hon. Members:** Brazen

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Brazen.

**Dr. A. Browne:**—given the mood of the seniors today—[Crosstalk] Listen! [Laughter]—has come into the Parliament and has—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Why you do not like to be corrected?

**Dr. A. Browne:**—attempted to reinforce some of the falsehoods that were established before. We would go through some of them today. And we would ask the Government to recognize that they have fallen out of favour with the senior citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] They are avoiding the reality that thousands of seniors are upset with them, right now. And by just repeating the false statements that were make before, that is not going to calm the temperatures among these seniors at all.

Mr. Speaker, the senior citizens were unwitting pawns, in what many believe was one of the most elaborate hoaxes ever played on the citizens of Trinidad and Tabogo, with those three separate newspaper advertisements, in the days before the general election—coloured newspaper advertisements.

Afterwards, when they were called on the issue with regard to the 60-year pension, the Minister of Finance told us that that was a future intention, a future plan. The question that remains and will haunt us every time we discuss this issue, if that were some sort of extended medium or long-term plan why was it circulated and advertised specifically and heavily, immediately before the general election, May 19, May 21 and May 22? It creates a false impression in the minds of the senior citizens and we have counted them. It is 160,000 over the age of 60. That
has been established, Mr. Speaker, I will not dwell on that aspect much further. But, the Government has not responded to that at all.

Then there were a few more recent contributions on the matter. I noted the words of the Member for Caroni Central today. I believe he is still quite remorseful that he did not contribute in the last budget debate. In my memory it is the first time a Minister of the People and Social Development has failed to contribute in a budget debate in this Parliament. He keeps using these opportunities to contribute—forced or not—to give us little snippets of his budget speech. That is what happened today and we heard about championing social justice, poverty eradication by hampers, retinal scans for senior citizens, et cetera.

I want to refer to a statement by the Minister of the People and Social Development that was made in this Parliament. It was made on Friday July, 16, 2010, entitled: “Senior Citizens Act (Amendment to)” And this is the Member for Caroni Central. After desk thumping:

“We promised the reinstatement of the Old Age Pension Act where pension must be an entitlement and not a grant. [Desk thumping] We promised… pension must be an entitlement.”

and not a grant.

2.05 a.m.

“We promised to increase the value of the monthly old age pension entitlement to $3,000 and we laid the Bill today. [Desk thumping]”

It was thunderous. These are the words of the Minister of the People and Social Development telling senior citizens—now, this is after the election; this is after the hoax about the 60-year pension had already been dismissed and revealed. The Minister came here and was making heavy weather in this Parliament about the shift from a grant to a pension and from a grant to an entitlement. We will talk a little bit more about what that means.
Then, on July 30, 2010, the Minister went a little bit further, and he has gone even further today, and those words will come back to haunt him. Mr. Speaker, this was in the Senior Citizens’ Grant Amendment Bill debate, and I quote:

“The Bill formalizes…”

And, you know, a very formal—

“The Bill formalizes our commitment to the senior citizens of this country to reinstate a pension.”—and he went up “a pension”—“it will no longer be a grant—to senior citizens and the value is increased to $3,000”—of this entitled pension.

He went further again. Boasting! This was in a Private Member’s Motion on portability of pension entitlement—The Member for Caroni East, the Minister of the People and Social Development.

Hon. Member: Caroni Central.

Dr. A. Browne: The Member for—[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, nowhere in this document that I have before me is there any provision that deals with old age pension. En passant, the Minister of Finance made reference to it. En passant, the Member for Caroni Central and the Minister of the People and Social Development clarified the issue. You cannot make your entire contribution and focus your entire contribution on old age pension.

So, I want you to either respond to the controversy that he, the hon. Minister of the People and Social Development, sought to clarify. But, to go into tedious repetition on matters that have already been settled in this Parliament, I think you are violating the Standing Order 36(3).

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Just sit whilst I am standing. So, I am asking you at 2.08 in morning to just attempt to either respond to what has been said by the hon.
Minister of the People and Social Development, and if you want to respond to the Minister of Finance, I am going to give you that leeway. But do not give me a whole treat this morning on old age pension. I have been through that, you have been through that and the Parliament has been through that. Okay. Thank you very much.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Caroni Central is giggling in his seat as thousands of senior citizens feel disenfranchised in the society of Trinidad and Tobago. His attempt to clarify the situation today did further damage to this issue. It is my responsibility as a former Minister of Social Development, someone who has information and perspective to share on this matter to assist—[**Interruption**]

**Dr. Ramadharsingh:** Bacchanal!

**Dr. A. Browne:** Not bacchanal at all; the bacchanal was created by the UNC in treating with the seniors. Mr. Speaker, I will not dwell on it for the entirety of my contribution, but I am responding to the attempt—you characterized as an attempt to clarify, I see it as an attempt to further obscure and confuse the senior citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [Mr. N. Hypolite]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So on the private Motion on portability of pension entitlement, we got this version of the clarification.

“What we did? As soon as we came into office, the first Bill that was brought to Parliament, we increased the pension to $3,000 for everyone…over the age of 65. That is what we did!”

And they mentioned this again.
“We also put in law that this was no longer a grant...that could be perceived as being taken away”—Mr. Speaker, I am referring to you—“at any time, but we legislated that it be returned as the senior citizens pension, and that was very significant to give us our citizens peace of mind, because we promised and we hold fast to what is now government policy that the ageing population, we will give a fair deal for older persons...that guarantees to retired persons a decent life. Our Government promised, and holds fast to that, protect the rights of the elderly.”

