Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [January 22, 1996]:
That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Sen. Martin Daly: Mr. President, I join with Members in formally wishing you a happy New Year and once again reiterate what a pleasure it is to debate in this Chamber with your good self in the Chair.

I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance on his debut budget. I must say at the outset that I am very impressed with the Minister’s attempt—whether successful or not—to make low income earners and the less fortunate members of the society feel involved in the political process once more. I feel very strongly that the party now in Opposition was very widely perceived as having—to its detriment—been concerned to satisfy the request of the more fortunate, well heeled and stronger members of the society and to have turned its back on low income earners and the less fortunate in the society. I am quite sure about that, Mr. President.

I think that a most commendable feature of this budget are those measures which will assist low income earners. Therefore, we must be very complimentary to the Minister with regard to his removal of VAT on basic items, the lowering of the tax threshold and the lowering of the rates of income tax. All those things are measures which will make the less well-off in the society feel that the Government is concerned about them and not only concerned about large capital investment.

It is very important that we keep people like that involved in the political process because whether one rides in a limousine in Houston when one visits
foreign investors, whether one goes to Haiti to play mas, whether one goes to Hong Kong to do—the devil knows what, we vote in Trinidad and Tobago. So one can ride in a limousine in Houston as much as one likes, one can play mas in Haiti for a day or two and do whatever one does in Hong Kong, but we vote here and it is very important that we keep—what is called—the man on the priority bus route involved in all our political processes, including the budget. I therefore think it is a matter for strong commendation that the Minister has made these gestures towards the less fortunate members of the society. It is a long time since they have received some practical consideration from Government. Of course they get many words.

Unfortunately, the reduction of prices of basic food items will only matter if one has an income or resources. Therefore employment creation is really going to be the real test for this Government given the two themes of the Budget, of which I also approve and which I think will prove politically useful for the Government.

The Minister said in his budget statement in the other place, and I quote:

"Our goal is not simply a healthy balance sheet, although we must be mindful always of the financial state of the nation. Rather, it is to develop a country built on national unity with an economy that can generate growth with equity, for all the partners, and create employment opportunities that will enable our people to believe in themselves and to have faith in their future."

That is a statement of which I very much approve and I am happy to see that it is the goal of this Government. I was even happier when the Minister came here and indicated to us, and I quote:

"We shall not settle for trickle-down economics which purports jobless growth, there must be growth with social equity."

I am very happy that the Government has rejected expressly and resoundingly trickle-down economics. It is a phrase I find uncomfortable, patronizing and one that is totally unsuitable for a Republic such as ours. I am also very pleased with those two goals that the Minister has set in the budget.

Regrettably, Mr. President, after one full day’s debate and after listening to the Minister in the other place, I have not had any concrete ideas from the Government with regard to job creation. I heard some concrete suggestions
through my colleague, Sen. Marshall. I know that my colleague Sen. Prof. Spence will once more be making a plea for agriculture and I am quite sure that he will be linking it to the school feeding programme and tourism. I also heard certain suggestions from my colleague, Sen. St. Cyr, but I have not heard one concrete suggestion from the Government as to how it intends to achieve its goal of "creation of employment opportunities that will enable our people to believe in themselves and to have faith in their future". I think it is quite wrong that we have not had any specifics on job creation.

While I am happy that we have re-involved the less well-off in the political process, having spent all our focus over the last few years in the metropolitan capitals of the world, I think it is incumbent upon the Government to tell us in more detail, what it intends to do about the creation of employment opportunities. I do not share the view of my colleagues that there is any settling-in period or any honeymoon period for any new government. I totally reject that. As far as I am concerned from the day one forms a political party, from the day one puts out one's manifesto, from the day one offers oneself for elections, one must have somewhere in his cupboard a coherent policy for how one intends to run the country. [Desk thumping]. That is why prior to today’s debate I have been critical of the work ethic of this Government and I continue to be critical of it.

10.10 a.m.

I am all in favour of cleaning up Wallerfield and Manzanilla. I think that is wonderful, but before the Minister of Works spends any more time, which I accept is absolutely commendable—but for the fact that I spend nearly every Sunday cleaning up a section of the beach in Mayaro I would join him on his clean-up efforts—con-jointly with that, he has an obligation—and it is an obligation that was undertaken by the Minister of Finance in the budget as I will show—to come to this Parliament and take us into his confidence with regard to the capital projects under his ministry.

I am very unhappy that I had to read about the library and the airport in the Sunday Guardian of January 14, at a time when the budget debate was taking place in the other place and was scheduled to take place in this Senate. The obligation to make those statements—I think everyone knows that I am very, very conscious of the importance of the media—is first and foremost in this Parliament where they can be debated; and I expect that we will be hearing from the Minister
in more detail about these things. I shall certainly return both to the subject of the library and the airport.

The point is, this budget debate represents the first opportunity for this Government to tell us, ministry by ministry, what is its plan for running the country. Indeed, the Minister of Finance recognized this and told us in the course of his budget statement in the other place that he expected that his Cabinet colleagues would tell us in more detail what are the Government's plans. In his budget statement on page 15 states:

"I have no doubt, however, that during the course of the dialogue on this Bill my Ministerial colleagues will elaborate on these issues and the specific policies and programmes which we intend to implement in order to propel the country forward."

The Minister of Finance quite rightly recognized the obligation of the Government to come and tell us in some detail what is their specific policy for running the country. I am not satisfied with thanksgiving after thanksgiving, and meeting after meeting. They must tell us what is their specific policy for running the country. The Government must tell us in the Parliament as well as in political meetings and as well as in the newspaper, because this is the place to which the country looks to find out what is happening, and there are procedures in Parliament to guarantee that the requisite information is given to us.

Moreover, the Minister of Finance, after his apologia for having to present a budget in a short time, in the fourth paragraph of his budget statement says:

"There are signed contracts to which the new Government is committed, whether it likes them or not. There are projects in the pipeline—some good, some bad, some mad."

Of course, I will be referring to the maddest project, which is the airport, in due course, but, "some good, some bad, some mad". That raises a clear expectation in the national community that those ministers under whose portfolio at least the bad and the mad projects fall, would come and tell us, because the Minister cannot have made this statement in a vacuum. The Cabinet must have a point of view. This is not a private expression of the Minister; this is said on a ritualistic occasion of a budget presentation and the Government tells us that there are good projects, bad projects and mad projects and Ministers must come and identify for us project by project, which are the good ones, which are the bad ones and which are the mad ones. They have the clearest obligation to do so, and they have
signally failed, in my respectful view. I want to elaborate on that statement. What that failure does is lead one to the conclusion that many of these decisions are going to be taken *ad hoc* and therefore, not taken correctly.

I will also touch on the issue of the La Brea Industrial Estate, but may I say at the outset that there have been at least four contributions on the Government side that comply with what I regard as the Government's obligation to disclose to the national community its plan for running the country and to tell us which are the bad and mad projects. In fact, I have lost track of the number, so let me identify them.

The Minister of National Security has told us some of his plans with regard to fighting crime, not as much as one would like to hear, but he has told us some of his plans. We had a very clear statement from Sen. Cuffy-Dowlat about housing policy. We had an equally clear, and as I will demonstrate if time permits, a momentous statement from Sen. Barbara Gray-Burke about social development. Momentous statement! It has absolutely no specifics and she has not related it to the budget, and I will demonstrate what is so dangerous about that and what makes me believe that many of this Government's policies at the moment are *ad hoc*. One cannot put oneself up for election and then say give us time to give thanks. That is not possible in the modern world, in my respectful submission. It simply is not possible and I hope that in the course of this budget debate those things would be rectified.

Likewise, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries was good enough—and I say that as an expression of graciousness—to tell us what he intended to do about the La Brea Industrial Estate because it is not only a colossal project, but it is a matter about which there has been great controversy. Whether people like it or not, it is a matter about which there is room for two views and therefore we must know what is this Government's plan.

Mr. President, I have no quarrel with the Minister of Finance who has been criticized for speaking too briefly. I do not find the seats here are all that comfortable. He has been criticized for smiling; he has been criticized for speaking in a homely fashion. Some say he is headstrong. That is the label that has been hung on him by the media. Someone said yesterday he was gentle, or words to that effect. So far as I am concerned he has discharged his obligation. He has given us the country's balance sheet; he has told us what money he expects to raise and he has told us how he expects to spend it. But as I have indicated, there is a clear obligation on his ministerial colleagues to come and tell us what
they plan to do with the money that the Minister of Finance has allocated to them. There is a clear obligation, Mr. President, with one or two exceptions which I have mentioned, which simply has not been fulfilled.

So that as far as I am concerned, a smiling, homely budget presentation is very refreshing. Indeed, we need some smiling, and we need some homeliness from this Government. Do you know why, Mr. President? It is so refreshing to see someone smile and hear someone speak in a homely fashion. Thank God, we now have a Prime Minister of the country who does not refer to himself in the third person. All these refreshing things are very important and it sends certain signals to the community. We have a Prime Minister who now says "I do this; I do that; I do the other". He does not refer to himself in the third person as though he is some sort of *deus ex machina* and not a servant of the people who has been elected.

All of that is very refreshing but the Government has fallen short so far, with the exceptions that I have mentioned, to tell us what its specific policies are in accordance with the obligation recognized by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. President, before I examine what we have been able to glean so far about the Government's policy, I would like to presume to say a few words about the political background of this budget.

**10.20 a.m**

One feature of the political background of this budget which I have already mentioned is that the Government, commendably, has attempted to enter into a dialogue with ordinary people instead of saying the Prime Minister will do this and the Prime Minister will do that and using what my mother calls $40.00 words. I do not think we need $40.00 words in order to communicate with the people, and that is part of the political background to this budget. The Government is attempting to reach out to ordinary people and to forget about Houston and Miami, and the Summit of the Americas, as important as they are, and talk to our people.

As Senator Mahabir-Wyatt pointed out yesterday, we are on a political cusp and I thought that was a wonderful way of putting it. This is the third change of Government we have had in recent times and to my mind, there is room for the cynical view that politics in this country represents a see-saw struggle for the control of power and the wealth of the country to be shared by political cronies. That is how I see politics in the country at the moment. Our Government has lost
sight not of the aphorism, the greatest good for the greatest number. They have lost sight of even some good for the greatest number as each person scurries about trying to secure his own turf.

What is happening in this country at the moment with this change of Government, is that our political leaders—and I use the words ‘political leaders’ advisedly—once again are taking us to the brink because this struggle for control of power and wealth in the country is causing persons to lose their cool. I do not know whether La Brea has a good project or bad project, what I know is that it is controversial. Colossal sums of money have been spent on it and enough material has been raised by our vigilant media to suggest that the project requires scrutiny—so the Minister of Energy quite properly says he will investigate the project. I am not making any pronouncement, and I am not suggesting that investigation means it is "bad" or "mad", I am saying there are grounds for investigation. The Minister of Energy says he is going to investigate the project, and then someone else in politics says that he is going to bad-mouth us on the international market, bring us to our knees unless this project goes forward.

Mr. President, is that how we are going to conduct politics in this country? If we disagree about a project, we are not only going to bad-mouth the public servant, we are going to bad-mouth the whole country because we disagree? That is symptomatic of the see-saw and the fight for control for power and wealth in the country. It means that the politicians are fighting over the wealth of the project. They are not concerned about whether it is good or bad for the country. They are only concerned to secure the power and wealth that comes when there is a project of that size. What I am saying, is that this see-saw struggle is blinding us, not only to the ordinary courtesies, but to the fact that we have a country to run and a public to whom we are accountable.

Then we read in the newspaper, and it has not been denied, that the Library Complex is to be scrapped. I know that the headline writers do not always get it right so I read the article and it is clear from the article and the quotation that it is the intention either to scrap the project, or to scale it down so dramatically that it becomes one out of ten. And what happens? Everyone says "political discrimination". How does discrimination arise? The Minister has made a decision right or wrong—I happen to think he is as wrong as anything—about the allocation of resources and people apparently do not think we operate in a democracy.
I am sure that everyone remembers on election night the map that appeared on the television screen in different colours, and it is perfectly obvious what are the respective constituencies of the three parties we have; and what is wrong if you can justify it on objective grounds and you win an election? What is wrong, if you can justify it on objective grounds, with the reallocation of resources and why can we not discuss a decision, whether it is to investigate the La Brea project, or whether it is to scrap the Library Complex? Why can we not discuss these things without using words like discrimination and threatening to bring the country to its knees? Why can we not do that? Is it that we are not concerned about the greatest good or some good for the greatest number?

That suggests to me a fight over turf and if, as many people perceive it, the parties that have formed the Government essentially have come out of a rural base and with that experience, choose to give priority to projects in rural areas, that is not discrimination, that is the natural result of democracy. If one does not like the result of the democracy then he must use what efforts he can to change the result in order to get a result that pleases him.

I am making a serious appeal to our political leaders to walk back from that brink where they are taking us. Democracy ordains that the party that comes to power has the right to reallocate resources without the talk of discrimination and warfare and bad-mouthing us on the international market. My view is that there is a strong, corresponding obligation on the Government to tell us what its policy is and to justify these reallocations to avoid charges and the appearance of discrimination. That is what makes taking the country into its confidence during this budget debate, so important. It means that decisions can be justified so the people do not simply feel that this Government is now turning its back on the City of Port of Spain. That is why things cannot be done ad hoc and we have to justify what are being done in order that people can examine the issues and not take us to this brink with loose talk of discrimination and even looser talk of violence. It is quite wrong.

We had an election. There was a certain result. Like it or not, certain consequences and policy shifts will flow as a result of that, and naturally, those who are affected, as the Minister of Finance recognizes—he even defined the parasitic oligarchy for us and I will be coming to that in due course—in his budget statement. That is the whole thing about democracy. You want to go one way and someone wants to go the other way and the end result of finding out from the Government what their priorities are, has produced this brinkmanship and loose talk about discrimination on one side and violence on the other. I
absolutely reject it and I have no qualms in telling our political leaders to behave themselves and stop this loose talk.

Let us understand what democracy is: No one has the divine right to govern the country and equally no one has the divine right to be in opposition. No one has the divine right to control the wealth and power of the country and, therefore, the sooner we understand what is the result of a democratic process, the better. Then we will stop all this loose talk and examine the policy issues and not simply make all of this loose talk which has the effect of destabilizing the country and making people feel very uncomfortable indeed.

Against that political background, let us examine some of the proposals in this budget. There is not much more I can say about the La Brea project, I do not have a view about it, but I am satisfied that it ought to be examined and there is nothing sinister in examining it. Of course, if the Government sets up a commission or a board of enquiry or chooses enquirers who are designed to produce a certain result then, that is a different matter. I can only reserve judgment on that until the Minister tells us who are the people that are going to investigate this project and that they are going to do so expeditiously; and that is where the parasitic oligarchy defined by the Minister comes in but I am going to leave that for a while. Against that background we must examine the decision to investigate the La Brea project.

Let us now briefly examine this library decision. It is a wrong decision and it is made as we lawyers say *per incuriam*, that is to say without knowledge of the facts. Libraries, as has been pointed out are not just places where one stores books and documents and therefore, I support those speakers before who have said that this library should be retained as a nerve centre of learning. It is astounding to me that the contribution of Sen. Marshall has not yet seen the light of day in the print media. It is amazing, and just shows what our priorities are in this country. Anyway, he made it very clear what is his view on the importance of learning and learning in technology and information sciences and I think all of us conceive of this library as doing just that. Being a nerve centre of learning which can then distribute learning by modern information systems throughout different parts of the country.

10.30 a.m.

Mr. President, if we focus on the issue, the issue is not about putting a post office in Las Lomas, putting a police post in Mayaro, putting a library in Tobago so that you can fool people and tell them to look at what the Government is
doing. The issue is, if modern technology requires that there should be a nerve
centre through which we distribute throughout the country, then we must explain
that to the people. Do not make them feel that the physical presence of the four
walls constituting the post office or the caravan constituting the temporary police
station is what the Government is doing for them. That is long time thing! I am
given to some colloquialism because I do not go to Houston to dine very often
and if I want to play mas I do so here. This idea that one must scurry about and be
photographed opening a post office or a standpipe somewhere is long time thing,
and it is long time thinking that has caused the scrapping of the Library Complex.

May I make it absolutely clear, Mr. President, I am not making any case for
the continuation of the rehabilitation of Port of Spain. If this Government thinks
that the beautification of Port of Spain as a whole is a wrong priority, it has won
the election and it is entitled to think so and to act accordingly. I am saying there
is a clear case for the detachment of the Library Complex from the overall
objective of the beautification of Port of Spain, and a fundamental mistake has
been made.

As I go through the Minister of Finance’s test, I would say that the library
project is a good one.

In the same article in the Sunday Guardian, mention was made of the airport,
a subject in which my interest is well known. It is amazing that the Minister of
National Security would say, "Do you know our airport might be downgraded
because we do not have fire tenders?" And we talk about "we got the site for the
ACS", and this, that and the other!

I am not going to bore everybody with the airport once more. Let us just settle
for the fact that it is a glorified slum and the only development that has taken
place in the airport is one fast food concession after another, which is increasing
the amount of litter in the airport. I suppose the Consul General from the ACS
goes in the VIP room—and that is part of the problem—all Government Ministers
traipse through the VIP room too.

But if one stands up in the waving gallery and looks down at the galvanized
roof through the metal grille which is not properly painted, one sees sucked
oranges and sucked pieces of chicken watching one in one’s face while one is
waiting. You say we are greeting people in a world-class place. It is a slum!

I want to hear what this Government’s plan is for the airport. Do not give me,
as my mother would say, any half-picked ducks about PRIDE. What is PRIDE?
What I want is an airport. People want cars to drive in or they want houses to live in but I want an airport. I do not want to hear anything about PRIDE or Wallerfield. Take me out of that glorified slum. I assume that "throw up" is not unparliamentary language, and it is difficult to wait for anyone in that airport without throwing up with all that litter on the ground. There are more sucked oranges on the ground than we see outside Strand cinema on a jouvert morning. I want an airport and I want one quickly.

Paradoxically, there can be no question that the second bidder on the airport should be given an opportunity because there is much talk about the overt influence of those who attend parties. Perhaps it is very ironic that the overt influence of those who give and attend parties should lead to the prison.

Indeed, the outgoing Minister of Planning and Development gave this Senate his word, in a Motion that I moved on the airport, that by the end of December he would have regarded the rope that was given to the first bidder as at an end. Let Sen. Wade Mark tell us he is moving gingerly about state enterprise appointments, but I want to know when we are getting somebody in charge of the Airports Authority to give us an airport. I want to hear it from this Government. We presume they will tell us something here about changes in PRIDE and not throwing out PRIDE and that sort of business. I do not want to hear about PRIDE, I want an airport.

Therefore, I would consign the existing plans for the airport under the category, "mad", not just bad but mad because they have not been able to raise the finance for three years. I am presuming to elaborate on this list: the good, the bad, the ugly. Well, we have the good, the bad and the mad. The lack of an airport is mad. There is no discrimination in giving us an airport because everybody has to pass through it. Even if one is a yogic flyer one has to pass through there, assuming one will have to clear immigration and customs.

Mr. President, there is an allocation of $332 million under social services. This is consistent with the two goals of the Government which I quoted this morning. I am not sure what was said in the other place because I do not regard hours subsequent to 8.00 o’clock as suitable for parliamentary debate. It may be suitable for other kinds of debates but not parliamentary debate. Until Sen. Burke spoke yesterday we had no idea how this $332 million is to be spent in furtherance to the Government’s goals to look after the less well-off in the society.
It is very important because the social safety net which the last Government said it was extending was a failure and it is responsible for the perception, which I referred to earlier, that they turned their backs on ordinary people. Indeed, if they had given any thought at all to how they are spending this $332 million, we would not have to be coming here again and making a plea for Servol. I am not going to embarrass Sen. Wade Mark by quoting from his contributions when he sat nearer to me - I think he is still close to me in spirit.