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the first right that the elderly have in this country is the right to honesty from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] Mr. Speaker, I am making a case in response for the Member for Caroni Central that an elaborate and deliberate series of pronouncements have been made in this House to create an impression among senior citizens that at least over the age of 65 years, all of them would have an entitled guaranteed pension of $3,000. [Desk thumping] Those are not my words; those are the words of the Member for Caroni Central.

They come here today, and elaborate a system, a tiered system, which is identical to the senior citizens’ grant in every respect but for the quantum. They have also come today to tell senior citizens that because the NIS retirement benefit—which has nothing to do with senior citizens’ pension, this is the NIS retirement benefit—was increased, their senior citizens’ remuneration has to go down. Mr. Speaker, this is not something strange and I am not berating the Member for Caroni Central or the Minister of Finance for that, because this was done in the past by previous administrations including the last.

What I have issue with, Mr. Speaker, and I feel very, very strongly about is the campaign to fool our senior citizens to believing that what was changed was more than just a name. I, myself, and the Minister of Finance know full well that

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the only thing that was changed was the name, and in reality, what is being
provided now is identical to what was being provided before. [Desk thumping]
That is why this pension is not an entitlement at all. That is why with consummate
ease, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is able to reduce the amount of the
senior citizens’ pension as they have done. They can adjust it, they can reduce it,
they can even stop it if they wish—all it takes is to come to the Lower House of
Parliament.

When this was done before, the UNC in their mischief were telling the
citizens it is because the last Prime Minister took away your pension and gave you
a grant; we will change that. Well, you know, they changed that, but nothing has
changed for the senior citizens. None of these seniors are receiving an entitled
automatic unconditional pension of $3,000. The criteria remain in place, the
conditions remain in place and the entitlement remains just a false promise, a fancy
play on words, by Members opposite as oppose to anything that could be
considered a reality. It takes these adjustments via the NIB and the other agencies
involved to bring home to senior citizens—and I would leave the point at this—the
comprehensive nature of the deceit of the United National Congress. That is what
has happened. I am going to move on from that point now. But, I believe that we
have now put into perspective the so-called clarification by the Member for Caroni
Central.

Mr. Speaker, there was another issue that arose and I would need to address
the contribution of the Member for Chaguanas West who asked in a very boastful
fashion, who said that no one can ask them where the money gone. But, that is the
very fundamental question that all citizens are asking of this Government after
these record budgets, every time so far, where has the money gone when you look
across the landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. The other question that they are
asking the Government, even when $1.5 million was being expended, is where is
the change that you promised to the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, every sector of society is asking those specific questions. People are not getting their roads—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I just want you to know that you may have your views, which I respect, but I think it is very dishonourable for you to cast a wide net on the entire Government Bench, whether you call it UNC, you call it partnership, you call it UNC-dominated, that is your business. But, I think it is very unparliamentary to cast this wide net on the Government Bench by saying the entire UNC engaged in comprehensive deceit, which in other words, you are saying the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has engaged in comprehensive deceit.

I do not think that is proper; I do not think that is in order, I call on you to withdraw that statement. If you want to ascribe any kind of improper motive to Members of Parliament, you can, at least, do it in a much better language. But, I would not preside over a Parliament where you are seeking to cast a kind of language that is not acceptable in this Parliament. So I call on you to withdraw that expression, and do not go down that route in the future, please.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the expression, but I hold up this document—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Listen, listen and take your seat. Do not query me—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. A. Browne:** I withdrew—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no, I am saying that I know where you are going. Move on to some other point.

**Dr. A. Browne:** I am moving on.

**Mr. Speaker:** Do not show that manifesto at this time; just move on. I know exactly where you are going.

**Dr. A. Browne:** You cannot tell me not to show the manifesto!

**Mr. Speaker:** All right, well, do you want to discontinue your contribution? Do
not argue with me. I am asking you—[ Interruption]

Hon. Member: Papa!!

Dr. A. Browne: You could read my mind?

Mr. Speaker: What! All right, discontinue, take your seat. Next speaker.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, you are something else, “yuh know”.

Mr. Speaker: All right, listen, apologize to the Speaker or I will order you out of this Chamber.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I seek not to disrespect you in any way, shape or form. You do not know the point I was seeking to make. I followed your instruction and I withdrew the comment that I made before. [ Desk thumping] I am a Member of Parliament and if I seek to hold up this manifesto, I am entitled to do so. [ Continuous desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker: You made a remark about the Speaker is something else, I asked you to withdraw that—[ Interruption]

Dr. A. Browne: I did so.

Mr. Speaker: —and apologize.

Dr. A. Browne: I did so, Mr. Speaker. I withdrew and I apologized.

Mr. Speaker: Good.

Dr. A. Browne: But what I am stretching my mind to understand is how when I raise this document, you can tell me not to do it. Why is that so?

2.20 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Go ahead.

Dr. Moonilal: Raise up the document.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, this is coming in the light of a dismissal of a Member already during this debate.

Mr. Speaker: Listen, listen. Member, take your seat. Take your seat. Take your seat! Did not query or question my rulings. Take it on a substantive Motion,
otherwise I will order you to take your seat. Continue.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, every time I rise there are interjections from Members opposite, of the exact volume and nature to that which caused the Member for Point Fortin to fault, and he is doing it again. I am on my legs and the Member for Oropouche East continues to interrupt me. I am asking for your protection.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am giving you my protection but do not make reference to that again. I know where you are going. Continue.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I wish, at this point, to refer to number of constituency matters relevant to expenditure by the Central Government of Trinidad and Tobago. One of them relates to a—[Interruption] Here we go again, whether the time is 2.08 a.m. or 2.20 a.m., a Member is entitled to the same contribution as earlier in the day. [Interruption]

**Mr. Sharma:** Stop wasting time. Come on!

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, Member. I want to give the Member for Diego Martin Central my fullest protection. I would like Members to observe Standing Order 40(b) and (c) and allow the Member to continue his contribution. Member, whilst you are on your legs just focus on me and do not take on any crosstalk. Let me handle that.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You have proven well able at all times to protect me and I thank you for that.

I want to refer—the Member for Chaguanas west made some references to work being done in various constituencies. There is a void in a community called Powder Magazine at this time, that demands the emergency intervention of the Member for Chaguanas West. Because, the public record would show that on August 27, 2010 there is a big media event at Powder Magazine and the Member for Caroni Central joined him on a walk over there. They had disabled people with
them. The entire media gallery of Trinidad and Tobago was present, cameras galore, big ceremony. [Interruption]

Mr. Sharma: What is your point?

Dr. A. Browne: They commissioned the elevators at that walkover. This is August 27, 2010. Today, we are in June 2012. Do you know that those elevators and that lift—and the Member for Caroni Central is aware of this because I have written numerous letters on this to the various Ministry—to this day, after that parading of the disabled people and that media circus and that PR output, to this day, those elevators are not functional for any citizen of that community? But they have already achieved their outcome, their desired result, which is the public relations (PR) from the event.

I want to use this contribution, speaking in my capacity as the MP for that area to demand, not beg or plead, that this Government fulfills its responsibility, having made that commitment and also having done the PR at the opening after two years, to immediately install and make operational the lifts for the senior citizens and the disabled citizens of Powder Magazine. [Desk thumping] It is unacceptable and unforgiveable what has happened there, because these individuals continue to have to dodge traffic while their more able-bodied colleagues and peers are walking on the walkover today. Mr. Speaker, I demand that the Government fulfills its responsibility in that regard.

This is not the only example of neglect in the western peninsular. The examples are numerous and they are easy to identify. They involve issues such as a promise from the Minister of Transport to provide a bus service for the residents of Cocorite. He gave a specific date which is now two months in the past, for that service to be initiated. Not a single day has such a service been provided and the residents are asking. Can we even belief anything that these Ministers says? This was said in a direct meeting. Two months have elapsed since then, nothing has
been done.

There are shattered pavements right across the western peninsular. I know Members opposite just want to sit back and say: “well, well, the PNM should have fixed it.” But in two years, many of those pavements have been shattered. A truck backs into a pavement, it breaks sometimes. It has to be repaired. They are not doing these basic services on behalf of the citizens who are taxpayers.

Just last week, an elderly gentleman got out of a taxi and fell into a hole on the pavement of the Diego Martin Main Road. Fortunately, he was able to go to the St. James Accident and Emergency Unit for an X-ray to determine—well, he had a hairline fracture, which the Minister of Health closed and then reopened after being corrected in that matter. [ Interruption ]

Dr. Khan: Do not get the Speaker angry, “eh”. He would tell you to sit down.

Dr. A. Browne: You should not worry about the Speaker getting angry right now. I would leave health alone.

Neglected sporting grounds, the surprise grounds, grounds in Cocorite as well—no action is being taken. One of the grounds was completed before the election, in Powder Magazine just a basic additional infrastructure on the football aspect of it. Again, I do not know who want auditing or whatever else, but two years have passed and we are seeing evidence of the neglect of the western peninsular.

Abysmal maintenance of parks and green spaces in the western peninsular. The parks in Diamond Vale, a residential community—mainly senior citizens, very, very poorly maintained and demanding of action. Mr. Speaker, how much more for time? [ Interruption ]

Hon. Members: None.

Mr. Speaker: Member, I have been very lenient. I have not attempted to do anything to frustrate you, except to guide you. This Bill has nothing to with the

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needs of constituencies, and all I am asking is, if you want to raise issues about your constituency, try to, in a skillful and clever way, liaise it or link those things with the respective Heads. But you cannot continue to just take in critical time of Parliament in raising issues which are very relevant to your constituents and I respect that, but please, on the point of relevance, if you could link those concerns of your constituents to some of the Heads that are before us, I would appreciate it.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Speaker. My concern really hinges around the reality that we have a Minister of Ministry of Works and Transport who has been complaining about a lack of funding for the work of his Ministry for the last two years and on the other hand we see an increase of expenditure of $1.5 billion. I fail to see the Ministry of Works mentioned here at all. I am asking what is the reason for that and I am providing some support to the Minister of Works during this contribution, to the reality that that expenditure is very much needed—*[Desk thumping]* in the western peninsular, very much needed.

We are at the end of the dry season, if there is a dry in this country, and I have to make the very sorry prediction that the rainy season is going to be a very difficult one because that neglect of the water courses, which could have been addressed if money is the problem, is comprehensive and it is going to cost this Government more in the long run. It is certainly going to cost the private citizens of this country more in the long run and the last time those floods occurred promises were made. Some of those promises are yet to be fulfill. I am talking about since November last year. We are coming back into the new flood season.

It is not a favour for me. If it was so, I could understand it not being done. This is the task of the citizens. Serve the people and all of that? Well, this is an opportunity to do it. It is not for the Member for Diego Martin Central, it is for the people of Diego Martin Central who are also the people of Trinidad and Tobago. So, that neglect has to stop. The bridges, the walkways, the foot paths in Capildeo
Lands, in Cocorite and Petit Valley—that has to go. The retaining walls and those other issues—the neglect is comprehensive and the citizens will not continue to accept this.

We heard some talk about the fisheries depots. [Interruption]

Dr. Douglas: What fisheries depots are you talking about?