On one occasion, the last government cut off Servol. It took 50 per cent of their allocation away and the people came up and demonstrated here, and they accused the Independents of having organized the demonstration, which of course was foolish. Not only that, Sen. Wade Mark was very impressed so that he accused his good Friend, then Sen. Rooks, of having organized the demonstration and he was enthusiastic about the demonstration and he embraced it indeed, as sometimes he was wont to do. People almost forgot that it was the Independents, such was his enthusiasm. He almost persuaded people that it was him and not the Independents that had raised the plight of Servol.

If the $332 million had been sorted out for allocation and if education of young people is important to keep stability in the society, then Servol should not have to go cap in hand to each successive government to ask for its normal subvention or for its subvention to be increased. I know the Minister has correspondence on this and I sincerely hope that he will tell us in his winding up that one thing we can be sure about is that the appropriate part of that $332 million has been reserved for Servol. I cannot believe Sen. Wade Mark will sit there and participate in cutting Servol’s throat again. I cannot believe that! I want to hear a firm undertaking from the Minister what part of that $332 million has been reserved for Servol.

Mr. President, I go further and say, the Government must give us an explicit agenda for social justice arising out of that allocation of $332 million.

10.40 a.m.

Now I assume from those two powerful contributions we had from—I do not like to call them the Back Benches—the Benches behind the Minister, that what we were told by Sen. Burke about the Government’s policy is correct. I heard her say that we are going to have contributory and non contributory social service benefits. I heard her say that. Well, in most countries, Mr. President, that is called welfare; and if it is that this Government has been planning to introduce welfare, or to turn us into a welfare state, then they must tell us what part of that $332
million is to be devoted to the provision of these contributory and non contributory service benefits.

They cannot come here and say "look $332 million, spend it", because we must have a policy, not something ad hoc. If we have social service benefits we should have a pilot project—let me choose a fictitious area—we are going to have a pilot project in Ruritania and then the Member for the constituency next door to Ruritania will say "discrimination". That is why you must have clearly defined policy. I thought that was quite startling—the disclosure that this Government is considering a welfare state—and they have not told us anything about how it is to be financed or how the resources are to be allocated.

I was equally startled to hear reference, from her, to a population council and to the use of poverty assessment teams. I really thought we would have heard something (it does not have to come from a minister) specific about that. That is all very laudable, but she has to tell us, with the greatest respect, Ma’am, how the country’s money is going to be spent on those matters, because welfare generally has—and I am not saying whether it is a good thing or bad—implications for taxation. So here we have the Minister lowering taxation, but I do not know how we are going to finance the provision of these social service benefits. I would say that that expression and some of the things listed by Sen. Burke are definitely some of the "smoking guns" in this budget. We simply do not know anything about them, and we simply have not been told.

That brings me, Mr. President, to another issue in relation to these "good, bad and mad" projects which we are only left to guess as to which ones the Government identify as such. That brings me to the question of our justice system. I would like to refer to a press release issued by the Chief Justice on January 9, 1996, in which he raised the question of a World Bank Report entitled Judicial Sector Report dated July 6, 1995, prepared by the Chief of the Modernization Unit of the Latin American and Caribbean Technical Department of the World Bank. I hope the Minister of National Security has a copy, because this says that the total funding for our judiciary is well below the targeted norm for the Latin American countries.

I do not know whether this is a project or a report that is going to be converted into a project to fall under the heading of "good, bad or mad". I think it is good. I am not surprised that we are spending less on justice, in the sense of the formal provision of administration of justice, than in other countries. The court statistics tell you that. I hope, Mr. President, that the Minister of National
Security, and possibly the Attorney General, will look for that report. Do we have Ministers who are not sitting over there? [Interruption] It is funny, but I was about to refer to Sen. John in connection with those instruments, but it seems that he sensed it and said something which I did not quite catch, but anyway—

Where was I Mr. President? The justice system. I would like to know how the Government views spending on the administration of justice. Has it made any allocation here for the improvement of the administration of justice, and if so, under what Head? We do not know, and we need to be told, because it is an integral part of improving the situation with regard to crime about which this Government was so eloquent on the campaign trail.

Thank the Almighty, Mr. President, that we have a Minister of National Security who has recognized the importance of forensic science. Let me suggest to him that, apart from vehicle identification and the other things he mentioned yesterday, that we set about training forensic examiners. I have spoken about this ad nauseam in the Parliament.

Mr. President: The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. J. Spence]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. M. Daly: Thank you very much, Mr. President and Members. Let me increase the rate of striking.

Now, Mr. President, I am not going to repeat all the things I said about the importance of forensic science, I am simply going to copy the pages of my contributions on the subject and pass them to the honourable Minister. But you see, if the Government had a coherent plan, we would know how much they intend to spend on the provision of forensic science, but we do not have the master plan, we do not have a plan based on contributions, apart from one or two exceptions, that have been made in this budget debate. But I assure you, Mr. President, that many of our problems will be solved in the courts by the use of proper forensic science. So that, I hope that the Chief Justice will get his wish and that this report will be unearthed, examined and investigated and we will decide whether we should spend the same amount of money as the rest of Latin America on the provision of justice, and possibly more.
Now, Mr. President, there are quite a few other projects that I would like to deal with but time is not always on our side. May I just very quickly, for whatever it is worth, lend my support to certain things that have been said in the course of this debate.

I welcome what has been said by the Minister of National Security on the use of forensic science in the fight against crime. I have already recommended the employment creation measures suggested by my colleagues Sen. Marshall and Sen. St. Cyr. I associate myself with the disappointment about the Library Project for the reasons that have been said. I agree with some of the concerns of Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt about political influence; and that brings me to the "parasitic oligarchy", Mr. President.

I invite everyone to read. I have known the Minister of Finance for some time, not a long time, and I know he is in touch. He is so in touch that he knows when to throw a good party. [Laughter] He says in his budget statement "there are those who fear change because they have benefited from the status quo, and there are those not being part of the 'in-crowd', who welcome change, but only if such change will redound to their own benefit."

10.50 a.m.

That is the parasitic oligarchy, those who want to be part of the in-crowd, because they want to be part of change in order to convert change to their own benefit. That is the parasitic oligarchy. [Desk Thumping] Do not tap the desk, because I could enumerate all those members of the in-crowd of the previous administration. I could identify people who are given unaccountable political power in energy, in water, in electricity, in airports, but I do not need to because the whole national community knows who they are.

One plea that I have for this Government, along with the Opposition, apart from not, taking us to the brink, is, can we come off this scene of political patronage? Can we come off it? All previous governments have been guilty of it. In one respect I will prefer this Government to the Opposition, and that is because they have studied the parasitic oligarchy for a long time and they have now recognized that the parasitic oligarchy is not businessmen like myself who have a mortgage on our homes in order to invest in our businesses. They are not like my colleague, the Vice President of the Senate, who is similarly circumstanced and, indeed, ventured into business far wider than I ever had the temerity to do. So he understands very well about business risks and certainly could not be identified as a member of the parasitic oligarchy.
It is very important, because this affects the award of contracts. It affects the appointment to important positions in the country. Do you know we now have presidential aspirants? We have good people like yourself, Mr. President, who labour long and hard in the vineyard and take political risks and may be called to serve the country in high office. If you are called, you come forward and you serve. But we now have, as part of the budding in-crowd, presidential aspirants. That, of course, is simply taking to its ultimate conclusion the idea that if you support a political party you will get a plum position, whether you are good, bad or mad.

I am appealing to this Government to break with the tradition of political patronage. Heed the warning of my colleague, Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt and be guided by your definition of the parasitic oligarchy and keep them out. If you have supporters that are competent, let them serve the country; if they are not competent or they are not suitable, keep them out. Do not only keep them out in Trinidad and Tobago, keep them out of London, Houston and Brazil. Take my advice. Remember, the parasitic oligarchy is your speciality. You should be able to recognize them very easily.

So we see how much wisdom there is in this budget presented by the Minister of Finance. I have tried to outline some of the dangers. Time is not going to permit me to go through as many of the specifics as I would like. May I, therefore, in the few minutes remaining, say that I support the need for an examination of monopolies and competition policy. I spoke about this in the last Senate on May 5, 1992. I had a lot of trouble about it afterwards, but I believe in it and I hope that when we talk about monopolies, we are going to examine a variety of things about which there are monopolistic practices in the community. But I totally support the idea of competition policy.

I have a big problem with used cars. I am not going to say anything about the environment because we are well endowed, on these Benches, with spokesmen for the environment. I cannot wait to hear the spokesmen for the environment, because anybody travelling on the East/West Corridor chokes on the diesel fumes every morning, and as admirable as the clean-up campaigns are, I do not know who is cleaning up the diesel fumes every Sunday, whether it is in Wallerfield or Manzanilla. But I do not want to waste time on that.

I have made certain suggestions informally to the Minister and to some of the lawyers on the Government side, but I have a very real problem with the registration of imported used cars, whether they come in bits or whether they...
come whole. Because we simply have no means of knowing whether those cars are stolen, whether it is three different types of motor cars skilfully welded together. Quite frankly, I think on grounds of national security, namely becoming a haven for the receipt of stolen cars; I think on grounds of safety—you have someone going up the road and the car splits in two, jumps over the crash barrier and kills someone—on those two grounds I have a very real problem with us importing used cars, either in bits or already assembled.

Time does not permit me to say what I think about it. I have put certain ideas to the Government and I hope that we will see, as a matter of urgency, the appropriate amendments to the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act to deal with this question of the safety and security of used cars which we may be intending to import. I have a very real concern about it and the Government has an obligation, not simply to go for the short-term popularity of a source of cheaper motor vehicles if our national security and safety are going to be compromised.

I, too, believe that this is a very difficult budget, because the Government has set itself very high goals and given us very few specifics indeed. I totally identify with Sen. Burke's very graphic description of "dead potential." I, of course, would not wish to confine my identification with it to any one group in the society, but it is a very telling phrase. It gave me little goose bumps when she spoke about "dead potential" and it reminds us of the importance of education. The library has to do with "dead potential." The social service programme has to do with "dead potential." I would ask everyone who takes part in this budget debate to remember that phrase, "dead potential." It really is quite upsetting, that in this day and age—I do not want to speak about water today; I have a Motion on that—that we should have "dead potential" in this country. That is why the Government's specific policies with regard to job creation are so important.

So let us set about the natural re-ordering of priorities that comes about after a general election, with a clear head, without talk of violence and without talk of discrimination.

11.00 a.m.

Mr. President, let us have policies that can be objectively and soberly examined. Let us examine them, preferably in the light of day when people are awake rather than at the dead of night when they are otherwise engaged. Let us approach it that way. Over the next two days, let the Government try to give us some of the specifics on the issues that have been identified. Then they would have served the country well.
Let them start to cool down the aspirants for high office and bring the 
experiene of the right type of person to bear. I see Sen. John is smiling, perhaps, 
he is one of the experts on that subject; I do not know.

Mr. President, let us keep a cool head. We have had a general election, things 
have changed and there has to be a re-examination of priorities. Let us keep a 
cool head and stop talking about violence and discrimination and get on with the 
issues.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh): Mr. 
President, I would like to join with many before me in congratulating you on your 
appointment to the high office of President of the Senate, and I would like to take 
this opportunity to extend to you and your family a very prosperous 1996.

It gives me great pleasure to rise in support of this Bill before the honourable 
Senate which seeks to give effect to the 1996 budget, and in the process, to 
provide a better quality of life for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

My pleasure is derived from many sources which include:

(1) This is the first budget to be presented by this Government of national 
unity.

In the short period of two months, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance has 
presented a budget, in his own unparalleled style, which has set this nation on a 
course towards economic prosperity and social equity. I, therefore, join the 
growing numbers of persons, both at home and abroad, who have been warmly 
congratulating him on his presentation of this most important budget.

(2) The budget has placed emphasis on alleviating poverty and reducing 
unemployment.

We believe that there is an unmistakable link between poverty and 
unemployment. Furthermore, although there are several other factors that 


(3) The budget clearly demonstrates that this is a Government which puts 
the welfare of the people first.
(4) This debate gives me the opportunity to present to this honourable Senate, and to the nation, some of the policies and programmes upon which the Ministry of Works and Transport is about to embark.

I am sure Sen. Daly appreciates that.

Let me make it clear, from the inception, that it would be a result-oriented approach. It just would not be "business as usual".

The general policy framework within which my ministry would function would include the following:

(a) Every cent allocated to the Ministry of Works and Transport would be wisely and prudently managed and spent.

(b) Emphasis would be placed on proper and effective management of the functions of the ministry with special attention to:

   (i) improving productivity;

   (ii) the elimination of waste; and

   (iii) the eradication of corrupt practices.

(c) Ongoing projects would be reviewed in the context of current financial circumstances to ensure that the best interests of the people of Trinidad and Tobago are served.

(d) New projects would be developed; not for prestige but because they are crucial to taking Trinidad and Tobago forward and/or because they would fulfil an established need and improve the physical conditions under which our people reside.

   It does not make sense to paint the front of one's house and have a manicured lawn while the rest of the house is dilapidated with the roof leaking and about to collapse and the drains clogged.

(e) Accountability at all levels would be our watchwords. Honesty and fairness must characterize our operations.

   Mr. President, allow me now to turn your attention to the specific areas of infrastructural works and development for which I am responsible. Since assuming duties as Minister of Works and Transport, I have had both the opportunity and pleasure of meeting staff at all levels and in all locations throughout the ministry. I am to inform this honourable Senate that these
meetings have led me to conclude that the human resources necessary to develop effective services in all areas of the ministry's operations are available within the ministry.

However, I must point out that I have observed that the implementation mechanisms within the ministry are not as effective as they ought to be. This is a problem that is being addressed as we seek to mobilize the full capabilities of our human resources.

I have come to realize that one of the handicaps of the ministry is the demotivation and even the demoralization of staff within the organization; a situation which was allowed to develop and fester over time as staff members in many departments were uncertain as to the future direction of those divisions. However, I recognize that there are many who are devoted, committed and are extremely competent and who, I am sure, can be motivated to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently. This is of extreme importance if all that is planned in the ministry is to be successfully completed. Let us hope that infectious enthusiasm would triumph over the lethargy and indifference of the past.

Mr. President, the ministry is engaged in a number of projects. Some are in the planning stage and others are in the implementation stage. I have examined these projects, especially those in the planning stage, to determine the service they are supposed to provide and also the impact they would have on the quality of life for all our peoples; both during and after completion.

Where it is clear that the impact would be mainly positive, and it synchronizes with the immediate objectives of the Government, the ministry has been given the all clear to proceed with those projects. Where the costs outweigh the benefits, the ministry would re-examine those projects to determine what mitigating measures can be put in place to minimize the negative effects.

If at the end of the analysis the benefits to be derived are not matched with the available resources, then these projects would be rescheduled. However, we assure you that innovative ways would be found to utilize existing structures.

Mr. President, this raises the question about the construction of the National Library Complex, about which much has been said in various circles. There is absolutely no doubt that the establishment of a national library complex would greatly enhance the development of a society such as ours. It is a project which this Government of national unity would like to see come to fruition. Also, the
Government would like to see the establishment of small strategically placed libraries, particularly in communities in which such facilities have never been made available.

11.10 a.m.

Mr. President, as I said before, proceeding with various projects must take into account the reality of the financial position in which we find ourselves, particularly in the case of a project such as the national library; the constructing, furnishing and equipping would cost in excess of TT $120 million. I, therefore, wish to inform this honourable House that due to other priorities that require urgent funding, the Government has decided to take the hard decision to defer expenditure on this project for the time being. Let me at the same time assure hon. Senators, that the construction of such an institution is on our agenda for implementation as soon as circumstances permit.

Furthermore, all projects identified for continuation will be implemented utilizing proper management techniques of planning and control to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago gets value for money at the end of the day. Indeed, effective management would be the watchwords of the Ministry of Works and Transport. The Ministry will now rethink and re-engineer its business processes to achieve improvements in measures of performance such as quality, quantity, cost, service and speed of delivery.

Mr. President, permit me to dwell on the specifics of what would be done by the Ministry of Works and Transport during 1996. In so doing, I will, first of all, deal with the works and infrastructure side of the Ministry. Of critical importance is drainage works.

Proper drainage and irrigation are integral since they touch the lives of so many of us in one way or another. We are all aware, sometimes painfully so, of the effects of improper drainage which could lead to loss of man hours, indeed, even loss of lives, loss of agricultural crops and livestock and even poor health. In seeking to improve the quality of life for our citizens, therefore, provision of adequate drainage will be of primary focus.

In the past, roads and highways were constructed without the necessary attention being paid to drainage works. One of the aims of the drainage works during 1996, will be the maintenance of drainage channels to ensure that the roads remain serviceable over their intended life span. In addition, the Drainage Division subject to the availability of funding, is scheduled to undertake
improvement works in a number of major water courses. They include the Caparo River, the Marabella River, the Vistabella River, Caroni River, the San Juan River and the Oropouche River.

While these works would generally entail the utilization of heavy equipment, the Drainage Division would also be implementing programmes which include repairs to the sluice gates in the Caroni irrigation system and the construction of a pumping station in the Oropouche catchment area. These works would be undertaken by a number of maintenance gangs within the Drainage Division. In addition, we will be developing and implementing a preventative maintenance programme to be carried out by existing gangs during the dry season.

It is recognized that there are instances where anticipated levels of productivity have not been met. One of the major constraints has been the absence or lack of task schedules. The Drainage Division would be attempting in 1996 to seek agreement with the relevant workers' representative in order to arrive at mutually acceptable task schedules. Once this has been achieved, it is expected that levels of productivity would rise. However, early indicators reveal that workers are willing and ready to work in the interest of developing Trinidad and Tobago to the benefit of all our peoples. In cases where personnel are not engaged in productive work due to unserviceable plant or equipment, which we will seek to keep to the barest minimum, the division would be examining the possibility of transferring these workers to areas where they will be efficiently utilized.

Mr. President, I will now seek to discuss what is planned for our major highways and roads in 1996. The main thrust of the work to be executed by the Highways Division will be towards developing a rehabilitation and network expansion programme in the road sector. Indeed, 1996 is the year which is expected to mark the beginning of a five-year programme to be known as the National Highways Programme which is to be supported by funding from external financing agencies, as well as funding provided by taxpayers through the Road Improvement Fund. In fact, I want to inform this honourable Senate that 50 per cent of all moneys collected from the Road Improvement Fund will be utilized as the people’s contribution to this national highways programme. Among the other financing agencies supporting this national highways programme are the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Economic Community and the Caribbean Development Bank.
Mr. President, permit me to share with this honourable Senate a few details of these projects.

Under funding provided by the European Economic Community, mostly grant funds, the Highways Division will begin construction of Phase I of the road rehabilitation programme which will improve two of the nation’s major highways, namely, the Solomon Hochoy Highway and the Uriah Butler Highway. Under Phase I, both the north-and south-bound carriage-ways of the Solomon Hochoy Highway between Couva and Tarouba, a total of 30 kilometers will be reconstructed, as well as the western section of the Tarouba Link Road which is 0.8 kilometers. The resulting improved highway is expected to exhibit a design life of 20 years after reconstruction. Phase I is expected to have a two-year construction period. Phase II of the programme, which will be constructed at a later date will involve less extensive rehabilitation work and the remainder of the Solomon Hochoy Highway and the entire Uriah Butler Highway.

Under a loan agreement with the Caribbean Development Bank, the highway network in and around San Fernando is being improved under a project known as a Southern Roads Development Project. The project consists of two distinct contracts.

Firstly, the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from Tarouba to Cipero Road, approximately 3.6 kilometers long.

Secondly, completion of dualling of the San Fernando By-pass, approximately 0.6 kilometers and construction of a connector road between the extended Solomon Hochoy Highway and Cross Crossing Roundabout, approximately 2.6 kilometers.