Dr. Amery Browne: That was presented by Members on their legs. You were already sleeping. But, there is a fisheries depot in the Cocorite area that has yet to receive attention and I am not introducing that for the first time but—[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Please, just allow—continue.

Dr. A. Browne: You need to take the attention of the seniors not my attention.

Mr. Speaker, it was not mentioned here, but the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs promised to come and meet with those residents; with the fishing community of Cocorite. They waited on that meeting. He never turned up at the meeting and yet they are now confronted with a reality that their needs are not being met in this Bill and they must be very, very, concerned about that. Who else can they rely on but the parliamentarians, including their own Member of Parliament, to address this issue when the opportunity presents itself?

Mr. Speaker, I asked you for a time check and I know you—[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: You have just about eight minutes more.

Dr. A. Browne: Excellent! Thank you for that update.

Mr. Indarsingh: Send him an email.

Dr. A. Browne: I already spoke to him directly. I would not come here and say that if I did not speak to the Minister. I spoke to the Minister and I—[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin Central, ignore the crosstalk and focus.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I spoke to the Minister responsible for that sector already and I warned him that the fishermen of Cocorite will not continue to accept
the neglect that appears to be in train.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Works also spoke about the Diego Martin Highway and I am not sure if he has the most accurate update from his staff, but he seemed very confident here in the Parliament that the highway—[ Interruption ] Mr. Speaker, I am making the point that these distractions are of a significant nature. He seems confident that work is proceeding apace on further phases of the extension of the Diego Martin Highway.

There was a passing attempt to create the impression that the highway was not being built before. Phase one of the highway was completed in expeditious fashion under the good management of the Member for Diego Martin North/East who at the time was the Minister of Ministry of Works and Transport. [ Desk thumping ] The project already well in trained. The Minister has clearly encountered some difficulties but he made more recent promises for the project to be reinitiated and completed.

Again, if finance has been any part of that challenge, we would have appreciated the relevant update from the Government today. That was not forth coming and, therefore, the citizens of the entire western peninsular: Diego Martin Central, West and North/East, would anticipate that their woeful traffic situation is a priority for their Government, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and that project, phase two and three will move from mere old talk and wishful thinking to actual implementation.

I am again—this is not a plea or begging, because this is not a favour to the Member for Diego Martin Central, this is the duty of the Government. It is a project that was already in train.

The call to this Government in this debate and in every debate in the Lower House, is to start doing your work and to stop simply shifting blame unto the People’s National Movement. Stop the PR gimmicks, the feting and the other
things and focus on the basic needs of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

If the Government of the day is unable to successfully lead, inspire and direct the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, then they should simply admit it, and there is one recommended course of action when that occurs. We have already—we have not reached two and one-half years yet—arrived at the point where the majority of citizens have concluded this Government is hopeless. [Desk thumping]

2.35 a.m.

The remaining action required of the Government is admission of their inability to govern, and the calling of a general election in Trinidad and Tobago. [Laughter]

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Members, before I call on the hon. Minister of Finance to intervene at this time. May I just again for the record—I think you were absent or you were out of the Chamber at the time. [Mr. Speaker points to the Opposition Bench] I just want to set the record straight, so that all Members will leave here with the clear understanding if there is any confusion.

When I advised the hon. Member for Point Fortin on three occasions to stop interjecting and she disregarded my authority, I did not use the awesome powers that are entitled to be used when that takes place. I used Standing Order 92, which gives the Speaker authority to deal with matters that the Standing Orders are silent on.

And what I asked the hon. Member to do, is to retire to the Members Lounge for two hours at five to nine, and she can then return and even make a contribution if she so desires. I never invoked the power of asking the Member to withdraw from the sitting of this House at today’s sitting. I simply asked the Member to retire to the Members Lounge for two hours, five to nine and she could have been back here, that is the hon. Member, at five to eleven; the Member chose not to return.

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So I just want to set the record straight. I did not ask the Member to withdraw from today’s sitting for the rest of the evening or the rest of the sitting. So I just wanted to put that on record. I could have used that power, I do not want—and I will never want to go that route. I have invented a new approach when Members are misbehaving; I ask them to retire and come back, either for an hour or two hours. So I just thought I should put that on the record, so that Members would be clear in their minds that the Member chose not to return to this Chamber, not because I ordered her not to return, she chose not to. Hon. Minister of Finance.

[Desk thumping]

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, may I thank all Members who have contributed to this debate. I know it is quite late at night or morning, I should say. [ Interruption]

Hon. Member: Early in the morning.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Early in the morning. But I believe that a number of very valid contributions were made, and I want to address some of them rather quickly.

The Member for Port of Spain South, in her contribution acknowledged that our economy is susceptible to international developments and asked the very relevant question, what indeed will be the impact of the world development and the Euro zone developments in Trinidad and Tobago and what does this deficit financing mean for the future of our country? I must tell you that those concerns are concerns that I share. And in some way I have acknowledged, that part of the problem we are facing has been the result of the transmission of world developments on the Caribbean economies, and to a lesser extent Trinidad and Tobago’s economy.

I also share, Mr. Speaker, the concerns that she had expressed with respect to the indefinite nature of deficit financing. For it is no secret that this cannot continue without putting additional burdens on the debt situation, and if it were to do so,
then we will, in fact, face in years to come what countries in Europe are facing today.

At one time it appeared that it was a financial sector problem, and that financial firms and banking firms were at fault, and that the regulatory system was indeed lax. It soon became clear that that was not the real problem, or at least that was only the beginning of the problem, and it turned out to be a sovereign debt problem, and we all know and we have seen what has happened. Now, within recent times we have seen that the problem has now moved into the political sphere, and recent election results in France, Mr. Speaker, have pointed out that there is the view that we must develop a growth-oriented austerity programme, and that was reflected in the change in political leadership in France recently.

I say that because I am very conscious that Trinidad and Tobago must be saved from that situation ever developing. When I indicated that, the Member for Diego Martin Central said that I was searching to provide a level of comfort for the people of Trinidad and Tobago; that is one of the reasons that I have said so. We in this country have been moved from the edge of a financial crisis to a point of comfort at this point in time, so that we can insulate ourselves from some of those developments. There is more to be done.

The Member for Port of Spain South asked for an exit strategy. Well, an exit strategy really will come about by ensuring that the recovery process takes on momentum, and that that momentum is translated in a sustainable growth path. That is the exit strategy. And in the short term it will be necessary to take some hard options in order to prevent the situation from getting to the point at which we may have to face up to a low-growth scenario.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that it is necessary for us to work out the strategy as we are doing to move this economy from a negative growth position three years ago, which continued at a slower pace for the subsequent two
years, and in 2012 we are beginning to see the turn. There is a sequencing of events, that is to say, that you have to put the figures and the balance sheets in place as a prerequisite for instilling growth in the economy. We have seen that this has started.

When this Government came into office there was a 3.3 per cent negative growth, which was followed by a further negative growth. Although we had reduced it, it remained there and, therefore, we took sequential steps to first stabilize the economy and ignite the growth process. That really is what the strategy is all about.

And these strategies, Mr. Speaker, have been well articulated and I would not take the time of this House but well articulated in the strategies outlined in the budgetary measures, “Facing the issues—Turning the Economy Around.” If is one thing you can say, is that when we came into office we looked at the situation squarely in the face, faced it and decided to take hard decisions to turn the economy around. [Desk thumping] That has resulted in an expenditure of the order of $17 billion over and above the normal expenditure in the country over the last two years. Nine million dollars for Clico—[Interruption]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Nine billion dollars.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** Nine billion dollars, thank you. I am Sorry. Three billion dollars for the contractors, $5 billion for VAT refund—in fact, I got the figures, I had promised to provide those figures to you, and what I am told is that the VAT refunds between October 2010 and September 2011 that were paid out, was TT $5 billion. And between October 2011 to May 2012 was a further $2.5 billion. When I added up those figures, we really had to deal with almost $20 billion of expenditure in one form or the other that was not our normal expenditure. [Interruption]

**Hon. Member:** Wow!
Mr. Warner: We inherited that.

Hon. W. Dookeran: And that was why I said we shall feel a sense of comfort to Trinidad and Tobago, that we have been able to do that and deal with all the other problems. [Desk thumping]

So, when the Member for Diego Martin Central wondered where is the sense of comfort? I will simply ask him, if we had not done that, where would have been the hell in which we would have found ourselves? [Crosstalk] And we have, therefore, been able to escape what many countries have been facing; and some of the countries in the Caribbean are, in fact, moving in that direction. [ Interruption] I will come to that in a minute.

The second specification of our strategy on the financial side is reflected in the Budget Statement of 2012, in which we said we shall move from this steady foundation which in one year we are able to put on the books, to the beginnings of economic transformation, and that was going to be based on three things; (1) is a large increase in investment; (2) was what was called “opening up new spaces.” When we talk about the highway in Point Fortin, it is not simply a road, or a highway, it is not viewed as a highway alone. We knew the need for that and that has been so for 20 years, as the Minister of Works and Infrastructure said, but we saw that as opening up new space in the south west peninsula for real development in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

So while we are trying to stabilize and we have stabilized the economy, and while we have been able to deal with the financial stress that we inherited, we have set the groundwork for the expansion of the economy in the different spaces. The south west peninsula is where we have taken our first step and there are other proposals which were announced by the Minister of Works and Infrastructure and I in the budget, about opening up the north coast, and opening up the north west coast, et cetera. I would not go into details, but I just want to point out that the exit
strategy that you talk about is expanding the economy, giving it some new space to breathe and in so doing to prevent us from having this on a long-term basis. In the short term, if it does not happen as fast as we would like, then there will be some bitter medicine to take, and we will have to make some policy options in order to keep our budget deficit at a reasonable level that will not put at risk our debt profile.

2.50 a.m.

I thank the Member for Port of Spain South and I hope I have given, in a short synopsis, the exit strategy; how we will work towards achieving this goal. You are right. We are concerned as much as you are and I myself am very concerned when it comes to a situation where our financing deficit remains relatively high.

In terms of world standards, notwithstanding that, we have kept it at 5.8 per cent of our GDP and the countries that have found themselves in problems have allowed it to go way beyond that. That is why we sometimes have stress and strain in getting all the funds. We have been following a policy of restraint with respect to getting our fiscal deficit out of control; but there are demands and needs in the country for much more to be done. It is a sense of this Government’s desire to get everything done, having come into a period from which many parts of the country were neglected, that we have this great sense for more funding to take place; but such funding can only take place if it insulates the country from those developments.

The second major issue that was raised has to do with the level of comfort of which the Member for Diego Martin Central spoke. Quoting today’s newspaper, which I have not seen, once again responding to the headlines, what I said, very clearly, I was referring to the Monetary Policy Report. How it was reported is not within my control.
Dr. Browne: Thank you, Minister, for giving way. The reason I referred to those headlines is that when you rose earlier—you were trying to correct newspaper reports—you said, “based on the comments of the Governor of the Central Bank”. I was suggesting to you that even in correcting it, the newspaper content of today has continued the same thing. I was assisting you so now you can go on and further clarify it, if it is different to what the newspaper was saying.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Let me stick to the record. The Monetary Policy Report is what was presented by the Governor of the Central Bank. I indicated here, when the Member for Diego Martin West was trying to link me to some attack on the Governor as governor, I accepted his analysis that the growth rate of the country had to be adjusted downward from 1.5 per cent to 1 per cent, but I did not see that as a slump. I repeat: I do not see that as a slump. Whether those reports accurately reflected what he said, I did not see that here either in his report.