The construction period for this project is approximately 18 months with work expected to begin in 1996. This project will considerably ease the traffic being experienced by commuters especially those who must commute daily to Central and North Trinidad.

Under a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, the Highways Division will undertake, through consultants, a pre-feasibility study for further extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from Cipero Road to Point Fortin. The recommendation of this study will be the basis for a later feasibility study and design of the subject highway. The importance of a reliable and efficient inland transportation system between the San Fernando and the Point Fortin areas cannot be over-emphasized, since large investments in the energy sector which is
one of our main contributors to the national economy, will be concentrated in this area.

Under funding from the IADB a feasibility study and design review will also begin on a highway between San Fernando and Princes Town which will be the first phase of a highway terminating at Mayaro. This is in keeping with the present UNC/NAR policy of opening up underutilized areas of Trinidad and Tobago by encouraging food production and human settlements. [Desk thumping]

Another segment of work to be performed utilizing the Inter-American Development Bank Fund is the total rehabilitation of main roads throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The year 1996 would be the first year of a programme which will eventually see some 645 kilometers of roads and 60 bridges being rehabilitated over a five-year period. During this year work will begin on the rehabilitation of 150 kilometers of roads in Trinidad and Tobago.

I will now focus on the maintenance function in the Ministry. Measures are being instituted towards increasing the productivity and effectiveness of the maintenance division. This division has the framework for providing a very important service to Trinidad and Tobago since it is charged with the responsibility for maintenance of public sector buildings. This is a task that had been approached in a very *ad hoc* manner in the past.

11.20 a.m.

Although a great deal of resources has been utilized in the construction of resources, very little attention has been paid to maintaining our existing stock of this very valuable asset. I am told that among the alternatives considered for this division by the previous administration was the reduction of the daily labour force with the consequent contracting out of the services provided by this division. After speaking with members of staff and reviewing the situation, it was mutually agreed that an effective management system within the division would render it capable of fulfilling its role. This system would also enable the precise pre-planning of activities so that there would be a more structured approach to planning, programming, execution, monitoring and feedback of the maintenance and repair functions. This would in turn ensure minimum delays or loss of productivity caused by scarcity of materials or other resources.

Workshops have been planned for the purpose of solving some of the operational problems which cause minimal service in relation to financial inputs. The process of inculcating a more productive mindset has been set in motion. The
structure for the provision of service will be based along commercial lines. The division must now see the customer/supplier relationship which exists between it and the population it services.

In a society where trade liberalization is taking place employees must understand what happens to businesses which do not meet customer demands and respond accordingly. It is our job as managers of the Ministry to ensure that acceptable levels of productivity are realized. We believe that this approach will serve to provide our public buildings with the necessary care which they deserve. In addition, the division will collaborate with the existing private and public maintenance companies that now carry out these functions and also provide inputs into the design of new structures. In this way all the information gained from the experience of the maintenance staff will influence the choice of materials. This will ensure longer lasting fixtures and finishes. [Desk thumping]

The Ministry will also be looking at the needs of all the client ministries. We will serve as a partner and an agent to plan and programme the works for this year given the resources which are available. The Maintenance Division will therefore be the strategic agency for formulating policy, planning and managing the maintenance programme for public sector projects. In order to properly carry out this function an information system will be developed. This system will be the repository of data on all buildings with respect to repairs and maintenance.

In all of this, emphasis will be placed on the development of our human resources. A manpower analysis in the area of trade and other skills available in the division will be undertaken. Out of this we can ensure the best use of our human resources in the execution of work. The aim here is to provide a core of tradesmen with specialist skills to service our buildings of historic value. Even private agencies will be able to source our expertise with respect to preservation of their historic resources. The Maintenance Division has a skilled labour force which can provide all these services. The various trades and other skills will be fully exploited for effective use.

The aim of the division is to remove the stigma of unproductivity and malaise which tended to stultify its growth. We intend to stimulate a more satisfactory standard of production by placing greater confidence in the skills and initiative of our workers by showing greater appreciation for what is accomplished. As Minister of Works and Transport, I have already signalled to staff at all levels what are the critical elements of the Ministry. They have indicated that they are ready to meet the challenges of a more productive ministry since they are thankful for the lease on life that this Government has given to them. The
Closely linked with the maintenance function are those undertaken by our Mechanical Services Division. As I visited and spoke with staff of this division I realized the vast human resource potential that was just waiting for the opportunity to be tapped. This division undertakes the repairs and maintenance of the Ministry’s fleet of vehicles and also other minor and heavy equipment. For some time now the uncertainty with respect to the continued operation of a division such as this as opposed to the alternative of contracting maintenance of these activities has allowed the division to function in a less than optimum fashion. This in turn has led to deterioration of many of the Ministry’s equipment.

I believe that in a ministry such as this where there are specialized areas of operation, such as drainage works, there must and will be specialized equipment, not used elsewhere in Trinidad and Tobago. It would, therefore, be expedient to have the capability and expertise within the Ministry to handle the repairs and maintenance of these equipment. Another consideration is the fact that in the face of market forces having one’s own expertise to fall upon serves to ensure competitive pricing.

In light of the need to allocate funds to areas of greatest need, cognizance is taken that funds to purchase new vehicles and equipment will not be readily available. A comprehensive repair and maintenance programme to all existing vehicles and equipment that are worth repairing will be done. With respect to the machine shop, the aim is to fabricate parts and fittings, the purchase cost of which could be exorbitant.

In addition to all that I have just outlined, I wish to further state that a comprehensive training programme will be conducted by our infrastructural development division. This training and employment of not less than 200 unemployed young persons within the age group 17-25 years for periods ranging from six months to three years will commence in February 1996. The skills and resources available in-house will be fully utilized in the undertaking of these new initiatives and projects. In the imparting of these skills to selected unemployed young persons there will be linkages to the national skills development programme. The areas of training will be in auto and diesel mechanic, agricultural machinery repairs, motor vehicle repairs, welding and fabricating,
machine shop and benchfitting, static plant maintenance that is gravel washing plants and asphalt plants, office procedure and accounting.

It is envisaged that provision of such training opportunities will benefit the society in the growth of self-development of the young people involved. This growth of self-development will impact in a positive way in the reduction of criminal activities involving the youths in Trinidad and Tobago and the development of entrepreneurial attitudes and manpower succession planning within the Ministry. This planned programme of training will be an ongoing programme and as such will enable the continuous addition to the country’s much needed stock of skilled personnel.

11.30 a.m.

Needless to mention, the ready availability of needy skills will redound to the efficiency of the development of the infrastructure country-wide, thereby ensuring the Ministry’s continuous contribution to the improvement of the quality of life of all our peoples.

I wish to inform this honourable Senate that this Government will be continuing the Unemployment Relief Programme. I must stress, however, that all attempts will be made to operate this Programme in a manner that will achieve the objectives that were originally intended when the Programme was first conceived.

Mr. President, you may be aware that this Programme commenced in 1959 in urban Port of Spain and was later extended to other communities in Trinidad and Tobago. Noble and positive ideals were intended, but somehow they got lost. This Government intends bringing URP back on course under the main objectives for which it was developed, such as:

- to provide a social safety net for the socially disadvantaged;
- to provide the widest possible employment;
- to provide on-the-job training so that on leaving the Programme persons will be equipped with certain skills which they can use to gain future employment, which will include self-employment;
- to help in providing self-development to individuals within each community.

Our Government recognizes the social service provided by URP in providing jobs and income to many. We also believe in the concept of empowering our
people, therefore we will not only give a man a fish, but we will teach him how to fish so that he will feed himself and his family forever.

In this light, therefore, the URP will be focusing on training persons, empowering them with skills for self-development, to take up employment in the private and public sector and set up micro enterprises. The recruiting process of URP has to be revisited. We must find a fair mechanism of recruiting people into the programme so that the neediest will be able to access it.

Let me tell you, Mr. President, that it is our intention that the Unemployment Relief Programme must never again be used for political gain. Our Ministry will be challenging all our people to suggest ways and means to eliminate all malpractices within the URP system which led to all types of irregularities. We will soon be inviting people who wish to access this programme to complete application forms which would enable us to target those persons who really need help to be a part of this programme.

Let me turn to the transport side of this Ministry and to the area of land transport. I am informed that the Transport Division is extremely pleased to see that certain new measures have finally come to fruition, which would assist them in collecting additional revenue for the state. The measures are:

(1) penalty for late renewal of drivers’ permits;
(2) payment of all outstanding licence fees before a vehicle is transferred.

That department is also extremely pleased that a major potential for corruption has been removed, in that the opportunity has been provided whereby vehicles which have been assembled either from foreign parts or using a combination of foreign and local used parts, can now come to the Transport Division to have the registration of their vehicles regularized. In so doing, the Transport Division is fully aware that this measure was introduced to fill the revenue gap which arose as a result of the importation of completely built-up vehicles as opposed to locally assembled vehicles. As such, the division will be insisting that the presenters of vehicles for regularization satisfy the Transport Division with respect to how the major components came into Trinidad and Tobago and into possession of the individual or organization concerned, and that all moneys payable to Government, for example customs duties, have been paid. It is only on the clear indication that the above conditions are met that the
registration of those vehicles will be regularized. The Transport Division will also ensure that all vehicles presented for this purpose are roadworthy.

The Transport Division stands convinced that the measures introduced in the 1996 budget will go a long way in reducing the cost of transportation in Trinidad and Tobago and will also act as a fillip with respect to improving the quality of the stock of vehicles on the roads of Trinidad and Tobago. The measures should also provide for an increase in activity with respect to the second-hand used car market. As a result, we expect that there will be a substantial increase in the amount of revenues collected by way of transfer fees.

During the course of 1996, the Transport Division will continue to look at, and where possible introduce administrative methods which would result in the improvement of the safety standards of vehicles on the roads of Trinidad and Tobago. Towards this end, the division will be looking very closely at the possibility of introducing a system of triennial inspection of private motor vehicles and motor cycles.

In 1996, the division intends to intensify its effort towards the acquisition of a new computer system, the installation of which would place it in a position to do several things. For example, it can introduce the renewal of one’s driver’s licence as well as vehicle licence on the anniversary date of transaction. The personalization of number plates should play a supportive role in revamping the ticket system for motor vehicle offences. It is also hoped that, with the acquisition of the new computer system, the quality and accuracy of record-keeping will improve considerably, thereby impacting heavily on fraudulent transactions and transfers of stolen vehicles.

The new equipment will also place the division in a better position to support the police in crime detection.

I indicated earlier in my address that there are projects in the pipeline which will be continued by the Ministry of Works and Transport. One such project is the expansion of the terminal facility at Piarco. As we approach the 21st Century, further advances in communication and information technology coupled with the frequency of flights have caused the creation of a global village, and the world is certainly becoming smaller. It is imperative, therefore, that this facility be developed since it will allow Piarco to:
(1) meet the needs of future traffic;

(2) provide a high level of service without which it will be difficult to attract additional air services;

(3) promote further commercial development within the airport;

(4) provide the opportunity to increase airport revenues, significantly enabling the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to be financially self-sustaining.

Mr. President, you will have also noted in the budget that my Government proposes to undertake an air service review addressing issues of space availability on flights to Tobago. We will also consider the option of an open sky agreement for Tobago, whereby airlines which meet particular standards with respect to safety and airworthiness can operate on the route.

I now wish to turn your attention to sea transport. Let me begin by informing you that my Government is currently examining the possibility of establishing a regular sea link between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. We believe that the South American market has great potentials, and to that end, the establishment of sea links with Venezuela is the initial step in bridging Trinidad and Tobago to the South American continent.

11.40 a.m.

Let me emphasize that this Government of national unity is fully committed to maintaining proper air and sea links between our twin-island state. Transportation links between the islands must remain accessible to all, so that persons are not inhibited in any way in conducting their personal or business transactions. We believe this is vital in forging unity between all our peoples, and as such, every attempt would be made to ensure that the water which lies between our islands is not used to separate us.

With respect to sea links, I am aware that the MV Tobago is currently in dry dock and only the MV Panorama is in operation. Let me assure you that every attempt will be made to have both vessels fully operational, so that an adequate sea link between Trinidad and Tobago is always maintained.

Finally, this Government of national unity and consensus intends to raise and improve the level of infrastructure and services for the people of this beautiful country, Trinidad and Tobago. When our stewardship is eventually taken into account, all the peoples of this land who have benefited from the good works in
the Ministry of Works and Transport and other ministries, will want us to continue to provide the quality service to which they have grown accustomed. Trinidadians and Tobagonians deserve a government that works, and they have got one.

I thank you.

**Sen. Philip Hamel-Smith:** Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I use this occasion to offer my congratulations to you on your appointment as President of this honourable Chamber. Additionally, and also belatedly, I wish you and your family a happy and peaceful 1996.

It is also a pleasure to commend and congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance on his 1996 budget presentation.

Mr. President, as you know, this budget was presented some weeks after the Government of national unity took over the reigns of office, from an administration that was floundering in more ways than one. Therefore, from a national perspective an election which may have appeared untimely, opened the way for a very timely intervention by our hon. Minister of Finance.

The cry of our community, and more particularly, the less privileged has for some time been building to a crescendo, but for some reason it was not being listened to. The criminal element in our society was having a field day, yet the caring government of the day could not care less, or certainly their lack of attention sent that message. It is against this backdrop that this Government, on assuming office on November 7, 1995, appealed to the community to join hands under the banner of national unity. It was an invitation to put our people at the centre of growth and development. Putting our people at the centre of growth and development could rightly be considered the theme of this budget presentation. A budget that gives practical directions and focus to this Government’s invitation to forge national unity by putting our people at the centre of its efforts.

In my humble view, this is a budget of vision, balance and timing. It is a budget which squarely addresses the priority issues facing our nation as we approach the 21st Century. Clearly, Mr. President, this budget statement has signalled this Government’s commitment to prudent economic management. Our people will no longer, and I stress, no longer, be subjected to a mentality of spending more than they earn. The issue will no longer be, who has the loudest voice. The hon. Minister has not only balanced this all-important budget in financial terms but he has also been able to balance the two all-embracing
imperatives, sustained growth and social justice. Imperatives, which under the former administration—one was led to believe—were in direct conflict.

The Government’s stated pursuit of continuing to foster economic liberalization has been matched in this budget statement by an explicit agenda of social justice. As we prepare to compete in a global economy, we strive at the same time to maintain a proper level of equity for our people. This has produced a budget based on sensible, businesslike and deregulatory economics combined with a targeted tenderness and social policy.

Further, and most importantly, this budget demonstrates that this Government of national unity is prepared to put its money where its mouth is. It has taken prudent economics, as well as the capacity to make hard, and even courageous choices, to set clear priorities and to make them stick. Money has been allocated to produce action in the areas targeted as priorities by this Government of national unity. Preconceived or bias criticism, as emanated from the Opposition Benches will not dampen our conviction that we have charted the right way forward, nor will it blow the clear outline that defines the steps to be taken to achieve these clearly articulated national goals.

Among the priority issues addressed in this budget are those of poverty and crime. The national call for something to be done to address poverty and the alarming incidence of crime have been taken to heart by this administration. These two areas have received significant focus in various aspects of this fine budget statement. For example, the business community moved swiftly to reduce prices on the list of food items from which VAT was removed, and our citizens immediately enjoyed these items at significantly lower prices. We can play with the new list of zero-rated items and attempt to ridicule the Minister’s selection for special treatment, but the bottom line is, cheaper food for all.

I listened with great interest to the contribution of our Independent Senator, Sen. Dr. St. Cyr, and can, in fact, identify with his overall view, that gambling has the capability of, and I quote:

“...undermining the moral fabric of our society.”

His revenue figures on the returns of the National Lottery are very instructive: 1993, $70 million; 1994, $187 million and in our 1996 budget, $347 million. Is this really the problem, or is this a symptom of the problem? To use Sen. Montano’s word, is not the problem the despair, desperation and hopelessness of a large sector of our population? This is my contention, Mr. President. The problem in our society that has given rise to this alarming incidence of gambling and a propensity to participate in Lotto, Play Whe or the like is very much tied up
with the focus of this 1996 budget. Poverty, Mr. President, poverty. It is poverty which has given rise to this increased sense of hopelessness and desperation. With the neglect of the former administration to do anything but pay lip service to the real incidence of poverty in our country, what Sen. Dr. St. Cyr identified, is a national consequence.

11.50 a.m.

Mr. President, I will support this contention by describing a recent incident to this honourable Senate. Over the years it has not been uncommon to be approached by the poor and underprivileged for some money to buy bread outside the bakery, but I had occasion to put $2.00 in the hands of such a person who promptly proceeded to join the Play Whe line. You see, the former administration has driven this society back to the wall where desperation, despair and hopelessness are the order of the day.

Further, the money allocated for financing the developmental programme and this fight against crime was increased from $24 million in 1995 to $66 million in 1996, an increase as we heard from our Minister of just short of 300 per cent. It may be noteworthy that in 1995 whereas the budget called for an estimated capital expenditure of $34 million, in an atmosphere where crime was running wild, the former administration revised this important head of expenditure downwards by $10 million. Where were the priorities? It may be instructive to take a look at the comparative figures for a few other ministries other than the Ministry of National Security, in what could be confidently considered priority areas at this stage of our national development.

In 1995 the revised estimate for the Ministry of Planning and Development was $48 million against the 1996 estimates of $78 million, a 62.5 per cent increase. The Ministry of Legal Affairs would be pleased to note that the budget has been increased from a 1995 figure of $2.3 million to a figure of $19.1 million in 1996, 730 per cent increase.

The Ministry of Works and Transport that we were just hearing about has increased its 1995 allocation of $53.9 million to a 1996 allocation of $89.4 million, a 65.1 per cent increase. The Ministry of Public Utilities $4.7 million up to $49.5 million, almost ten times. The Ministry of Social Development by a 95 per cent allocation of $2 million increasing to $7.1 million in 1996.
Mr. President, this is real money not funny money. This clearly demonstrates the focus of this Government and its commitment to expend its scarce resources in the areas where they are most needed in the general interests of the population. Remember that to put its money where its mouth is, is to really put our people at the centre of growth and development. This Government must and has made very hard and courageous decisions. To give practical effect to this vision, this Government has set its priorities and it is going to stick to them.

We cannot afford as a nation to bring back the good old days or, is it the bad old days, when the word "priority" was only associated with the "Bus Route". In that context, it is also true that this budget reveals a movement by this Government away from the allocation of natural resources to highly visible projects, often at the expense of the needs of the wider community. Clearly, this action would cause some loss and hurt at times to those citizens who care most deeply about those projects which we have heard are not planned for immediate implementation. This Government understands this, and we listened carefully to the views of all who have been affected as well as our entire society, and it has made hard choices on a set priority.

Without treading on the areas that could be better dealt with by the relevant ministers, I would simply use, by way of an example, the national library project. This project as we have just heard has been postponed and will be reviewed. I had hoped not to get sucked into this issue, but with all the adverse comments on this project, I think I should have my say. I understand and I share the disappointment of those who are interested in learning, in books, and more particularly the librarians who directly contribute to our society in this area. Balance and timing are required, however, if the Government's vision of putting our people at the centre of growth and development is to be achieved.

At this time the Government of national unity simply could not allocate sufficient of the country's scarce resources to this very worthwhile, visible and attractive project, when the needs of the entire nation are for basic amenities, food, drainage, safety, water and so forth. This does not mean that priority action should not be given to the areas of library and information which are more and more critical as we near the 21st Century. Having a centre for research and information would truly be an admirable asset. Clearly, these areas must be addressed within the vision of putting our people at the centre of growth and development. Again, the issues are balance and timing.
It is also crucial to observe and accept that a library is not a building—I am not sure that at this time the most balanced way to meet the challenge to provide library and information services, is to concentrate such significant natural resources in the construction, not of a library, but of a highly visible building to house a library. Experience suggests that construction of such an attractive and highly visible building will no more ensure an adequate library service than the construction of an expensive and visible hospital ensures adequate health care for our people—some of us have short memories, but I am sure all of us do not. To stop and review the Government's priorities in this area, it seems to me to be a prudent step which means to protect our library services and librarians from the millstone of having a highly visible building with little or no resources for books, information technology, maintenance or most importantly the professional librarians. There is a time and place for everything; 1996 is not the year of the national library complex. This deferral allows this Government at this time to rake and scrape additional moneys to meet its obligations and to fight crime and poverty. Again Mr. President, balance.