I want to bring to the attention of Members just a few of the findings of this report that would suggest to you why I believe that we are not in a slump. Let me just quote a few small paragraphs from this report. On page 16, it says that:

“Private sector credit which had begun to show signs of a recovery since mid 2011 following 20 consecutive months of decline, gained momentum later in the year. By December, private sector lending was up by 3.7 per cent (year-on-year) compared with just 0.9 per cent in May 2011 and a decline of 2.2 per cent a year earlier.”

This is in the Monetary Policy Report. It goes on to say:

“...business credit began a recovery in October 2011. Encouragingly the growth in business lending has continued into 2012 with an increase of 4.8 percent being recorded in March.”

It goes on to say, the Monetary Policy Report, which the Governor presented:

“There was also a reversal of the downward trend in construction loans,
mainly on account of lending associated with highway construction.”

Someone said, I believe the Member for Diego Martin Central, that he did his own survey and asked people what they thought about the country. That is reflected in consumer lending and this is what the report says:

“Consumer lending, which had been growing steadily in 2011, continued its steady path of recovery, expanding by 2.2 per cent (year-on-year) in March 2012.”

It goes on to explain how consumer spending has begun to show an increase.

You see, to move from one condition in which you are in negative growth to another condition where you have at least flat growth, you have to change the trends and that is what the strategy was all about. What steps do you take to change the trends? And what I am reading here is some evidence that the trends have begun to change and that is why I said that it could not be in a slump. What we are, in fact, seeing are changing trends of behaviour in a number of critical indicators. Perhaps it has not gone far enough and fast enough, but certainly it is the reversal of the trends which we inherited when we came into office and that is why I am making the point I made earlier today.

It goes on to say that the domestic stock market enjoyed the bullish run throughout 2011, providing investors with attractive returns, but has been hard-pressed to sustain the performance in 2012 so far. The composite price index rose by 21.2 per cent in 2011; compared with an increase of 9.2 per cent in 2010 and a 9.2 per cent decline in 2009.

The final quote I will make from this report has to deal with the issue—I will get to the quote in a while, but the point I am trying to make—oh, yes, let me just complete it. On page 29 of the Monetary Policy Report, this is what it says:

“The real estate mortgage portfolio of commercial banks has continued to expand at a relatively strong pace supported by historically low mortgage
rates on a year-on-year basis to March 2012. The value of real estate mortgage loans outstanding on the books of commercial banks, the main lenders in this market, increased by 10.5 per cent to $10,620 million. The number of new residential mortgage approvals granted by the commercial banks in the 12 months to March 2012 totalled 3,426 representing an 8.7 per cent increase over the number of approvals for the previous years.

There is another quote about new car sales that, in spite of what the noise levels in the country are saying, new car sales have increased. The figure is in here as well. These are the changing trends that are taking place in Trinidad and Tobago and I do not interpret those changes to suggest that this economy is in a slump. We are beginning the recovery process from the period from which we have come, but it takes time. There are some lags; it has to take time.

Having said that, I note also what are the downside risks. This was pointed out in the report. That is why sometimes reports on reports deal with one issue that gives the wrong impression to the population and that leads to a headline. In fact, the headline was raised here about recession. The Governor never said that. It was never anywhere in this report, but that was the headline in one of the newspapers and someone raised it here today.

There are some downside risks that we must be conscious of and those downside risks have been enumerated in this report as well, on page 11. I will briefly point out what these risks are and what we ourselves are concerned about.

First, there is the worsening crisis in the Euro area, of which the Member for Port of Spain South spoke. I would not go through the details. Secondly, there is the current industrial relations climate and the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre gave an account of the progress that we have made in settling 36 of the 57 agreements. These are all agreements that we have inherited from the years 2008—2010. We had to deal with that and our strategy has always been to contain, as far as possible,
those agreements, so that we can have a breathing space and, having got the breathing space, we would see the resumption of growth and then we would be in a better position to deal with the second rounds.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and I had discussed this several times. We said: “Let us consolidate; get the 2008—2010 behind us because they were agreements in the period of lean economic growth and it would have been wrong economically to apply high levels of settlement in that period, retroactively. You would have been adding more burdens and the very thing you were concerned about, you would have begun to see it possibly happening. Now that we have more or less—not totally yet—completed that round, we can now look afresh at the next three years and see what is possible in a different scenario and, based on the social dialogue that the Minister announced earlier, we will design with the labour union and the other partners how to proceed to have a rational settlement of wage disputes in Trinidad and Tobago where the workers will get their fair share.

We had inherited a system that itself had a certain number of weights and before we decided to move forward, we had to shed that weight. I am always supportive of those labour leaders, including the PSA, for having come to the national interest and providing a breathing space for this country in a very difficult time.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is within the context of a carefully designed strategy. That is what I am trying to tell you today. There is always this flippant argument that has been thrown out by some Members: where is the plan? The plan is a sequence of strategies to come out of the recessionary period in which we have emerged, into a period of growth, which now has to be sustained.
3.05 a.m.

The third area with respect to the risk ahead of us outlined in the report has to do—well I covered the two main areas and maybe I will get a chance to come back to the third area but I am conscious of the risk ahead of us. In fact, management of an economy today is about management of risk, and that is why you have to be very careful in deciding how you move because there can be new risk emerging. Anticipating those risks is an important part of management, and to some extent our economic strategy has been based on that kind of arrangement. That is why I feel confident when I say that the trends have begun to change. There is no slump emerging in the economy, a recovery process has started. It is not as strong as I would have liked or none of us would have liked but that is for the period ending 2011, and we still have 2012 to account for.

There is a problem with statistics, I agree, but let me also point out that the CSO although its statistics are lagging and ought not to be lagging they had, in fact, produced statistical information about unemployment. I have a report of November 15, 2011 which was a media release of the Central Statistical Office giving full details on what is the status with respect to unemployment and labour issues. What it said here and was repeated in the Monetary Policy Report is the unemployment rate for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago decreased from 5.8 per cent in the second quarter of 2011 to 5.2 per cent in the third quarter of 2011. [Desk thumping] There is a caveat, that the rate of participation had also dropped, but it is a level of comfort, Member for Diego Martin Central, that in spite of fighting a recessionary trend we have been able to maintain unemployment levels in Trinidad and Tobago by and large. [Desk thumping]

We know that there are changes taking place and the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, the Minister of Labour, announced them, but our policy has been based on a low interest rate environment on a sustenance of the employment levels,
on trying to ensure that inflation does not get out of control and providing sufficient credit for business sector expansion. That was the strategy; and to achieve those goals we announced a number of measures to do so.

So, before it is said, Mr. Speaker, as it has been said by those who are not reading the details of the agreement, there is a strategy to come out, to exit. Whether the strategy will, in fact, yield the results is a matter of time, is a matter of effort. I know that investment will have to increase. We all know that. That is why steps are being taken to provide the investment climate for that. At some other time we will explain what we are doing in that respect, but today, that is the main issue that has to be addressed in order to actualize what we expect could happen in 2012 and two thousand and beyond.

The third issue, Mr. Speaker, that was raised by the Member for Diego Martin West and he said it himself that he was basing his entire contribution on the arithmetic of the budget. I was surprised that the Member for Chaguanas West and the Minister of Works saw exactly what he was doing without ever being prompted by me.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What? Financial giant! [Desk thumping]

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** I must give him credit; because I went to ask my staff how could we explain that $4.2 billion for what the Member for Diego Martin West was saying, and what the Minister of Works and Infrastructure said was precisely what it was. He was quoting, and I will just repeat it for the records, from the Supplementation and Appropriation Bill for the financial year 2011 when we were closing the accounts for 2011 and the $2.7 billion that he spoke about was for 2011 and he was translating that into 2012 and he said he was basing his entire presentation on that. Well, I need not say any more because if he has based his entire presentation on that assumption which was wrong, then his presentation clearly had no merit whatsoever. [Desk thumping]
Mr. Roberts: I empathize with the PNM at this juncture.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, he went through the 2012 revenue estimates. It was requested at the Finance Committee and it was provided. I would not go through them again, but all the variations in revenue were outlined and he was correcting quoting them, and suggesting how they could recoup our revenue.

So, there is no debate because he was arguing that most of the revenue projections would remain the same. There were two or three items that we expect to have increases in one of which is royalty and the other with respect to capital revenue and other financing which means the unemployment levy and the Green Fund contributions. Someone asked me to explain that, but it was actually explained in the document already. So, suffice it to say that the Member for Diego Martin West has once again said nothing because he has started from a wrong assumption [Desk thumping] and his entire presentation in response to this Report was out of track as a result.

Mr. Speaker, I think those are the main points, substantial points that were raised and I must say that there are other points that were raised of a local level, and I know and we all know that all politics is local and therefore the Parliament is a place to raise local issues and I believe the Member for Chaguanas West had outlined some of the areas of activity. I myself, in the presentation outlined some of the activities in order to ensure that we have covered the entire country in terms of the needs of the people within the constraints of our capability.

So, finally, I just want to reiterate what the Minister of the People and Social Development said when he said that we did, in fact, take every measure to ensure that no one would be getting less income as a result of the increase in income to the NIS. But I remember very well, we did not want to put it to administrative rules, we decided to put it in the law itself.

The Finance Act that was passed here on February 29, 2012 included the
provision so that there is legislative support to an intention. I do not think this was done before.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: No!

Hon. W. Dookeran: Someone had said that this happened the last time but what did not happen the last time is that they put it in the law and we have put it in the law to protect the 2,700 people. It is only 2,700 people who will be affected potentially so that the pension under this Act will ensure that this total income will not be less than the total income he was in receipt of prior to February 01, 2012.

And the Minister of the People and Social Development made a strong presentation with his technical staff and we eventually decided to see and agreed that we must not leave it to chance so that we put it in the law.

Now, there are always people who will feel—in fact, what I have sensed is that people do not recognize that this only affects approximately 2,700 people and a special category, so the whole retirees association is now talking about it. The Minister met with them and I told him earlier that I would be happy to meet with them, with him, to explain further, and to see what are the concerns that would affect them all.

We are in a position where we have introduced the $3,000 old age pension and we have also increased the NIS pension by $3000 within these two years with this onerous fiscal burden on your hands [Desk thumping] running the country at the same time, and have done that all together. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to put in perspective, because it is easy when you are in Opposition to pander to some kind of emotion interest on the part of some person or victims who might feel they are being not treated properly. In that sense, I thought we shall quote the overall figures as outlined in the monetary policy report to establish our case and to ask this House to support the measures.