I disagree with the views expressed by Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt when she said that the Government had "not only broken its contract with the financier but also to the people of Trinidad and Tobago". Surely, when we look at the Government's commitment in contract terms one should readily appreciate that the contracts that the Government have sought to honour or make good and are provided for in its 1996 budget take precedence over, what I would be quick to agree, would be a laudable obligation to a deserving population. We all certainly deserve a national library complex but, our contractual obligations in the strict sense for the time being, are elsewhere.

12.00 noon

Focusing on some of the fiscal measures in the budget, I will take my cue from the Finance Minister who pointed out that this Government of national unity on assuming office and I quote:

"...met with a given set of circumstances over which it has little or no control."

He further stated:

"...two months is hardly enough time ...to review all the existing inadequacies in the economic and social conditions prevailing in the country."
Accordingly we see in this budget presentation a skilful blend of the old and the new, whereby what was good was kept, the bad has been discarded, and the salvageable has been altered. The good, the bad, and the ugly; and all have been focused towards the overall vision of unity and putting our people in the centre of growth and development.

Again, a sensible approach reflective of both balance and timing. The fiscal measures outlined in the budget statement have been informed by the Minister’s stated consideration and I quote:

"...an economic policy that will encourage growth as well as development, maintain exchange rate stability, keep inflation under control, and continue to develop a climate conducive to investment, both local and foreign."

In fulfilment of an election promise we have seen a reduction in the top marginal rate and the middle income rate by 3 per cent. Effectively, at the lower end, chargeable income of $20,000 or less would pay no tax; additionally, tax paid on any savings account in any financial institution by persons in this lower income bracket would be fully refundable. This measure will, no doubt, stimulate and encourage the level of savings and investments by the prudent taxpayer.

We have also seen corporation tax adjusted downwards in tandem with the top marginal rate of income tax. Additionally, approved small companies entitled to a tax credit of 15 per cent of chargeable profits will now only pay an effective rate of 20 per cent corporation tax. Again, a move that would stimulate re-investment at corporate level, the beneficiary here being the entire national corporate community again, however, preferring the smaller and sometimes neglected businessman.

The business levy which was introduced in 1993 by the previous administration would be reduced in 1996 by 20 per cent, and the threshold for exemption to this payment has been increased to companies with gross sales of $150,000 or less. This measure provides welcome relief to many of our corporate citizens. Again, it will enhance the effective companies’ ability to invest.

If we pause at this point and review these fiscal measures, we will see that the stated policy of the Government is reflected throughout. These measures provide
impetus for growth across the board, at the same time targeting the lower income earner for what is to be considered life-saving relief. Not only is this approach reflected in the Minister’s treatment of tax issues but they can also be found in the allocation of the scarce resources of the Government for its capital project in 1996.

At this point, I will deal with the issue of this Government’s capital expenditure programme which has been the target of critical commentary from those in the construction sector.

On examination of the Public Sector Investment Programme, we see a provision for capital expenditure of $1,150,710,000. When this is compared with the provision in the 1995 budget, it would first suggest a reduction of 21 per cent, however, I invite Members to delve a little further. When we do so, we quickly see that the budgeted expenditure for 1995 was in fact, revised downwards during that year to $1,351,720,000 and when this actual figure for 1995 is compared to the 1996 budget it is found to be just over 14 per cent more than the 1996 figure. We can maybe go a little further beneath the surface and look at the breakdown into subsectors in 1995 which reveals, under the head of economic and social infrastructure, that the revised estimates for 1995 show a drop from 49 per cent of the cake to just over 33 per cent of the public sector investment. Only 33 per cent of the capital expenditure in 1995 was for economic and social expenditure.

When we return to the 1996 figures now, we see that it is in these two critical areas the exact expenditure of $578 million in 1996 which translates to 50 per cent of the cake as compared to 33 per cent of the cake in 1995. In dollar terms the 1996 allocation is approximately $100 million more than the 1995 allocation for economic and social infrastructure. This Government clearly knows where the needs of the national community lie. It puts people at the centre of growth and development and is prepared to put its money where its mouth is.

The most significant feature of this Government’s public sector investment programme is not its reduction, rather it is its focus of that programme and what it tells us about this Government’s understanding of the country’s priorities. Accordingly, the emphasis is on how our scarce resources are to be spent. The budgeted reduction clearly arises out of a policy of living within our means with a focus on more direct investment in social and infrastructure programmes, as opposed to the trickle-down approach of the previous administration which sometimes trickle everywhere else but down.
The most significant feature of the Government’s public sector investment programme is not the 14 per cent reduction in its budget, but the focus and emphasis it places on how our scarce resources are to be spent. Another justifiable criticism of the 1995 public sector investment programme of the former administration is to be found in the evidence of poor project implementation experience, which can be gleaned from the mere need to revise its estimates of expenditure. For example, the capital expenditure by central government and its agencies in 1995 was $544 million; or approximately 67 per cent of planned expenditure was expended. This alarming statistic definitely supports my contention of poor project implementation, more so when matched against the 1994 figures; for example, in that year, 79 per cent rate was achieved. Essentially, what we see in 1996 is a Government which is prepared to keep its feet on the ground and its head out of the clouds as appears to have happened in 1994 and again in 1995.

I will now turn to a specific fiscal measure that also has been criticized by many and was made heavy weather of by my Senate colleague, Sen. Montano. This issue is rather more technical and I crave your indulgence to spend just a few minutes on it. The issue to which I am referring, of course, is the removal of the dividend income allowance (DIA). The DIA as it is called, was introduced when corporation tax came into effect in 1966. Its stated purpose, clearly, was to ensure that income was not taxed twice, that is corporation tax, and again as income tax.

12.10 p.m.

When the DIA was first established companies paid taxes at 42.5 per cent and the formula for grossing up dividends was set at 170 per cent. As the rate of taxes changed, the formula was adjusted so as to achieve the purpose of ensuring that income was not taxed twice. In other words, the goal was to keep the tax market neutral. The foregoing formula of changes thereto had the following effect:

1. Dividends were grossed up at the rate of corporation tax.
2. Taxpayers brought in dividends as income grossed up to the full rate.
3. Taxpayers paid income taxes on dividends at the highest marginal rate.

This meant that taxpayers in the highest rate of personal tax ratio were in a neutral situation, that is, paying no tax nor getting a refund. Taxpayers in the
lower rate got refunds. The lower the rate of tax payable, the higher the refund. This recognized the fact that income earned by shareholders should be gross and that taxes should be paid at one’s own rate of taxation.

Mr. President, in the 1995 budget, which was presented in November 1994, the basis for grossing up of publicly listed companies bore absolutely no relevance to the corporation tax rate. The then government wanted dividends to be taxed at source, as bank interests, and to be paid by companies to the Board of Inland Revenue. That government tampered with the DIA and, quite frankly, made a mess of it. A level rate of taxation of 15 per cent was used.

Firstly, dividends were grossed up by 162 per cent and then 15 per cent of this grossed up figure was deducted and paid by the company to the Board of Inland Revenue. This calculation was done on an individual shareholder basis and was shown on each shareholder’s dividend warrant.

Secondly, in completing one’s tax return one would gross up the dividend payable by 62 per cent and this figure becomes gross income not subject to further taxation after deduction of 15 per cent.

For example, someone receiving $16,000 gross dividend would get a tax credit of $9,920 but would pay taxes of $3,888. Therefore, all shareholders who received dividend income for 1995 are now eligible to receive tax credits of approximately 38 per cent. Under this 1995 system the man in zero, five, 38 per cent tax bracket, the same rate of tax on dividend income for unlisted companies, 15 per cent. Those in the 38 per cent tax bracket get a credit of 38 per cent; therefore not paying any taxes on their dividend income besides the 15 per cent.

Mr. President, our hon. Minister inherited this gaping hole in the head of taxation. How gaping is this hole? An impact analysis done by one of our prominent stockbrokers on the dividends paid for 1995 alone on listed companies suggests that an aggregate DIA credit of approximately $47 million would be due to taxpayers out of this one fiscal blunder in 1995. What started as a measure to ensure that investing shareholders did not pay double tax ends up as a mammoth cost to this Government.

Faced with this gaping hole, the Minister of Finance not only plugged it by eliminating the DIA but also advanced Government’s goal of simplifying the tax system and encourage investment by exempting all dividends, other than preference dividends, from income tax. Mr. President, was this the measure Sen. Montano suggested had as its goal incentives for companies to list in the stock exchange?
The hon. Minister with these and other measures has certainly signaled this Government’s intention to broaden the tax base, at the same time lowering tax rates; simplifying the tax system while reducing overall tax burdens; and, all in all, providing neutrality and equity in tax treatment.

Mr. President, I turn briefly to Government’s monetary policy which the Minister stated and I quote:

"... seeks to maintain price and exchange rate stability, improve the country’s foreign reserves position while developing an interest rate regime that is geared towards stimulating the level of savings and investment."

On this issue of exchange rate and the contention by Sen. Montano of the former administration’s expert handling of the economy, a few basic economic indicators should tell the true story. When the former administration took office in 1991 the exchange rate of the TT dollar was $4.25 to the US dollar. When it left office on November 7, 1995, it was $5.999 recurring. Sen. Montano says that this identifies a lack of investment confidence in the economy. He seems to have forgotten the effect the change of government in 1992 had on the exchange rate.

Additionally, within days of the presentation of the 1996 budget the CEO of Nova Scotia Bank, Mr. Ronnie Chan, was quoted as saying:

"Already we have seen positive signs of an ease in the pressure on the foreign exchange situation."

It speaks for itself, Mr. President.

Further, to look again at the contention of the handling of the economics by the former administration, we go back a bit. Inflation rate in 1991 was 3.8 per cent; in 1992, 6.5 per cent; in 1993, 8.7 per cent; in 1994, 10.8 per cent. Management of the economy!

A quick look at our country’s external debt over that period: in 1991, it was $5.255 billion; in 1992, $6 billion; in 1993, $9.45 billion and in 1994, $10.071 billion, and the story goes on.

Gross Domestic Product in 1991 was $16.5 billion; in 1992, $16.25; and further to that was $16.023 in 1993. The facts are here for all to see and to draw their own conclusions.

I return to this Government’s monetary policy. A critical factor here is the development of the required investment climate and, accordingly, the quality and efficiency of the regulatory framework.
With this in mind, I am sure that this Senate and the country welcome the Minister’s commitment to bring before Parliament as soon as possible the regulations governing the new Companies Act due to come into force in April. Along with that will come the Securities Industries Act and the establishment of the Securities Exchange Commission as well as regulations for the Venture Capital Act. We have also been promised the Investment Promotions Act and the Mutual Funds Act.

Mr. President, I think I have demonstrated why, in my view, this national budget is to be welcomed for its vision, balance and timing.

I have reminded this honourable Senate that for some time before the election of this Government the cry in this country has been pressure—pressure for the poor, pressure for the less privileged; pressure for food, water, jobs; for rich or for poor, pressure; pressure from criminals, pressure by criminals.

There is much to be done but after this budget presentation and the debate, the country can feel confident that this Government of national unity has charted the right course for our beloved nation.

Once again, I offer my congratulations to the hon. Minister for a job well done.

Thank you.

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I think it is appropriate that we suspend for lunch at this juncture. The sitting is now suspended until 1.50 p.m.

12.20 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

1.50 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny: Mr. President, may I join the long queue of Senators in congratulating you on your appointment to the office of President of this House; and may I also take the opportunity to congratulate all the other Senators on their appointment.

Mr. President, I heard a word yesterday which rather startled me, that what I am saying today is a "maiden" speech. I thought it was an inaugural speech, and I would like to explain or suggest why I am speaking on this particular topic. I recently had a formal communication from the Ministry of Agriculture, which addressed me by my name as an Independent Senator (Environment). I have never had a qualification in this subject area. I consider myself, first of all, a
biologist, an educator, scientist and so forth, but I will speak on the environment because I think it is a subject area of immense concern, although this is not reflected in the budget speech. I have looked for the word "environment" and seen very little reference to it. I have looked for provision of funding for particular things, and found very little reference to it.

The United States Government, one of the most powerful states in the world, has had its government process held up on budgetary matters; and what are these concerns in the United States? The balanced budget—we have the assurance of the Government that we have something close to it—and the subject of medicare, medicaid and the environment. On one side of the United States system of government there are people who would like to cut expenditure and balance the budget; and there is the other side of it, the President of the United States arguing that they cannot tolerate cuts in expenditure and the environment.

Mr. President, as I looked through the volume of material which has been presented to us, the thing that struck me is that the clearly identified expenditure on what I would consider to be the environment, works out to about 0.09 per cent of the expenditure, and I will come back to that in a minute. This is, in fact, less than what Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt suggests might have been necessary to compensate victims of domestic violence in one year.

I am not surprised that the subject of the environment has not received the attention it really ought to receive, because we have the problem of any government and what it sees of its electorate, and the environment does not really figure significantly in the life of this nation. The issues are crime, unemployment, poverty, water. These are the major issues when you see the surveys which have been done over the years.

I would like to assume a perspective of someone who is between a chartered accountant and a geologist. Geologists think in terms of rocks and millions of years. Chartered accountants, I believe, think in the short-term and environmental problems and issues are not things that one deals with piecemeal in the duration of one budget, or one fiscal year.

I would like to dig into the budget a little bit, not so much into the specific details but to try to see what is the policy of the Government. In the Medium-Term Policy Framework, there is a brief reference, on page 29, to “The Environment”, and it explains the Government’s policy. Much of this revolves around the Environmental Management Authority about which I will speak later.
But if you look at the specifics in the medium-term as to what will be attempted—

"preparation of a National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP);
setting up of a National Environmental Information System (NEIS);
development of a public awareness and education programme;
conduct of a Pollution Inventory Study;
conduct of a Waste Management Regulatory Study; and
rationalization of the cluster of agencies involved in environmental management."

Mr. President, there is nothing there that says we are actually going to do anything of substance in the medium-term.

Some years ago when I was speaking on this particular topic, we brought out the documents of studies which had taken place over the past, at the time it was about two and a half decades, and they came up to about waist high if you stood them one on top the other. I assure you now, Mr. President, that the latest studies—and some of them I have been involved in—are actually up to my shoulder, and in the medium-term I expect to be buried by these studies. I think it is really time now for us to do something. The Government, of course, will have a problem because it is caught between the various publics and the problem is to try to evaluate what is there.

If one looks at the media coverage, say, in the past decade, the really important issues in Trinidad might be turtle conservation, or it might be wetlands; it might be transport of repossessed nuclear fields; sea level rise; global warming. These are the things that attract the attention of the media, and we have this problem of the media reacting to the environmentalists, and Mr. President, I assure you I am not an environmentalist, I am quite an ordinary scientist who sees no difference in value between, say, turtles and mapipires. They are the same to me, whereas to other people, turtles are of vital importance.

2.00 p.m.

Rather than list all the various things that appear in the media for the Government, I would like to help them because matters of the environment are really matters that are non-partisan. I sincerely hope that I can show some objectivity rather than the emotional response to the screams from this source or
that source as to what is being done in our environment. Hence my reason for saying that I speak somewhere between the chartered accountant and the geologist.

Because the environment has not figured in the philosophy of this or any previous administration—there has been no statement—what we are faced with in this country is a debt which we are accumulating in parallel with the public service debt, because today the thinking is that all use of the environment has a cost. To illustrate, for example, a simple thing, the cost of mismanagement. The Minister of Works this morning spoke about the vast expenditure which is going to take place in drainage. Of course, flooding is a product of mismanagement of our watercourses or our watersheds. So that just to illustrate for you what happens when you mismanage; the real environmental cost of, say, take the Maraval Valley—the real cost of managing the denudation of the hills up in Paramin, is this immense cost of canalizing the Maraval River, and the other costs associated with this; the destruction of other parts of the environment, for example the quarries for the boulders to canalize the river, and that is being multiplied. So that today, not only do we have $2 or $3 billion debt arrears, we have a considerable, but so far unmeasured, environmental cost of mismanagement over the past several decades.

Some time ago when I was a young graduate just come back from university and full of enthusiasm, I gave evidence before the Blagden Commission—this was in the early 1950s—which considered the pollution problem of the Caroni River. Recommendations were made as to what we ought to do. Of course, nothing has been done. Today, it is not only the Caroni River, but it is also all the rivers down the west coast of Trinidad. You name them, they are all in this state because we appear, as a nation, to think that watercourses are sewers and everything and anything can go into them.

But notice today what has arisen at the grassroots in the north-east of Trinidad, which is where you will find the last of the pristine rivers and valleys of the Northern Range. I speak particularly about the noises about what may happen at Matura. I will not obviously go into the details, but I want to emphasize that somewhere along the line, we have to take account of the real cost of this management.

About 25 years ago, the economists got together worldwide and they came up with something called the limits of growth. This has now been replaced by a Mark II model, which is now called sustainable development. On page 29 of the
Medium Term Policy Framework you will see that the policy of Government is to adopt sustainable development. Of course, when you read some of the legislation, in particular, the Environmental Management Authority Act, the preamble states that this is the objective—sustainable development. It does a sort of—I was going to say a parody; that is probably the wrong word—but it attempts to explain what sustainable development is. Economists are able to do this, but I am afraid biologists have great difficulty with this. In the preamble, it only refers to sustainable development and to, what we call the Brundtland mantra. If you repeat it often enough, it becomes something which you do.

This is, in essence, saying that we develop in such a way that we use the environment without prejudicing the opportunities of future generations. It is written into this; it comes in various forms. What is not in the preamble to sustainable development is that there are certain conditions. I think that a number of Senators have referred to it. In fact, Sen. Daly referred to the gap there about how do we do something about eliminating poverty. But sustainable development requires a number of things. One of the objectives is elimination of poverty, because it is argued, I think incorrectly, that poverty creates environmental degradation.

Another one is that if you are aiming at sustainable development you must aim at reducing consumption, especially of fossil fuels and other non-renewable resources. The third thing is that the population of the state which is undergoing sustainable development must bring into harmony the size of population with the resources of the state. This idea of population management, population growth, is something which is taboo in this country. The minute anyone attempts to articulate a view, down they come on him or her. It is something that really ought to be reflected in a national population policy.

This country has a population growth rate, depending on who is estimating it, of about 1.1 to 1.2 per cent. It means that every year we have 12,000 to 14,000 people coming into the population, in addition to if we do the sum between those who die and those who are born. Jamaica is in this situation as well. Curiously, Barbados has got its population growth down to less than a quarter of a per cent. St. Kitts is zero; in fact, negative. Grenada is zero or near negative. But we have these two countries in the Caribbean, this country and Jamaica, in which we have this, and this contributes—whatever may be said outside—to the nature of the problem that we are dealing with.
I would like now to look at one aspect of the *Medium Term Policy Framework* concerning the environment. I have referred to the numbers of studies which will be done, but what alarms me, quite frankly, is that what we do will be conditional on the availability of funding from donor or lender agencies. Now it seems to me that if we take the problems of national security and education as serious issues and we address a lot of our resources to these issues, we really ought to start thinking in terms of upgrading our expenditure of effort.

I pointed out earlier that I would like to try to help this administration because, as I say, this is not a partisan issue. I do not think that the Greenpeace activities around the world are really all that important to us. I could go on and list all these things, but I think we would be wasting time. I would like to give some focus to what I am saying here with the idea of helping this administration and any succeeding administration to come to grips with what we have to do with the environment.

2.10 p.m.

Mr. President, we all know the truism that water is life and life is water. There are many people in this country who have suffered over the years for water, particularly in South Trinidad and Tobago, yet, we are considered to be a high rainfall area. The lowest rainfall in this country is in Chacachacare and down in Icacos where there is 50 inches of rainfall per year which is more than in Great Britain. The highest is in the Northeast where there is well over 140 inches of rainfall, yet, we have this problem of water.

When I say that water is life and life is water, I am suggesting that we should think of how, and from where, we win our water. There are two sources of water; the ground waters and the surface waters. We use surface waters just about to the maximum now. When surface water is used part of the environment is utilized to make a dam which means the loss of land.

Much of our water is drawn from deep gravel fields called aquifers that collect water from the higher land, percolates downs a natural filtration system; we then drill the wells and extract water. There is much water extracted. I do not have the actual figures, but we have come to the point where it is now a fact—this is from one of these many studies that have almost buried us—that in major aquifers, as the Santa Cruz Valley, which is one of the major acquifers, WASA is extracting much water.
A 1992 study has shown, tragically, that the recharge level is substantially less than the extraction level. This is being replete in many of our fields. The rain falls but because we have mismanaged our environment, most of the water runs off and we extract from the residual ground water, and the aquifers are being depleted. This is not happening in Santa Cruz alone; it occurs in all the valleys, from Maraval all the way down to Chaguaramas and into some areas to the east.

One of the side effects of this is the rather tragic over-exploitation of the resource—this is a renewable resource—that we have started to pull in sea water into our aquifers. It has happened in Cocorite and El Soccoro. Because we extract at too high a rate we have started to pull in salt water which means that we could no longer use that water.

Perhaps I have laboured the point but Trinidad was not always like this. It is a problem of mismanagement of the watersheds.

Mr. President, when I looked at the development programme for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources for 1996, I was absolutely startled to see that the princely sum of $250,000 is to be expended to reforest 65 hectares of denuded hills.

I would just quote a few figures for this Senate from an official document from the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, which numerically describe the areas of fires in the past few years. I would not go too far back, but just to illustrate my point. This has nothing to do with any administration *per se*; it has much to do with the particular dry season.

In 1991 there were 674.4 hectares of forest burnt—now, when a forest is burnt it does not necessarily mean that it is totally destroyed; it may, in fact, have suffered severe damage, in some cases it may be destroyed. In 1992, 2,712.5 hectares were burnt; in 1993, 1,567.6 hectares were burnt; in 1994, 2,597.3 hectares were burnt. Last year when there was a very severe dry season—and it looks as if we are going to have the same thing this year—there were 7,244 hectares. That is about 16,000 acres of forest burnt and we are going to plant 65 hectares? Are we really being serious?

Any environmental policy for this country must grab this nettle and have serious developments of reforestation particularly in the denuded areas of the Northern Range. As we talk about reforestation, it is spreading all the way to the East; Lopinot and Caura are ravaged. We are boasting about eco-tourism, but the Arima Valley is being ravaged up to the Heights of Gunapo. Sadly, the last
A bastion of real forest in the Northern Range is in the Northeast in areas like Grand Riviere, timber is being extracted from both private and state lands and there does not appear to be any serious attempt to manage the problem. If we are serious about water, and our life, we have to address this issue now. We really ought to have addressed it seriously about 50 years ago.

So, while I compliment the hon. Minister of Finance for the presentation of this budget, I must emphasize, or remind him—that if he is still there in 1997 and I am here at the same time—of what I have just said if he does not do something serious about this issue.

Mr. President, I turn to another issue related to this subject of water. It is not a glamorous one, but it is thought to have caused the downfall of one civilization. We now have, and have had for some time, a problem with lead contamination which enters the atmosphere through the use of leaded fuels, but one of the big problems has been related to the recycling of old car batteries at different levels in the society. The fisherman melting down old batteries to make centres, up to a lead smelter which anyone could see on the Omera Industrial Estate.

In 1992 we had this tragic lead poisoning incident which caused one fatality; two children permanently brain-damaged and 50 others hospitalized.

Mr. President, I see advertisements from the Environmental Management Authority for us to save turtles. Surely, the time has come to shift the emphasis to looking after people and their interest.

The lead problem was thoroughly investigated by one of the top analytical chemists in this country at the University of the West Indies, and investigated by the top environmental health and safety medical specialist in the country, who is attached to the Ministry of Health. This study was commissioned by Cabinet and the results were delivered promptly to the Ministry of Health, and the Government, but nothing has been done. The lead waste is still out there and look where it is. It is on the banks of the Arima River. It is also in the Guanapo dump and on Stratham Lodge; there are also vast quantities of contaminated battery cases lying in the open in Omera.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. President, we use surface water. I would not expect you to notice it, but I do not drink the water in Trinidad and Tobago. I know that 40 per cent of the people of Trinidad and Tobago are drinking water that comes from the Piarco treatment plant. Here, there is a case not of a few old batteries, but a case of
tonnes of lead slag and this lead slag has other nasties in it like cadmium, antimony, chromium, you name it, it is all there.

The Water and Sewerage Authority, we know, is in serious trouble but WASA is responsible for this water. The water is drawn from the Caroni River. It goes through a standard procedure according to World Health standards, but whether it is done all the time remains a problem.

The water is first of all flocculated with alum—and I just emphasize alum because, occasionally, when WASA has no money it is unable to buy alum, therefore, the surface water goes through to filtration without flocculation first. It means anything that is in the water will go through to the filtration. The second part of this water treatment is filtration with a sand bed with activated charcoal which is supposed to remove all the very nasty substances; the very fine matters which may be in solution. Thereafter, the water is injected with chlorine which kills any pathogen.

It was well over a year and a half ago that I was told there was no activated charcoal at WASA. WASA is bankrupt. There is no money to buy the wherewithal to produce potable water. I am not suggesting that WASA is not attempting to monitor the quality of the water but given the fact it is unable to deliver water reliably to such a large part of the society, I would suggest at times its standards may not be adhered to.

There are some other issues which I would like to raise, but here is the core of what our problem is with water; the problem of management of our watersheds and the problem of management of the raw material once we receive it.

There are a number of other issues that I will raise. I do not wish to pre-empt Sen. Prof. Spence, but we are a small country. Our population density is about 650 per square mile if we accept the figures of the Central Statistical Office. It means that we number about one per acre. To give a feel of what this is like, the projected figure is about 1.75 or 1.8 million by the year 2015 and this means that we will be about one per half acre. Given the needs of housing, industry, recreation, what about the needs of agriculture? We have seen in this century the continuous alienation of our prime agricultural lands. Valsayn was absolutely first-rate agricultural land. A previous administration allowed that to go to housing but sent agriculture off to Wallerfield to the heavy clay and gravel to try to do something there. Of course, we know that would not work.
If a government is developing a philosophy—and I suggest that at political levels there is need for this—about the environment, the philosophy must include identifying and securing all our arable lands towards the coming generation, towards the requirements of sustainable development.

I turn next to another problem and this is one to which Sen. Daly referred this morning. This is the subject of vehicle emissions. This is something which was developed over the past few years and I have decided against using the Priority Bus Route except in extremes when I have to get here by a certain time. I have used this example, and I have done a little survey. I would like to read to this Senate a part of the laws of this country. It is taken from Rule 13, Chap. 48:50, which deals with road traffic. This is a rule that we are all supposed to obey, and I quote:

"He shall not permit sparks, smoke or visible vapour of an avoidable nature which could cause annoyance or danger to the public to come from any motor vehicle in his charge on or near any public road..."

That is in the laws of this country. I am told that in Barbados people are routinely prosecuted under this Visible Vapour Law, that is what they call it there. We have the same thing on our books.

Sen. Daly did not know that he actually prompted me to do this, but he made the observation that nothing is enforced in this country. We are required to put a sticker saying, Priority Bus Route Pass, and I dutifully do this. He said he has done a survey, and I think it is less than 10 per cent who actually do display these passes.

I thought, being a scientist, that I would do a mini survey—and this was repeated over a few trips—to see how many vehicles would pass this visible vapour law which is on our books. The Priority Bus Route is an excellent route for this purpose because the traffic is coming at you, so one can make a decision as to whether it is visible or whether it was a hazard. Seventy-nine per cent of the commercial vehicles, the "T" and "H" vehicles—which is my sample, which admittedly is a sample of less than 100—would not have passed the visible vapour law because it would be an annoyance. One could see it, black smoke. No less than 35 of them—and I have impaired vision—I would consider a hazard because I could not see on the other side of that cloud which is being belched on to my side of the carriageway.
I cannot understand why the licensing authority which has the power and the authority to get on any road in this country and stop any vehicle and say, there is a defect, come into the authority for inspection does not do this. They need to do it a few times just to get the message across. The question is: Will they? I think there is more concern with stopping people to check their licences to see whether people have paid their taxes, or their insurance to see that they are not a hazard to the other people on the road. Something as easy as this does not seem to be of any importance.

What is the cause of this? The cause of this is the problem that Sen. Daly referred to.

The hon. Minister of Finance also referred to the second-hand vehicles. It is not only second-hand vehicles we are dealing with, we are dealing with second-hand diesel engines. It is advertised all the time. When you take an engine which is designed for a certain purpose, it is worn out and you rebore it; it is not a new engine. If you have had the hassle of trying to use this machine to earn a living there is this problem of vehicle emission. It gets worse and worse every day.

One day in the company of other people I noticed a new Ministry of Health van driving along the Priority Bus Route belching out black smoke so one could not see the oncoming traffic. Sadly, it is partly a maintenance problem, but it is also partly a problem of the use of second-hand diesel engines.

Mr. President, the Minister of Finance and the Government ought to be thinking about the question of philosophy as to how to deal with problems like this. In other parts of the world there are incentives. If you go, and as many of you have travelled elsewhere you would notice that unleaded gasoline is cheaper than leaded gasoline. It is the reverse here. We have one of the cleanest fuels—fossil fuel—possible, natural gas and yet natural gas does not compete with gasoline. It is too expensive. It started out to be competitive. People invested and found that the Government jacked up the price of liquefied natural gas. That is a great inconvenience of having a tank. So there is no incentive, and I think we have to be thinking in terms of those incentives that we need to offer the people of this country so that they can move along that pathway away from this degradation and this immense environmental debt which we are accumulating.

I refer to the subject of enforcement of legislation. I would like to raise just one particular issue. Sometimes governments act, many times they lose in court. Sometimes, however, they win. I believe most are aware that there was a major squatting issue in Nariva which came to a head in the form of a constitutional
Motion brought against the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the Attorney General.

2.30 p.m.

About three years ago, I went as an expert witness for the state and Mr. Justice Lucky ruled in favour of the state. The state has done nothing and the squatters are still down there using the land to grow rice. I mentioned this one because I feel that any government wanting to make a signal that they are really serious about the environment would grasp this nettle and take action.

I would like to refer to two or three other issues which are of concern to me. I have put them in order of priority. The boom of the 70s and 80s saw total unrestricted quarrying of boulders and gravel throughout the country. An area to the east of Piarco is like a lunar landscape. There is legal and illegal quarrying. I understand that one gets a licence to operate a quarry and one of the requirements is to rehabilitate. Nobody has ever asked anyone to rehabilitate. Consequently, it is a lunar landscape.

I was also participating in one of these studies and the document is there in one of the ministries. It spells out exactly what to do. Prof. Spence has the study there. If hon. Senators have any doubts about what I have said, they do come up to one’s shoulders. There is a detailed blueprint as to what to do. Time passes and nothing is done.

I am emphasizing a few areas to help the Government bring focus to them. A very thorny problem is the one that people raise about noise. It is currently in St. James at carnival. Noise is something that one can sometimes do something about. One can go away from it if it is extreme. There are many parts of urban Trinidad that are zoned for residential housing and there is this creeping degradation with the entry of, first of all, clean businesses such as a medical practitioner’s office. That fits in, but it goes on to other activities and in many cases to factories. There are people living in what they thought was a residential area, and then later on they are told that the government would be doing a new re-rating exercise for purposes of taxation. One could be living on a property that has perhaps a boarding house on one side and a factory on the other. This is possible in certain parts of Port of Spain.

Now I would refer to our built heritage. One of the most alarming things I have read in the environmental management legislation of 1995 is its description of the environment. It means everything except the built heritage. It means all
land area, surface, atmosphere, climate, water, ground, marine and rivers but it
does not mean the built heritage. This country has a comparatively limited built
heritage.

Over 20 years ago, the Town and Country Planning Department developed a
plan in which they listed nine properties which were approved by Parliament for
the development of Port of Spain in the business area. This building was one of
them and so is the cathedral. There was a building obliquely over there which was
called the Lucien Building which Parliament in its wisdom decided should be
saved as one of the nine heritage sites in the capital city. The then Executive with
the money flowing decided that was irrelevant. They did not come back to
Parliament. They just knocked down the Lucien Building and up went another
structure. I think it was the Hall of Justice.

Mr. President: The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15
minutes. [Sen. Prof. Spence]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny: Thank you, Mr. President. The built heritage in
this country compared with that of Barbados, Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Vincent or
Grenada is limited. We seem to be able to casually deface buildings and
important heritage structures without any sort of concern for succeeding
generations.

This building here has been listed by the Organization of American States as
one of the greater monuments of the Caribbean. While it is listed by the OAS and
Town and Country Planning, I daresay and I would not suggest for a second that
the hon. Minister of Works and Transport would do anything foolish to the
building, but it is within his power if he so wishes to do something to a heritage
building. Once it is property listed under a national trust, there is no problem. If
this building were listed under a national trust and anyone defaced the building by
changing it without approval of the trust the person could be fined; be it a
government minister or otherwise.

I mentioned this one as I come to the end of these issues of the environment
because the Third Parliament of this country unanimously passed legislation for a
National Trust in 1991. The Act received assent in August 1991 and although it
required a special majority, it was passed unanimously in the end. It was a
voluminous debate. I remind Sen. Mark that he participated actively in the debate
for the National Trust. Somehow the Executive thought it unnecessary to fulfill the wishes of Parliament. Outside of the parliamentary system this would be a matter of contempt.

Here is this important piece of legislation. Every Caribbean country has a national trust. It is not the sort of legislation that requires vast expenditure. It is a simple Cabinet decision. It is not a question of providing it with a building; the state owns Stollmeyer’s Castle. What does it require in terms of manpower? It requires a good devoted graduate assistant, perhaps a field assistant and some secretarial assistance. Once this Trust is established and it is proclaimed and incorporated, many of us would happily put our money where our mouth might be. It is only $500 for a life membership of the Trust. Immediately we will find people supporting the Trust. The Trust is nothing new in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.40 p.m.

Again, as a young graduate 30 or 40 years ago, the late Douglas Archibald, the noted historian, was one of the leading figures in this; the late Ruskin Punch, the architect, was also a major backer of this idea. All their time went into it. The late Paul Jenkins, the planner, was also actively involved. These people have all gone now. This is an activity that has been going on for almost 40 years.

I look to the hon. Minister of Finance, the Minister of Culture and to Sen. Mark to have Cabinet move ahead the review of some 20 or 30 Acts for proclamation to pull the National Trust out of the queue and get it moving, and they will find the citizens of this country will continue to get involved in it both morally and materially.

In the few minutes left to me I would like to go back to an issue which, frankly, alarms me. This is the subject of the Environmental Management Authority, which the budget document in places refers to as the Environmental Management Agency—that seems a very strange Freudian slip there.

This is something which, in many respects, is a rather unusual piece of legislation. What alarms me about it, however—and there are a number of things which do—is that while it is basically a pollution enabling Act which has held up many things, it also gives to the authority certain responsibilities, and one is to co-ordinate the functions of about 20 different state agencies with responsibilities for the environment. This puzzles me because what we have done is establish an authority to do what was the responsibility of the Cabinet of this country.
Secondly, I have had some contact with the authority and it is in fact quite small—about the size of a cent if you look at the professional people. It appears to be dominated by people who are certainly not nationals of this country and who, I am sure, are not coming here for national salaries. So, I wonder about the wisdom of relying on people who are not part of our society coming here for a couple years to do something which is the Cabinet’s responsibility.

I also have some concerns about the schedule of activity for this authority because the Act requires it to develop a plan in two years’ time. Mr. President, I hope I have been impressing you with the sheer seriousness of some of the really important environmental issues in the country. We have a number of highly-paid people coming from abroad who will now sit down and come up with a plan in about two years’ time, by which time we would have had an extra thousand beat-up diesel engines, we would have killed a few more people with the lead, we would have stripped perhaps another 1,000 hectares of our watersheds, and we would have defaced the limited dirt environment which we have.

I will just briefly, finally, I think, refer to something which is very, very dear to my heart and which brings out considerable passion—not to match Sen. Daly’s, though. We have a limited built heritage. The oldest standing building in Trinidad and Tobago is not in Port of Spain, it is actually on one of the five islands—Nelson Island. It dates back to 1802. The Ministry of Works building is just a little bit after that. We can have this confirmed with the historians.

Nelson Island, the Five Islands, Los Cotorros—The Quarantine Islands—have an immense history that goes back to 1802. Mr. President, there is so much tied up in that. The ancestors of a substantial part of the population in this country entered, not through the Port of Spain docks, but rather being barged off the ships at the south end of Nelson Island, thereafter to Carenage to be carted to the railhead and down to the estates. In this century, German and Austrian Jews who were fleeing the holocaust were actually interned on Nelson Island as enemy aliens. Two Trinity Cross holders were actually interned on Nelson Island. When I was a boy in the sea scouts, we used to go there to see Uriah Butler, a hero of labour and a Trinity Cross holder. He was incarcerated at Caledonia, but when things got hot in the war, the British authorities transplanted him to American control and we used to go over to see him and get crix from him.

The hon. George Weekes was also interned in 1970. Now, this is a real heritage site. It is a mixture of Alcatras, a prison island, and Ellis Island. South
Africa recently named Robin’s Island a national monument. This facility has been used for a wide range of purposes. We used it for educational purposes.

I know I am supposed to address the Chair, but I am looking at the hon. Minister of National Security because Nelson Island is under his Ministry’s control. Nelson Island, in 1990, was completely rehabilitated to incarcerate some people who were attacking. It was fully equipped—new cells built and so forth. On December 15, I visited Nelson Island and it has been totally gutted. There is not a door hanging; all the plumbing fittings are gone; the guttering is gone; the wiring has been pulled out, and this is a heritage site. It is useful, it is habitable, it can be converted. It is under the charge of the Ministry of National Security. I know that the hon. Minister has many other things to worry about, but somewhere along the line, can we not just look after our heritage?

I thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed: Mr. President, as I stand here to make my contribution in this my first budget debate, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all Members of this honourable Senate and, indeed, the national community, who are presently observing the holy month of Ramadan, a very holy and blessed month.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the hon. Minister of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung for being kind enough in this 1996 budget to reduce the level of my personal income tax and for helping to reduce the prices of certain food items. I would have been much happier, though, if I could have gotten a tax credit on my Unit Trust shares. My plans to construct a home with my husband are now in limbo because of the reduction of the mortgage interest allowance from which we thought we could benefit. I also have to reconsider my membership in the credit union.

2.50 p.m.

Fortunately, my husband loves peanut butter and we are indeed very happy that the price of peanut butter will be falling. However, we would have preferred to see a reduction on certain other basic food items, but we have to say, thank God for small mercies.

I have made these remarks because this coalition Government would have us believe that this is, perhaps, the best budget ever delivered, as it reduces so many things. What this budget has effectively done, is to reduce my level of confidence in the ability of this coalition Government to manage the affairs of this country.
This is a Government that is surviving and thriving on the basis of public relations. During the elections campaign, the United National Congress waged one of the finest public relations campaigns this country has ever seen, and now they intend to run the country on the basis of that same public relations. The moment one dares to criticize them, one is attacked in certain quarters, but as one of the advisers to the hon. Prime Minister said recently, Parliament is not a tea party.