I believe I have responded to the main measures that have been raised here
today, and if there are any other measures they probably did not warrant a response at this time.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Debe doubles coming.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [Desk thumping]

*Question put and agreed to*

Resolved:

That this House adopt the Second Report (2011/2012) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2012 Appropriation.

**THE FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION)(FINANCIAL YEAR 2012) BILL, 2012**

**The Minister of Finance (The Hon. Winston Dookeran):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill entitled an Act to provide for the Supplementary Appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30 2012 of the sum of the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2012) Act, 2011 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

*Question put and agreed to*

Bill accordingly read a second time.

*Question put and agreed to,* That the Bill be read the third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

UNREVISED
SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEES

National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago (Inc’n) Bill
(Adoption)

Mr. Jairam Seemungal (La Horquetta/Talparo): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Be it resolved* that the House adopt the Report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a Private Bill entitled an Act for the Incorporation of the National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, November 18, 2011, Mr. Chandresh Sharma, MP, presented a Petition on behalf of an organization known as the National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago. The Secretariat ensured the notice was published in the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette* and the *Trinidad Guardian*. The private Bill was introduced and read a first time on Friday, January 27, 2012.

At the next sitting, the Bill was read a second time and the following Members were appointed to a Special Select Committee: Mr. Jairam Seemungal, MP, Chairman; Mr. Chandresh Sharma, MP, Member; Mr. Stacy Roopnarine, MP, Member; Miss Marlene McDonald, MP, Member; and Miss Donna Cox, MP, Member.

After the requested documents were received, the Committee’s first meeting was held on March 23, 2012 and the promoters were required to appear before the Committee. There were no objections on the Bill, however, the Committee received a written submission from Dr. Pandita Indrani Rampersad, who was invited with other Members of her team to appear before the Committee on Friday May 04, 2012 to state matters on their submission.
However, it was concluded that the issue raised would not affect the legislation and the National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago has the right to conduct their affairs accordingly.

The Committee wishes to report that it has completed its deliberations and has found sufficient proof to support the incorporation of the National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago by an Act of Parliament. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the private Bill be passed by the House subject to the amendments that were agreed by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, the National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago and the Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be now read a third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

**Association of Real Estate Agents of Trinidad and Tobago (Inc’n) (No. 2) Bill**

**Adoption**

**Mr. Jairam Seemungal (La Horquetta/Talparo):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Be it resolved* that the House adopt the Report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a Private Bill entitled an Act for the Incorporation of an Association to be known as the Association of Real Estate Agents and for matters incidental thereto.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, February 04, 2011, Mr. Stephen Cadiz, MP, presented a Petition on behalf of the Association of Real Estate Agents of Trinidad
and Tobago, and leave was granted to proceed with the introduction of the said private Bill. As required, the relevant notice was published in the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette* and the *Trinidad Guardian* newspaper and the Bill was introduced and read a first time on Friday, March 25, 2011.

At the next ordinary sitting, the Bill was read a second time and was referred to a Special Select Committee comprising the following Members: Dr. Fuad Khan, MP, Chairman; Mr. Stephen Cadiz, MP, Member; Mr. Jairam Seemungal, MP, Member; Mr. NiLeung Hypolite, MP, Member; and Mrs. Patricia McIntosh, MP, Member.

The Committee met with the promoters of the Bill the Association of Real Estate Agents (AREA) and the objectors of the Bill, representatives from the Institute of Survey which resulted in amendments to the said Bill.

The objector’s main concern was clause 3(c) of the Bill, the use of the words “valuers, examiners and expert”. The officials from the institute stated that the members of the association do not have the qualification and expertise in the field of valuation, land surveying or valuation surveying to legislate on such matters.

In light of this, the Committee agreed that the Secretariat’s legal adviser liaise with the association and the Bill was later amended. Amendments were also proposed by the CPC Department and these were agreed by the Committee and the association.

However, the Committee was unable to complete its deliberation before the end of the first session and submitted a report to Parliament indicating the progress made and recommended that the other committee be established in a subsequent session to continue the work. This report was adopted on June 03, 2011.

In a Second Session, HOR Bill No. 25 of 2011 entitled the Association of Real Estates Agent (Inc’n) (No. 2) Bill, 2011 was introduced in the House of Representatives on November 25, 2011.

UNREVISED
At a sitting of the House held on Friday December 09, 2011, the Bill was read a second time, and Mr. Speaker referred the Bill to a Special Select Committee comprising: Mr. Jairam Seemungal, MP, Chairman; Mr. Stephen Cadiz, MP, Member; Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh, MP, Member; Mr. NiLeung Hypolite, MP, Member; and Mrs. Patricia McIntosh, MP, Member.

The Committee was mandated to continue consideration of the matters of the incorporation of the Association of Real Estate Agents. The Committee was empowered to adopt, as part of the records, the work undertaken by the Committee established in the First Session 2010/2011 on the same matter. The Committee held three meetings during this session, considered the Bill and reported on reports and documents received from the Registrar General’s Department. The Committee then made the following recommendations: the Association of the Real Estate Agents be incorporated by an Act of Parliament and the Bill be passed by the House of Representatives.

The Committee further recommended the following:

(1) They must provide the name approval certificate duly authenticated by the Registrar General’s Department, in addition to the other documents required.

(2) Where a name approval certificate expires before the Committee completes its business, the Promoters should be mandated to apply to have the name approval certificate renewed.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you, and I beg to move.  

Question put and agreed to.  

Report adopted.  

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be now read a third time.  

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.
The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, June 15, 2012 at 1.30 p.m. and to serve notice that on that day the Government will deal with the amendments to the Children Bill and any further amendments to the Electronic Monitoring Bill, 2012. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 3.33 a.m.*