We on this side have an important role to play in this democratic process. Under the Westminster system of Government, we are the official Opposition and our role is to criticize Government’s policy and administration, and to suggest alternative policies. After all, we are the alternative government. It is against this background that I will proceed with my comments on the 1996 budget. I intend to deal with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

The budget speech delivered by the hon. Minister of Finance is as a scorpion with the sting in its tail. It is most deceptive and illusory. Whilst the intentions of the hon. Minister may have been good in the preparation of this budget, the reality is that the figures just do not tally. We have already heard a great deal about the over-statement of the revenue figures projected by the hon. Minister of Finance, and the inconsistencies with the expenditure figures quoted in the budget statement, as opposed to those contained in the budget documents. The hon. Minister himself sought yesterday to justify some of these figures, but it was the Minister who put these figures together and, therefore, he must explain the inconsistencies. We are not questioning the integrity of his technical staff.

As I said before, this Government is intent on running this country on the basis of public relations and not on the basis of properly thought-out policies and programmes. One would have thought that after the Minister’s presentation of the budget we would have gotten a clearer picture of the policy thrust of this new coalition Government, particularly in respect of the agricultural sector, but look at the hoax that has been perpetrated on an innocent and unsuspecting population.

Throughout the 1995 general elections campaign, we heard numerous statements from the UNC’s platform that agriculture will be the main thrust of a UNC government, particularly, in relation to the unemployment problem in the country. On January 10, 1996, the hon Minister of Finance presented his debut budget and at first it appeared as though agriculture was, indeed, going to be
getting significant attention from this Government. I quote from page 11 of the hon. Minister's budget statement:

"Mr. Speaker, the agricultural sector will be required to play an increasing role over the medium term given the sector’s employment creating capacity.

Agricultural policies will be informed by both an inward looking and an outward looking perspective whereby production will be organized to meet domestic demand as well as to secure niche markets overseas for non-traditional agricultural products. These policies will focus on strategies designed to stimulate economic activity and employment opportunities; promote domestic food and nutrition security; secure private investment; and ensure sustainable management of land, water, forest and marine resources. Special emphasis will be placed also on increasing foreign exchange earnings; providing for social stability and rural development; and revitalising agriculture in Tobago."

What is really the focus and emphasis that this new coalition is putting into agriculture? When one looks at the statement of the hon Minister, one would see that there is nothing new in it. It has been said time and time again that agriculture has been neglected in this country. In fact, the perception that exists in many quarters in this country is that the former PNM administration did absolutely nothing for agriculture, but let us look at the realities. I have with me a clipping from page 4 of the Newsday dated January 16, 1996. In this article the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, during the course of the budget debate in the Lower House, made certain comments and I would like to read some extracts from his contribution. I quote:

"Following the 3.4 per cent contribution to local GDP last year, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is set to become one of the pillars for national development.

This comment came yesterday from Minister Reeza Mohammed as part of his contribution to the debate of the 1996 budget presentation of the UNC/NAR administration in Parliament.

He stated that there has been a need for this particular sector to be cast in a pivotal role 'if we are to achieve the universally agreed objective of reducing our excessive dependence on the energy sector.'

The Minister then launched into a listing of expenditure for his Ministry starting with $42 million to finance the modernisation of Caroni (1975)
Limited in accordance with the terms of the Tripartite Agreement and to achieve enhanced efficiency within the sugar industry.

There is an allocation of $19 million under the IDB Rural Access Roads.

... A provision of $5.25 million to implement a Youth Agriculture Credit and Training Programme ...

A further $20 million under the Global Agricultural Credit Loan from IDB will enable farmers and agri-business to access credit to finance investments which will expand productivity.

There is also a million dollar allotment for rehabilitation and drainage work in the Oropouche Lagoon as well as a $0.7 million allocation for infrastructural development at major fishing and landing areas.

The Minister also made mention of provision of $500,000 for the development of a National Parks and Watershed Management Project.

... Expanded food production will be facilitated by the distribution of some 2,000 acres of lands from Caroni (1975) Limited and another 7,000 acres of state lands."

Mr. President, the article goes on, but when we look at these plans announced by the hon. Minister, we would see that they are, in fact, a summary of the work that was actually being carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources over the last four years. These policies, coupled with the policies and strategies outlined on pages 11 and 12 of the hon. Minister of Finance’s budget statement, are almost identical to the policies and programmes of the former PNM administration. One just has to look at the Medium Term Policy Framework 1995 and a comparison can be made at pages 49—51.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. President, I want to focus a bit on the strategies and measures outlined by the hon. Minister on page 12 of the budget statement. The first measure mentioned on page 12 is the distribution of 2,000 acres of land from Caroni (1975) Limited and at least 7,000 acres of state lands to private farmers. This new Government has received many commendations for the announcement of this measure by the hon. Minister, but I would like to draw attention to the fact that there is nothing new about this measure. In fact, this land distribution measure is a programme that got underway under the previous PNM administration.
Prior to demitting office last year, the former PNM Government was in the process of negotiating with the Inter-American Development Bank for an agricultural sector loan. My information is that this loan agreement is in an advanced stage and is supposed to be signed in February 1996.

As the former Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and now Minister of Public Administration and Public Information, also Chairman of the United National Congress, will know, there are normally conditionalities attached to these loans from the international lending agencies.

I would just read some extracts from an Action Plan relating to Land Use in respect of the Trinidad and Tobago Agricultural Sector Reform Programme. This Action Plan constitutes an annex to the Trinidad and Tobago Agricultural Sector Reform Programme which forms part of a letter of sectoral policy to the President of the IADB, and it is dated August 11, 1995.

These extracts highlight some of the conditionalities that are attached to the agricultural sector loan. On page 1 of Annex 4 of this document which deals here with Land Use, it says:

"The Government has undertaken a comprehensive review of land policies with the aim of promoting agricultural development, achieving greater equity in land distribution and facilitating improved environmental management as well as formulating a new land policy characterized by greater effectiveness, coherence and improved co-ordination. It is in the context of this policy review that the Land Use component of the proposed Agriculture Sector Reform Program has been prepared with agreement on a set of actions in support of the following strategic objectives:

a. Promulgation of a new Standard Agricultural Lease which incorporates terms that protect the interests of small farmers, sanction environmental damage, assure long-term productive use, and strengthen economic value and financial security of the leasehold.

b. Implementation of an appropriate and effective State Lands Disposition Program based on annual quantitative targets for the distribution of State-owned lands to private farmers for productive agricultural use."

It goes on:

"The Government has agreed to review the present draft Standard Agricultural Lease and proposed Leasing Procedures."
The Government is committed to designing and implementing an appropriate and effective land distribution program in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to achieve the national objective of distribution of State-owned agricultural lands for productive agricultural development. The program is to be based on annual quantitative targets agreed to by the Bank and the Government.”

Mr. President, there are certain actions that have to be complied with prior to the Board's presentation and these are outlined on page 3 as follows:

"a. A State Lands Disposition Program which addresses program for disposition of State and State-owned industry (e.g. Caroni Limited.) land;

b. Agreed guidelines for the revision of the Agricultural Small Holdings Act;

c. Preparation of a Standard Agricultural Lease in accordance with guidelines spelled out in Appendix II.”

If one were to look at the 1995 Manifesto of the People's National Movement one would see at page 16 where it states:

"A new land Administrative Division has been established to co-ordinate the Ministry's distribution and land management functions.

A new standard agricultural land lease has been developed.”

You see, Mr. President, just before the PNM demitted office in November, 1995 one of the things Cabinet did was to approve the distribution of 1,000 acres of state lands in the Aripo area. A very transparent process was being used whereby the lands were identified and advertised to invite prospective farmers to make themselves available to be screened by a team of technical, competent people in the field. After those farmers' needs were evaluated, allocations of these state lands were being made.

With regard to the distribution of lands at Caroni (1975) Limited, I would like to point out that that particular programme emanates from the 1992 tripartite agreement on Caroni (1975) Limited. The PNM Government had also put in place a land management division at Caroni (1975) Limited, and the 2,000 acres of land are for sale according to prevailing market conditions—it is not that these lands are going to be given out. These 2,000 acres of lands are surplus lands of Caroni (1975) Limited which are not required for sugar production, or indeed any others.
They were to be made available to the public through a transparent process of market conditions and under transparent terms and conditions. I trust that this new coalition Government which speaks so much about transparency will pursue this measure with that level of transparency or the level that they so often talk about.

The other measure that the hon. Minister of Finance mentioned at page 12 of his budget speech is a $22 million allocation from the Inter-American Development Bank to provide increased access to agricultural credit. When we examine the Draft Estimates of Development Programme for 1996, we see at page 48 that this allocation is $20 million, whilst the Minister of Finance quoted $22 million. There is also reference to a $42 million allocation to Caroni (1975) Limited.

3.10 p.m.

In the newspaper clipping of Tuesday, January 16, 1996, which I have just read, the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is reported to have said that this expenditure of $42 million is to finance the harmonization of the factory and food operations of Caroni (1975) Limited, and that is in accordance with the terms of the tripartite agreement, and to achieve enhanced efficiency within the sugar industry. However, again when one looks at the Draft Estimates of Development Programme for 1996, one would see that only $25 million is allocated for this purpose. Clearly, the figures quoted by the hon. Minister of Finance in his budget statement are inconsistent with the actual allocations quoted in the budget documents. This is why I remarked earlier that the budget is illusory. But, perhaps the biggest hoax of all in this budget with regard to the agricultural sector is the reference on page 12 of the hon. Minister’s statement to the formulation of a social mitigation programme which will involve the disbursement of $60 million to farmers who had suffered from the adverse effects of structural changes in agriculture.

Time and time again, this Government has stated its commitment to transparency and accountability in its affairs and I ask the question: From where is this $60 million coming? When I look at the budget documents, I am unable to find any allocation for this $60 million social mitigation programme, yet, when the statement was made, many commentators applauded the hon. Minister of Finance for this provision. Even the farmers throughout the country were saying what a great budget this is, for at first blush, it looked as though this Government
was really attempting to boost the agricultural sector, however, this is where the sting in the scorpion’s tail really lies.

My information is that this $60 million figure has come straight out of the letter of sectoral policy for the agricultural sector loan which was being negotiated by the previous administration, and which will soon be signed by this new Government. In the arrangements that were being made for this agricultural sector loan, the previous administration was seeking to get US$5 million for two consecutive years in the agricultural sector reform programme to carry out a social mitigation programme. It seems as though in the preparation of this budget, computations were made on the basis of US$5 million multiplied by an exchange rate of TT$6.00 and this equals $30 million. So $30 million for one year and for two consecutive years you get the $60 million, hence the allocation of $60 million in the budget for this particular programme.

If that is the case, it means that for this year only $30 million will, in fact, be available for this programme. To compound the situation, the policy matrix pertaining to this policy sector loan and which is annexed to a document dated August 11, 1995 shows that this US$5 million per year in financial resources is to address the social impact of trade liberalization in the rural areas, and retrenchment of public sector employees, so this money is not confined to agriculture only. I refer to page 6 annex 1 of that document.

The real issue of this social mitigation programme allocation is that if this money is coming from the agricultural sector loan, then one has to take note of the conditionalities that are attached to the granting of this loan.

The hon. Minister of Public Administration and Information was a man who, when he was on this side of the Senate not too long ago, used to be very critical of the previous administration’s policies on trade liberalization and its relations with the international lending agencies. One just has to look at the [Hansard](https://www.hansardدس.com) reports and one would see the vicious attacks he used to make on the then administration. But now the shoe is on the other foot and we await with bated breath to hear how the hon. Minister, who is now the Leader of Government Business in the Senate and Minister of Public Administration and Information, will deal with his Government and their relationship with these lending agencies.

One of the conditionalities attached to the Agricultural Sector Loan involves a reduction in staff at Caroni (1975) Limited; in fact, it involves a reduction by some 1,000 persons. The policy matrix to which I just referred deals with the question of the reform of state-owned enterprises and it involves the
implementation of the Caroni tripartite agreement. This annex outlines the conditions to be met prior to presentation, and prior to the second and third tranches of the loan being disbursed. Page 4 of the document deals with Caroni (1975) Limited and the tripartite agreement and it says here:

"State owned enterprises are costly to government and act as disincentive to private investment."

It also says that:

"Caroni Ltd. has high fixed costs and large operating losses."

and the objectives:

"Implement the Caroni Tripartite Agreement to develop viable sugar industry. Reduce costs and improve efficiency of the enterprise."

In order to make Caroni Limited viable, the excess labour force has to be cut and Chap. 7 on page 12 of this tripartite committee report on Caroni (1975) Limited deals with this issue. It says:

"The Committee recommends that urgent action be taken to address the Human Resources situation within the industry and to improve the morale of the work force. Critical steps in this connection are:"

And the report goes on to outline these steps and under the heading "Pension Plans" there is a paragraph that says:

"The Committee felt that an enhanced pension plan was an essential prerequisite for the Company’s viability which was linked to the leanness of the organization. In addition, it was felt that a corporate organization like Caroni (1975) Limited had a moral responsibility to adequately take care of its workers upon retirement. The Committee fully endorsed the view that, while on one hand no retrenchment was being proposed, a suitable pension plan was an appropriate instrument to control levels of employment in the industry. Accelerating the attrition rate through enhanced benefits at an earlier retirement age is likely to produce desirable levels of labour force reductions within the five-year viability framework. Significant reductions in wage expenditures are expected through this mechanism."

This tripartite agreement was signed in 1992 and at that time, the hon. Prime Minister was—and I am not too sure if he still is—the President General of the
All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Union, and this report recommends making Caroni (1975) Limited more cost efficient.

The fact that this $60 million allocation has been made in this year’s budget means that this coalition Government intends to complete the Agricultural Sector Loan, and thus, we can expect that soon there will be a cutting down of the labour force of Caroni (1975) Limited. So much for agriculture helping with the unemployment problem in our country. The deception does not end there.

When I received my budget documents, I noticed an increase of some $232 million being transferred to Caroni (1975) Limited. At first blush this transfer gives the impression that this money will be benefiting farmers in Caroni.

3.20 p.m.

However, when questioned about this allocation the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources revealed that the sum of $287.9 million expenditure on Caroni (1975) Limited is basically a paper transaction. Yesterday the hon. Minister gave a breakdown of how this sum of money is to be allocated and the Express newspaper of Tuesday 16, 1996 also gives a breakdown on page 3 of how the sum of $287.9 million will be spent. I think last night Sen. Nizam Baksh gave that breakdown as well. Most of these payments are really paper transactions. They are sums payable to the Board of Inland Revenue.

Yesterday, Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt touched on the issue of giving such a large grant to Caroni (1975) Limited, a company which government is trying to make efficient and cost effective, and I endorse her comments.

At the end of the day, what we would see from this budget is that the population has been hoodwinked into believing that this new coalition Government will be doing a great deal more for agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago, but the reality is that nothing new has been introduced. If anything, this coalition Government has endorsed the PNM’s policy on agriculture, including the agricultural sector loan. In real terms, very little money will be spent on agriculture for development programmes.

It should be noted that prior to the previous administration’s departure from office, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources had sought from the Ministry of Finance some $159 million when the budgetary estimates for 1996 were being prepared around July/August, 1995. It was eventually agreed that some $122 million would be allocated. However, the development programme for 1996 under a UNC Government shows an allocation of only $76.6
million by this new administration which claims to be so concerned with agriculture in this country.

Mr. President, under this new Government there is no real expansion to be expected in the development programme of the agricultural sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the meantime, it is the small farmers in this country who will experience the greatest disappointment with this budget. In fact, I sympathize with my friends and neighbours who live in the Barataria/San Juan and Aranguez areas. They are our nation’s most important food producers. They are the ones who control the food basket in this country and it means that they have to continue producing food under very harsh and rigorous conditions. They have to continue paying very high costs for chemicals and equipment, and when they are ready to reap their crops they will continue to be subjected to the problem of praedial larceny. I know of this because I have had personal first-hand experience with some of these problems.

For those who are able to reap their crops, they have to continue experiencing the very dehumanizing and harsh conditions that exist at the Central Market in Port of Spain. They have no market of their own and they are mere squatters at the Central Market in Port of Spain. They are also subjected to price fluctuations. Right now, there is a glut in the market for cabbage—cabbage is selling at 20 cents per pound at the wholesale market—and the farmers of this country have to be subjected to these kinds of conditions. There is the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) but no real help is being rendered to these poor farmers for the marketing of their goods.

Many of these farmers are the same people who sweated and were prepared to give their lives and blood to ensure a UNC victory in the two marginal seats of Barataria and St. Joseph. It is a fact! And I ask the hon. Sen. Wade Mark to tell me what provisions have been made in this 1996 budget for these poor farmers in not only those areas but throughout the island. We hear about putting people first.

**Hon. Senator:** What PNM did? Nothing!

**Sen. N. Mohammed:** Mr. President, I have just outlined what the PNM was doing, and it is the same thing the UNC/NAR Government is continuing with - PNM programmes.

This is a Government that claimed, on the platforms, that they were going to do so much for agriculture. I thought there was going to be a revolution in
agriculture. One would have thought that at least in the budgetary allocations, some provisions would have been made. There would have been some new thrust by this new Government, but there has been nothing.

Numerous studies and reports have been done over the years in various aspects of the agricultural sector. Sen. Prof. John Spence is here and he is an expert in the field. The experts in those areas have had their say.

I urge this new coalition Government to arrange a national consultation on agriculture whereby these farmers—I am talking about the small farmers—can come together and sit with the experts and the authorities and see what meaningful ways can be found to increase our food production, generate employment, earn more foreign exchange and reduce our food import bill. This is a Government that is committed to consultation and I urge it to do so.

Mr. President, I turn now to another area. Over the past several years, Trinidad and Tobago has been experiencing severe belt-tightening measures as a result of the downturn in the economy. When the PNM was returned to government in 1991, our economy was in a fragile state but by 1993 there was stabilization in the economy and in the Medium Term Policy Framework for 1994 - 1996, the stage was set for growth in the economy. In 1994, economic activity expanded and, in 1995, the economy continued its strong performance with real growth of 3.5 per cent. Earlier, Sen. Hamel-Smith quoted some percentages in his contribution but they all ended at 1994. He made no mention of the growth that took place in 1995. However, since November 6, 1996, a major spoke has been put in the wheel of this economic turnaround.

On the eve of the 1995 general elections the former government had completed a tremendous amount of preparatory work to upgrade the physical infrastructure in this country. A comprehensive programme of infrastructural development was being put in place, but in the last few days we have been hearing that many of these projects will be scrapped, stopped or deferred. Sure enough, a new government will have its own agenda and its own priorities but I urge this new Government that before discarding PNM’s projects outright, it should adopt a reasonable, holistic and pragmatic approach. Do not be shortsighted; have a vision!

3.30 p.m.

We had world class vision. [Interruption] Let us look, for example, Mr. President at the City Centre Development Programme. At least we had a vision.
When I look at this budget I am searching for the vision and I am not seeing any. I am searching for the policies and programmes, and I endorse the comments made by Sen. Daly on this issue.

**Sen. Kuei Tung:** You are still talking "world class"?

**Sen. Jagmohan:** What is wrong in being world class?

**Sen. N. Mohammed:** Mr. President, some reports say that the Government is scrapping the National Library project; others say the project is being reviewed and this morning, in fact, we heard that the project is being deferred, perhaps, until such time as another world class Opposition comes into being.

**Sen. Jagmohan:** It gone through!

**Sen. N. Mohammed:** But, Mr. President, in the meanwhile, the construction will suffer major losses.

**Sen. Kuei Tung:** All of all you gone, you know. He say so!

**Sen. N. Mohammed:** Mr. President, the unemployment problem in this country will certainly be affected and our economy will be affected as well. As one engineer said recently, the construction industry is not one that you can easily turn on and off. A lot of time and planning is required. It is a high capital intensive industry which benefits from long-term planning; and over the past few years such planning has been taking place. Now we are hearing that the Library Project is being deferred.

My information, Mr. President, is that some $10 million has already been spent in the design and foundation stage of this project. It is now at the award stage. Does this mean that $10 million will now go down the drain? What is so wrong with a project of this nature? This Library Project is intended to be a technological information centre fit for the 21st Century, but now it is being deferred.

Then there is the Restoration of the Red House project. Is this project being deferred as well? Last Monday, hon. Senators, who may have been here at the sitting of Parliament, would recall that there was a heavy downpour; and just across there, very near to the President’s Chair, there was a major leakage coming into this Chamber, and Mr. President, if any hon. Senator would take a walk down to the Library area, one would see the old Senate Chamber in a state of disrepair. The ceiling is collapsing. Are we going to defer this project? The PNM was going to-
Hon. Senator: Was going to? [Interruption]

Sen. N. Mohammed: The design stage had already gone through and now, Mr. President, we have to wonder, is this project going to be stopped as well? Then there is the National Security and Legal Affairs Complex, Mr. President.

I have been exposed to the enormous difficulties that affect the state’s Legal Department. For many months we have been hearing a lot about the problems in the administration of justice, and how the system can be speeded up. A project of this nature would certainly enhance the administration of justice in this country. The Solicitor General’s Department is the advocate department within the state’s Legal Department. This is the department from which State Counsel go to court and argue cases on behalf of the state. The department is now housed at Richmond Street in the Winsure Building. It relies heavily on the Chief State Solicitor’s Department for its information. The Chief State Solicitor’s Department at present exists at Queen Street and in that department, statements are obtained from persons involved in court matters; there are affidavits to be filed, deadlines to be met, and there are many problems associated with this system. In fact, I am sure the Attorney General would have on her desk many reports of problems existing within those departments because of the problems of space and the physical proximity of the departments. Mr. President, how good it would be if all these legal departments were brought into one building with the Ministry of National Security. Many legal actions involving the state involve matters of national security.

Mr. President: The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. V. Gilbert]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you very much, Mr. President and thank you very much Sen. Wade Mark.

Mr. President, I am wondering whether they are going to scrap the administrative offices that were being planned as well. Several administrative offices were going to be built throughout this country, and they were to house all government departments in particular areas. Are they going to scrap or defer this project as well?
Mr. President, I can go on and on about these projects, but at this point I would like to urge the hon. Minister of Works and Transport to please adopt a practical and holistic approach towards them. Nothing is wrong with reviewing and pursuing your own path of development, but please do not be short-sighted or spiteful in your shifting of priorities. Just look at the Brian Lara Promenade and you will see the pride of place that this has brought about in the City of Port of Spain.

Quite apart from the aesthetic value of projects like these, Mr. President, the most significant benefit that these projects bring about is growth in our economy. It is an economic fact that a strong capital development programme fuels income generation and generates employment. In so doing, our physical infrastructure is improved and wealth is thereby created and distributed. The effect is felt throughout the economy.

I would like to move on, now, to some other areas of concern. On page 20 of the Public Sector Investment Programme, reference is made to the IDB assisted $200 million Rural Access and Roads and Bridges Rehabilitation Programme, which will continue in 1996 with an allocation of $20 million for the advancement of Phase II of this Programme. I am informed, Mr. President, that in October 1995, $92.4 million in contracts were awarded for Phase II of this project. Payments for these programmes will become due by the end of 1996, so it means that by October, 1996 $92 million will become due for Phase II of this Rural Access and Roads and Bridges Programme. However, only $20 million have been allocated for this project. What is going to happen when the balance of this money becomes due? Unless additional funding is found for this programme the work now in progress will come to a halt by April, 1996. Much of this Rural Access and Roads and Bridges Programme falls in UNC-controlled constituencies. I trust that this programme will not be scrapped or deferred as well.

Mr. President, I would like to conclude this part of my contribution by commending the Government for continuing with the Roads and Bridges Programmes outlined in paragraphs 83, 84 and 85 on page 23 of the PSIP. They were all PNM-initiated projects. The hon. Minister of Works and Transport has dealt with these programmes already this morning. Then in paragraph 92 on page 24, allocations for the Drainage and Flood Control Rehabilitation Programme are also welcome. This, too, was a PNM programme.

Then there is the Road Improvement Fund which has performed admirably in repairing over 400 kilometres of road in just two short years. This Fund is
supposed to be $50 million annually, but only $25 million has been allocated in 1996.

3.40 p.m.

The Ministry of Works and Transport accomplished a great deal between 1991 and 1995. One wonders now as to which programmes and projects will, in fact, be pursued in 1996. I join with Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt in calling for transparency and openness in the priorities of this new Government and also with respect to the awarding of contracts.

Yesterday Sen. Barbara Burke was vociferous about the plight of the people in her area and she blamed the PNM government for the poverty in her area. But what is her coalition Government doing to ease the plight of these people? They have cut the allocations for the URP. Today we heard the URP is going to continue, but the reality is that the allocations have been cut and nothing new is planned with respect to the creation of employment, according to the budget documents, especially in the agricultural sector. Certainly in the construction industry we would see that the unemployment problem in this country is going to worsen.

With regard to sport and youth affairs, I think that all honourable Senators will agree with me that sport is essential to national development and it is an excellent avenue for the development of our youth. As we all know, our society is afflicted with the worst forms of social ills. Drugs and unemployment are two of the most critical issues affecting our nation's youth and are certainly linked with the spate of crimes that are taking place on a daily basis in our society.

Our youth population is about 220,000 and any government, be it PNM, UNC, NAR, or UNC/NAR or MUP, or whatever else, cannot ignore this valuable human resource base in our society. In all our various communities, it is a fact that sport provides perhaps the best and most exciting medium for harnessing the abundant resources of our nation's youth. In the San Juan/Barataria/Aranguez areas alone, some of the best sportsmen and sportswomen have been produced. In cricket, we have had Brian Lara playing in the Aranguez league, Imtiaz Ali, Anthony Gray and Frankie Ragoonath; in football, Ken Butcher, Marvin Faustin, Alvin Corneal, Russel Latapy, David Nakhid, and others; in netball, we have had Jean Pierre, Jemma Bess, Cheryl Peters; in volleyball, Feroze Mohammed and Frederick Williams. All these are people who have been involved in sport in the San Juan area.
However, there are problems in these areas which I am sure exist in other communities as well. If you ask anyone in sport about the problems that confront them, they will tell you about inadequate sporting facilities, high cost of sporting equipment, maintenance of existing sporting facilities. There are many other problems, but it is clear that the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs can do a lot to assist this important sector in our country.

Under the previous administration, a national infrastructure plan for sporting facilities had been developed and certain areas had been addressed, for example:

- Refurbishment of the Arima cycle track,
- Construction of a synthetic hockey pitch at Tacarigua,
- Construction work had started on sporting facilities at Pleasantville, Tacarigua and Point Fortin,
- Facilities were scheduled to start in Chaguanas in 1996; and
- New facilities at Irwin Park, Siparia.

There were certain programmes for those with special needs as well. There were several other programmes that were ongoing in this ministry. I trust that under this new Government, particularly under the very vibrant and astute ministerial control of the honourable MP for Tobago West, Miss Pam Nicholson, for whom I have the greatest amount of admiration, that these programmes will be continued and will be built upon. My only concern is that the budgetary allocations for the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, the development programme in particular, has been reduced by more than $3 million. It is regrettable that this very dynamic Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs has to be treated with such scant courtesy, but with her abilities I am sure she would be able to mobilize her Ministry. Sport is an industry and our nation's youth are valuable resources. Let us not ignore these two areas.

I would just like to wind up by reiterating our position with regard to the integrity of this budget. As the saying goes, "all that glitters is not gold." By the end of 1996 we can expect the unemployment situation in this country to worsen. Nothing new would be taking place in the agricultural sector. The construction industry will constrict and our nation's youth will continue to suffer. Crime will continue to plague this country. Would this new coalition Government please stop the campaign and get down to the task of managing the affairs of this country? Or is it that this budget is geared towards an early general election? I wonder.

Thank you, Mr. President.
The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Daphne Phillips): Mr. President, I wish to add my congratulations to those Senators who spoke before me today and yesterday, to your good self, for your ascension to high office in this honourable Senate and to your family for a prosperous, healthy and happy new year.

I wish also to congratulate the Minister of Finance and my colleague on the presentation of what I assess to be a good budget, given the limitations of the macro-economics and fiscal environment which we inherited. I wish to confine my remarks specifically to the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs which I now head. What I will do is to look at the conditions which I found in my Ministry so as to give this honourable Senate and, indeed, the national community, a sense of the state of the problem.

The philosophy of any body, group, organization or administration can be deduced by an examination of the activities or behaviour of that group, body, organisation or administration. When we look at the activities or the behaviour which was carried out in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs, we find the following. In the area of the capital development programme distribution, we note that in the year 1995, the distribution of the construction of community complexes reflects a certain bias. Here is a list of the areas in which community complexes were constructed. Community complexes are large, multipurpose community centres which are all new and all built in 1995. The distribution is as follows: Toco, St. Augustine, Maloney, La Horquetta, Barataria which is still under construction, Carenage, Vistabella, Plaisance Park, Ste. Madeleine, Esperanze, Laventille, Pleasantville, East Port of Spain which is still under construction. These are 13 new community complexes constructed in 1995.

We note that the distribution reflects a bias towards perceived political support bases and are not really related to the greatest need. About two or three weeks ago, my permanent secretary and I interviewed a gentleman from the Warrenville area. We got to him through a letter he wrote to us requesting assistance and we invited him to come to the Ministry to talk with us. He said that in his community they were trying to have a community centre constructed for the last several years, something like 30 years. Within the last two or three years they identified the land for this, but up to this point in time, the community centre has not been constructed.
3.50 p.m.

This is an elderly gentleman of 72 years, a retired school teacher whose only wish is that he could see a community centre in his area before he dies. I think this is a pity.

Mr. President, this distribution of community centres in relation to political support is carried over into the behaviour of the people who live in these communities. For example, there are several reports of the closure of community centres by some groups in the community, for example, in Mayaro, Plum Mitan. Today, while here, I got a note that the community centre in Macaulay, which is in Claxton Bay, has been closed and some people are preventing others from using it. This is the effect of the impression that community centres are built for certain groups and not for others.

Still under the area of the development programme, we note that repairs to community centres in 1995 showed that 16 centres were repaired through funds provided by the CARE programme—I shall explain what the CARE programme is about later—controlled by the Community Development Division. The cost of repair to those centres was in the range of $20,000—$70,000 approximately. We had 11 community centres repaired through the ministry's funds that ranged in costs between $4,000 and $11,000. There were 24 community centres repaired under the URP Programme which ranged in costs between $250,000 and $665,000.

We are talking about deducing the philosophy of this ministry from their action. I leave it to this honourable Senate to interpret what these figures mean.

Mr. President, in the area of programmes in the communities, there has been a lack of organized activities. In fact, several communities are characterized by inactivity, lethargy and an absence of motivation. The areas in which programmes were implemented were also those in which there was perceived political support. Indeed, communities do engage in activities on their own under very trying circumstances, but these sometimes are little acknowledged, little supported and there is little publicity of the efforts by those persons.

When I went to that ministry I met some other programmes which were implemented, and there was the claim in the other place that five new social programmes were successfully piloted in the ministry. This is not quite correct. It can be conceded that two programmes were piloted, that is, the Community
Action for Revival and Empowerment (CARE) and the Relief Centre or Soup Kitchen Programme. Whether these were piloted successfully is another matter.

Let me give an example. The Community Action for Revival and Empowerment (CARE) is a source of great embarrassment to the Community Development Division. It has severely undermined the credibility of the Division. Most of the money allocated for the years 1992—1995 went back to the Treasury unused, while there were numerous community projects which remained unapproved.

For example, out of an annual allocation of $5 million in 1992, $697,953 was spent, the rest was returned to the Treasury. In 1993, $1,706,855 was spent, the rest returned. In 1994, $1,848,563 was spent, the rest returned; in 1995, $2 million was allocated, $902,396 was spent and the rest returned. This is in the context of a dire need in the communities.

A second programme, the Relief Centre Programme, represents an elaboration of the original idea of the famous soup kitchens. Fourteen of these soup kitchens were hurriedly put together just before the general election; 13 are in operation. This programme was never properly conceptualized and no proper administrative system was put in place.

In fact, of the 13 soup kitchens in operation, 12 of them became operational after the general election when this Government was already in office. There were no support programmes and no systems were developed. Again, the truth is that this programme was conducted as a political one. Indeed, in my ministry, not even the permanent secretary was involved in, or was aware of what was going on in this programme. Of the 12 soup kitchens that were opened while we were in government, a total of $359,903.25 was spent to date.

The other social programmes piloted are not new at all. The National Training and Service Programme was piloted in this country in 1987. The Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP) which was a project under the National Service came from the National Service Training Report of 1990. It was recently piloted and there seems to be a lack of appreciation for the philosophy of the National Training and Service Programme as envisaged previously.

A fourth programme, the Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programme (RAPP) is yet another one taken from the National Service Training project, which was not piloted. It never started.
Finally, the fifth programme, the Export Centre Programme is a reconfiguration of the Community Cottages Programme introduced under the Labour Intensive Development Programme. The Export Centre Programme was launched in April, 1994 but not much has happened since. Persons were hand-picked to conduct training in certain skilled areas but it turned out that this was not adequate to meet the needs of the proposed facility. This programme has since been handed over to the Small Business Development Company but concerns have been raised that it is being used to reintroduce the EPZs. For example, in Tunapuna garments are being produced in pieces for business houses.

4.00 p.m.

Suspicions have been raised that the trainees in this programme might very well be victims of exploitation. This is now being addressed by my Ministry.

In the area of community development, both in the capital programmes and in the other social programmes, there is much to be desired. Community development has really been a mechanism for servicing political partisan interest and not really a vehicle for community integration and the development of the people. The truth is that the new Government has inherited a community development portfolio in a horrible mess.

In the area of culture, we note an obvious absence of policy on culture. There is no sense of direction; seemingly little inclination to acknowledge the importance of culture as a vehicle for community integration and integrity of the people.

If we look at the activities that were engaged in during 1995, we note that the activities in relation to culture were largely a response to public pressure. For example, assisting with carnival celebrations; assisting cultural organizations in the implementation of their programmes; staging of cultural presentation for state visits, for example, the Presidents of Zambia and India; assisting with the celebrations of national days and festivals, for example, Emancipation Day, Phagwa, Divali, Hosay, Eid, Ram Leela, Independence and Double Ten; Staging Carifesta V1; staging the Coming of Age Pan exhibition, and that is also related to Carifesta; staging the Prime Minister’s Best Village Competition; and assisting with Parang activities. These were the listed activities of the Division of Culture in 1995. No sense of direction. Assisting with this and that and activities related to what were various pressures from outside.
In the ministry there is no structural or functional relationship between activities and programmes across the divisions of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs. Departments in the ministry function like separate ministries. For example, there is little sense of the multiple ways in which gender issues are interrelated with community and culture. There is no coherent, holistic policy of the ministry. Activities were characterized by adhocism and lack of integration. These were some of the conditions which I met in the ministry.

I turn now to the philosophy of this Government and my ministry in relation to community development, culture and women’s affairs. This philosophy emphasizes the following:

1. The importance of community development to the quality of the social fabric.

2. The importance of the widest possible participation and involvement of the people and of their membership in community organizations to the development of a positive sense of self, and the potential for the reduction of crime, violence and other negative behaviours.

3. The notion that community is the microcosm of society, that cultural development is inherent in community development which, is itself, enhanced by reducing gender tensions and encouraging the promotion of smooth gender relationships.

4. The vision that cultural products are valuable both as integrative elements of people, and as resources for exploitation, income and wealth.

Indeed, we think that at one level culture is an integral and integrative mechanism; at another level, it is a resource for development and exploitation; at a third level it is the showcase of the people, that is, for enjoyment and entertainment. We need to articulate all these levels in our cultural policy. The theme of the new Government and of this ministry is People at the Center of Growth and Development. We believe that social problems are felt at the community level and solutions to these problems can be derived from community strengthening and empowerment of the people for self-sufficiency. Community then, is the core of our focus in the ministry.

Our policy direction involves the following:
Invitation and encouragement of the participation of all social sectors in the process of community development.

In this regard, and as an example, we have planned a national consultation on women to be held in March this year. We are presently conducting a preparatory meeting for this consultation which is to be held on Saturday, January 27.

In this proposed national consultation on women, we want to look at, among other things, legislative review in relation to women and women’s issues; we want to have the recommendations which came out of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing translated in ways that they can be used and implemented at the community level; we want to focus on that sore problem of domestic violence and also on the issue of shelters for women and children. In this regard, we want to enlist the contributions of the NGO community to form task forces and select committees to work with on these and other issues related to women and to share with us the wealth of their information and experience.

The Division of Women's Affairs, therefore, will be used as a nucleus to pull NGOs together and accelerate the process. This is an example of encouragement of the participation of social sectors in the process of community development.

Another one of our policy directives for this ministry is the encouragement of the development of integrated communities through intensified and integrated programmes and neighbourhood activities. In this regard, I am presently negotiating with the Creative Arts Center at the University of the West Indies through their Arts in Action programme, which is something of a mobile participatory drama which we would like them to take to the various communities in dramatizing ways in which the communities themselves can deal with social problems. This is one of the ways we are looking at to encourage the development of integrated communities and self-sufficient communities.

4.10 p.m.

We are also looking at negotiating with the OAS for a project which would deal with the training of adolescents who have not been successful in being placed after the common entrance examination.

Another one of our policy directives at the level of the ministry is the integration of activities through the creation of common, holistic programmes in which there are components of community development, culture and gender issues in every programme to be implemented at the community level. This means that every programme we put out into the community will have a
component of culture and gender issues. People will be exposed to discussions about relations between the sexes in different kinds of context depending on the programme. The directors of the ministry are already working on these integrated programmes.

In the area of culture, policy directions are our first and foremost concern with the development of a comprehensive policy. In this regard, we note several things. At present there is a symposium on the Best Village Competition and this is calculated to examine the problems to make it more relevant, meaningful and in keeping with the realities of the various communities. Will it produce the results which we want? Is it still relevant in the way in which it has been previously conceptualized? In this area of development of policy on culture we see cultural participation as offering a sense of community. People identify with cultural institutions in which they participate and that itself lends to community strengthening.

We note that the National Carnival Commission has initiated a deliberate policy through monetary incentives for the encouragement of the re-integration of the steelband into carnival celebrations. Another area for the development of policy on culture is the exploration of the development of cultural products as objects for national and international income generation. In the *Daily Express* dated January 22 our Prime Minister urged all those who manage the industry to ensure that 'this incredible talent of our people finds its rightful place in the international and commercial markets'. We need to explore this aspect of cultural products as objects for national and international income generation. We note that our national museum, archives and heritage are also products of culture.

Issues of community development, culture and women’s affairs are areas which overlap with other social and economic sectors. Therefore, there is the necessity to work with other ministries, a practice which has been and continues to be characteristic of this Government.

I move now to the actual plans and programmes for 1996 in relation to the budgeted allocations. There has been criticism of the budget in relation to allocation for culture. The revised estimate of recurrent expenditure for 1995 to the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women’s Affairs is $65.1 million and the estimate for 1996 is $57.1 million; a difference of $8 million. In the development programme, the revised estimate for 1995 is $23.5 million and the estimate for 1996 is $23.6 million; a difference of $0.1 million. Overall, the revised estimates for 1995 totalled $88.6 million and the estimate for 1996 is
$80.7 million; a difference of $7.9 million. Looking at the surface it does appear that the allocations to the ministry have been reduced by about $8 million. However, in 1995 from the ministry’s allocations, $8 million was paid to Carifesta VI and $7 million to cover the debt of the National Carnival Commission. Allocations for 1995 included these two large sums which are not to be paid in 1996, hence there is actually an extra $8 million in the budget to be spent in the ministry in 1996.

In relation to the NCC debt the $7 million paid in 1995 represents debt accumulated over the period 1992-95. This suggests that there might have been questionable financial practices and/or financial mismanagement. The past chairman of the NCC paid himself a salary of $19,000 per month. He paid to his company and himself as CEO of that company a further $19,000 per month, a total of $38,000 per month from the funds of NCC. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

**Sen. Gilbert:** Mr. President, can I ask the Minister to explain $19,000 across how many months of the year? Is it just a term period of one or two months?

**Hon. Dr. D. Phillips:** He received $19,000 per month all year around.

We have instituted a change of the board of the NCC since our assumption of office and from this board we expect greater efficiency and responsible management. [*Desk thumping*]

In the area of allocations, I noted earlier that there were actually no reductions in allocation to the Ministry this year, but there were increases. In the specific area of culture, under the heading Assistance to Carnival Organizations revised estimates for 1995 show a total of $309,000; the estimate for 1996 is $600,000 which is an increase of 93 per cent. The allocation for the Best Village Programme, revised estimates for 1995 show a total of $1,450,000 and the estimate for 1996 is $1,500,000; an increase of 2 per cent. Assistance to steelbands: revised estimates for 1995, a total of $250,000; estimates for 1996, $400,000, an increase of 60 per cent. National Days and Festivals: revised estimates for 1995, $475,000; estimates for 1996, $590,000, an increase of 24 per cent. Therefore, there are no reductions in allocations to culture in 1996.

4.20 p.m.

Still in our actual plans and programmes, if we look at the capital development programme, what we plan to do this year is to continue the construction of community complexes. Fifteen community complexes were identified in the programme last year. Thirteen are either completed or on their
way to completion. There are two more to be built: one in Tobago and another in Trinidad. That last location is still being looked at.

In this area, I note the comments of the hon. Sen. London yesterday in his statement that there was no capital programme in culture for Tobago. This is not quite correct. In this regard, I just want to make an observation. If we are to understand the allocation to Tobago by looking at allocations to the Tobago House of Assembly, our analysis will be distorted because there are several areas in which Tobago is taken into account in the various ministries. So the analysis of the contribution of this Government to activities in Tobago would not be correct if we look only at Tobago.

**Sen. London:** Will the hon. Minister explain why, if this allocation was to be for Tobago, it was so cleverly hidden that the technocrats in the Tobago House of Assembly could not see it? In addition, why should money for Tobago not be under the Tobago House of Assembly, especially in a situation where we are asking for autonomy for Tobago?

**Sen. W. Mark:** Somebody will answer that.

**Hon. Dr. D. Phillips:** Mr. President, the community complex identified for Tobago is clearly identified in the area of Black Rock, Tobago. This is not hidden; it was certainly available for my scrutiny when I entered the ministry.

We intend to commission fully the 13 newly built complexes. These complexes are presently empty; they have no furniture nor equipment and we have, in the development programme this year, made allocations for commissioning these complexes and we need also to put staff in place to have them fully functional.

We will continue the refurbishment of civic and other community centres which were planned, and work on the Naparima Bowl, Queen’s Hall, the National Museum, the Archives and Fort San Andre. In this area, we need to seek funding for several projects such as the National Centre for the Performing Arts and also a cultural centre for Tobago. Or, maybe Sen. London will not want me to do that and leave it to the Tobago House of Assembly.

We need also to construct community centres in various areas which were neglected in the past. Again, for Tobago, the area of Golden Lane—and several areas in Trinidad—has been identified as an area of great need. This is our development programme for this year. We have to source funding for several of these projects.
In our actual plans and programmes, we intend to put in place an integrated programmed approach to projects for implementation in the community. My recent visits to communities in St. George West, Caroni and, indeed, Tobago have shown that several areas are largely neglected. Many of them have never seen a Minister under the last administration.

In these visits we identified deplorable conditions at some of the centres and deplorable facilities for staff. Community development requires activation and stimulation of communities across the nation and revitalization of lethargic and dormant communities. In this regard, we intend to put in place and strengthen existing programmes, such as community domestic support programmes, employment generation programmes, leadership and management programmes, the geriatric programme, and the retirees/adolescent partnership programme, which exists only in one or two areas. We intend to extend them to areas not previously identified for this programme.

Many of these programmes are paper programmes. They are on the books and for many communities they really do not exist. We intend to strengthen and implement them and we are looking at the possibility of creating an agency for trained persons under the geriatric adolescent programme.

Mr. President: If the hon Senator can wrap up her contribution within five minutes, she may continue, if not we will break for tea. What will it be?

Hon. Dr. D. Phillips: I prefer to break.

Mr. President: The hon. Senator has seven more minutes before the expiry of the 45 minutes. Perhaps it will be useful for her to run for those 7 minutes and if she does not wrap up, resume after the tea break.

4.30 p.m.

Hon. Dr. D. Phillips: Thank you, Mr. President, I will try to finish in the seven minutes.

Mr. President: Hon. Senator, you will have a further 15 minutes provided the House agrees.

Hon. Dr. D. Phillips: Mr. President, as I was saying, these programmes are all on the books but are largely paper programmes, not known in several of the communities. They are to be implemented, but with gender and cultural components in each of them.
In the Division of Culture, the programmes being the focus for 1996 are aimed at the development of a comprehensive policy on culture in Trinidad and Tobago, to be informed by the re-evaluation of ongoing activities. I note that the projects listed for 1996 are:

1. An exhibition of carnival artefacts, masquerade, pan and calypso.
2. A training programme for Best Village officers, tutors and aides.
3. The publication of a bulletin.
4. Seminars and workshops for artistes.
5. A workshop in calypso, steelband and masquerade for teachers.
6. A workshop in local East Indian chutney music.
8. A workshop on East Indian dance.
9. An exhibition of works of young artistes (arts and craft).
11. A complete re-organization of the archives.
12. The publication of East Indian wedding songs.
15. Pan technology courses.

Please note, Mr. President, that this list of activities for 1996 is a big improvement on the list we noted for 1995. We are moving in the direction of the creation of policy and of some programmes in the ministry, which is not only articulated by pressure from outside.

In the area of culture too, we have noted the changes in the NCC, the efficiency and the creative direction which has already been demonstrated. This is to be enhanced in 1996 after carnival, when we have time to look at the systems and programmes within NCC and to improve them.

Under culture, we continue training and workshops as I have just identified, research and publication and also the support for cultural groups and
organizations. We want to look again at that school pan programme to see if it can be re-activated.

In addition to this, we need to review the handicraft division where there is a high degree of frustration. In 1995, the handicraft division was negatively affected by three factors:

1. Absence of a clear policy on handicraft.
2. Lack of financial resources.
3. Disorganization of the Handicraft Development Unit.

These issues have to be investigated and policies put in place for the handicraft programme in 1996.

Under the Division of Women’s Affairs there are several programmes identified. I will come back to that later.

**Mr. President:** The hon. Minister’s speaking time has expired.

*Motion made, That the hon. Minister’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes.* [Hon. W. Mark]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. President:** The hon. Minister, will utilize those 15 minutes after the tea break.

4.37 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.08 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

**Hon. Dr. Daphne Phillips:** Mr. President, I was looking at the plans and programmes for the Division of Women's Affairs for 1996. These include the following:

Promotion of the principle of gender mainstreaming in all policies, plans and programmes. In this area, there will be strengthening of programmes of other divisions through the incorporation of a gender component in the various programmes and policies. There will be provision of gender training programmes to the staff of the ministry, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and project participants. There will be a review and development of women in development policy through consultation and collaborative processes.
Secondly, the continuation of activities under the institutional strengthening programme; this includes activities in relation to outreach programmes, co-ordination and gender training.

Thirdly, the development of training programmes in non-traditional areas particularly for women. This is largely in non-traditional areas of employment within communities.

Fourthly, there will be an integrative approach to the problem of domestic violence. In this regard a number of strategies will be developed aimed at prevention and rehabilitation of women and children affected by violence at the community level. These include the development of domestic violence support groups, training of staff of homes for battered women and children and of law enforcement officers and other service workers.

Fifthly, the implementation of programmes aimed at economic empowerment for women and enhancing their social, political and economic participation.

Sixthly, legislative reform in support of gender equity. In this area there is to be the establishment of committees to review legislation in support of gender equity such as the Succession Act, Industrial Relations Act and the Attachment of Earnings Act and so forth. These are the plans for the Women's Affairs division.

In summary, in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs we intend firstly, an integration of programmes within the ministry for implementation at the community level. Programmes which will emphasize people oriented policies.

Secondly, delivery of services to the people encouraging their participation and including areas which were wilfully neglected in the past.

Thirdly, development of a comprehensive policy in all areas, particularly the policy on culture.

Fourthly, we will emphasize the importance of gender and culture in all community activities.

Finally, we will institute training for self-sufficiency, empowerment and development of communities. This is our mission, Mr. President.

Thank you.

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. President, please accept new semester greetings and my thanks for your guiding presence in this remarkably un-
acrimonious Chamber. I am glad of the opportunity to make a response to the budget presentation of the hon. Minister of Finance.

Those of us who are involved in the arts of explication know how hard it is to be clear and direct; what a labour it is to present difficult material simply without becoming simplistic; and what discipline it takes to be casual and conversational without losing strictness. The Senator has accomplished in the field of numbers what writers strive to do with words. This does not mean that I agree with all his measures or stances, nor is there any implication that he is backward when it comes to words and catch-phrases: "A country where everyone who is able to work can find meaningful and rewarding work; a country where there is social and economic equity; a country built on national unity with an economy that can generate growth with equity for all the partners, and create employment opportunities that will enable our people to believe in themselves and to have faith in their future."

Mr. President, if you live in a society whose work seems to be to wine and jam and whose belief is "eat and drink O, die one day we go", what can you do when a man talks like the hon. Minister of Finance? Since one does not have a third eye one has to give him the benefit of the doubt.

One can be cautious and say that the hon. Minister of Finance has created the appropriate style and fastened upon a winning rhetoric. But I am inclined to trust my intuition that there is a more profound process at work and suggest that Sen. Kuei Tung has begun to find his voice. An elephant may not be able to pass through the eye of a needle, but who can tell what realms a clear-sighted former businessman with an aroused social conscience may enter.

5.15 p.m.

The new radicalism that seems to be called for by recent convulsions in the socialist bloc may well have to be led by those who combine a genuine wish for equality of social and economic opportunity at a structural level with a knowledge of, and sympathy towards capital that they may wish to reform, but not to dishearten. I want, therefore, to commend to the hon. Minister his own words:

"In every situation where change is imminent, there are those who fear change because they have benefited from the status quo, and there are those, not being part of the old in-crowd, who would welcome change but only if such change will redound to their own benefit."
I do not have to tell Sen. Kuei Tung that the traitors are very often within the gates.

The Government has assured the vested interests, the private sector and the business world that they will not embark upon change for the mere sake of change. And there seems to be consensus around the country that there is an inevitable continuity with the previous regime as far as broad economic goals and the patterns of relationship with business groups, local and overseas investors and international finance are concerned. And this is not surprising. Most of the governments in countries like ours are, unfortunately, at one in their acceptance of the born-again dictum of a once socialist Prime Minister of Jamaica, that sovereignty is meaningless in a globalized world, that national economics do not exist anymore, and all we can do is find a niche in the global economy. At the same time, however, the hon. Finance Minister has given the impression that this Government is about to depart from the strict conditionalities of structural adjustment programmes which have put less emphasis on the development of social programmes for delivering houses, or quality health and educational services than on developments with a trade potential. That is why I have chosen not to examine directly what the budget does for the individual pocketbook; whether it is a budget for this income bracket or that; whether it is a budget that runs something small for everybody; whether it is a honeymoon budget delivered on three days' notice; or whether it is all things to all parties.

I take the intention to drive the unemployment rate down permanently as a good intention, without scrutinizing the budget statement for evidence of how this will be achieved. I do not think that anyone can work out whether the fiscal measures merely tidy up the tax regime for aesthetic reasons or whether they do so to increase revenue, or whether, indeed, the combined measures are liable to keep the exchange rate stable. Least of all, will I attempt to challenge the Minister’s estimate of revenue to be earned and gained in 1996. I do not want anyone to call me any funny names.

I am, after all, one of those old-fashioned budgeters, holding to the rule that you can only increase revenue in truth if you make and sell more things, or if you cut down on your expenses by changing your lifestyle. Is it too late, Mr. President, to hope for a kind of education that might allow people to see that there is no tonic in Clayton’s Kola Tonic; that any decent chemist can produce a glucose drink like Lucozade; that there is no reason to prefer black currant juice to orange juice? A kind of education that would bring market forces to bear in driving out such products and some of the more extravagant and esoteric items
that the agents of consumerism are now importing into this country as a result of trade liberalization. The Government may be bound to liberalize and open up the market to products from our mortgage companies, but cannot the population be educated into patriotism and the know-how to operate voluntarily their own negative list?

What I really want to do, is to draw out some of the implications of the Minister’s social programmes, flesh out some of the notes towards the making of a new society to be found in his presentation: to make a contribution that recognizes a striving towards vision and philosophy in the budget statement as a whole, while recognizing the extent to which the Government is committed to continuity and to honourable acceptance of obligations incurred by the previous regime. I want to look at it as a government that makes a break from some of the policies and attitudes of the previous regime. May I stress, not the continuity, but the break and the difference.

I want to search out its promise of release and departure from an economic regime that "privileges speculators and traders, and has impoverished the mass of the people including its middle classes". The quotation is from Kari Levitt’s study of the effect of adjustment programmes and trade liberalization on the Jamaican economy. I take seriously, therefore, the Minister’s focus on the intolerable poverty problem where over 100,000 citizens have little hope and live in despair, and his concern with crime which is the No. 1 concern of the population at this time. And one is encouraged by those declarations of intent in the Minister’s presentation concerning housing, health care services, the education system and the public utilities.

I intend to say something about education and training. I do not want to slide too far off my track, but I do want to congratulate Sen. Theodore for his comprehensive planning to reduce, prevent and punish crime, for his openness to suggestions from concerned citizens, and for his engaging efforts to be specific about how his ministry intends to operate and perform. Since he has sought to take us into his confidence, I would like to tell the Minister of National Security about the fate of two sayings with which one grew up. The first of these is, "Honesty is the best policy," the second is, "Crime does not pay."

5.25 p.m.

I got a lot of licks, as a little boy, to learn the phrases and to learn to act them out. Crime does not pay. But crime is paying for the big man! Crime is paying so much for the big man that it can afford to pay the police; it can pay the
government Ministers; it can pay the lawyers and the judges; it can pay anybody else from whom it needs a favour. Crime pays! Unfortunately, not all the time.

If the little man speeds, ticket! If he bounces a child, jail! If the little man takes his employer’s money and buys a solar flex, a fridge, or a food warmer for his kitchen, jail! If the little man swears he is going to do something and he does not do it, that is breach of promise, jail!

These two sayings, Mr. President: "honesty is the best policy" and "crime does not pay" have now suffered a radical shift, they mean the opposite of what they say. In the year 2020 they will be changed: "Dishonesty is the best policy"; "Crime pays".

I have taken the liberty of addressing this little lesson about linguistic shift to the hon. Minister of National Security because I suggest that he needs to construct a strong net for the big fish in white collars, whose ability to commit crimes and not be found out, commit crimes and get around the laws, only makes the criminals that terrorize the citizens of this country feel aggrieved and unrepentant. I suppose we could start by getting Inland Revenue to drive around the country, looking at cars, swimming pools, houses and other visible properties and auditing citizens and getting them to report and pay tax on the income that permits them to afford these luxuries.

There are some other aspects of the budget statement and the country’s development programme that I would like to touch on. These include, of course, the National Library Complex, the need to rationalize tertiary education, energy, and the subject of tourism—I almost read "terrorism"—and agriculture.

Firstly, the National Library Complex. Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt’s comments about the abandonment or postponement, or both, of this developmental project may be said to summarize the thoughts and feelings of many of us in this country. The library can indeed be a technological information link with the world, the nerve centre of a link-up of people and institutions in this island and in our region—the whole Caribbean; a repository for printed books, manuscripts and other precious documents; a national art gallery; science or nature museum and an important link in the chain of theatre, centre for the performing arts and an environmental museum, which we need.

The complex as conceived has to be seen to be something more important than the sum of all its practical uses. The complex will be a national monument, an adornment of an already historically and environmentally magnificent capital
city; a repository of the intellectual, moral and artistic achievement of all the peoples who have contributed to our civilization; the house of all the spirits of our ethnic groups, refined by time into all our ancestors.

Nothing was ever created in the West Indies, said Vidya Naipaul, referring to the failure of an exploiting imperialism to build roads, bridges, institutions, public monuments. The National Library Complex would be a noble expression of the creativity, vision and purpose of our peoples. Its value to us and to generations to come cannot be measured in terms of today’s cost. If the human cost had been a factor, Mr. President, would the Tajmahal have been built? Would the Pyramids have been built? Would the British museum have been constructed? If the Tajmahal, the Pyramids and the British museum had not been constructed, would India, Egypt and London be able to impose themselves on the imagination of generation after generation?

Mr. President, I urge the Government to announce to an anxious nation that the National Library Complex project is about to be reinstated, and I ask them to appeal to the national community and corporate citizens to contribute to a fund for the neediest of our cultural cases.

In the interest of saving time, I omit my interrogation on the subject of agriculture and tourism and my suggestions concerning the rationalization of the tertiary system of education. I trust that my colleague, Sen. Spence, will cover these matters with his usual good sense and thoroughness, but I cannot resist one suggestion concerning tourism. I propose that Government make arrangements for all tourists to change their money into TT dollars in government banks at the port of entry and I would like the Government to declare that the only legal tender in this country is the TT dollar. Sen. Theodore might well consider how such a measure will not only contribute to exchange rate stability but also to his ministry’s battle against drugs.

On energy, I draw attention to the unexplored and unexploited possibilities of wind and especially solar energy; energy sources that we cannot exhaust and which we can use while selling oil and natural gas to the less blessed. Wind and solar energy may turn out to be major factors in rural development and in the revitalization of agriculture. To make the point very swiftly, I refer to the work of Prof. Headley of the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies on the following subjects. Firstly, the use of solar energy for domestic hot water.
And I quote from Professor Headley:

"At the end of 1992, there were 22,388 solar water heaters installed by the solar water heater companies in Barbados.

The installed cost of a 52 US gallon solar water heater is Barbados $2,575. This is the most common size used by a family of four."

I do not understand why we do not have enterprising enough entrepreneurs in this country to offer to citizens the possibility of introducing solar water heating for domestic purposes, and I would like to see the Government giving incentives to citizens to install such devices. If Barbados can do it, why can we not?

Secondly, solar energy for lighting, TV, refrigeration, radio telecommunications, a special value to rural areas and isolated farms.

5.35 p.m.

"In the hinterland of Guyana," says Professor Headley,

"several photovoltaic (PV) systems have been installed for lighting, TV, refrigeration, radio, telecommunications and other essential services. The landing field at Kaiteur Falls has a 2000 watt PV system."

I did not know this.

"In Trinidad, the Matelot School uses PV and wind with a diesel backup for its electricity supply.

For agriculture the most common application is crop drying. The largest solar dryer in Barbados is a 1400 sq. ft. hay dryer at Friendship Plantation, St. Michael. Several types of solar dryer have been installed all over the Caribbean in the past 20 years. ... In addition to food crops, we have also dried timber for the sawmill and furniture industries.

We have also begun work on solar cooling and hope to be able to air-condition greenhouses for growing cool climate flowers such as chrysanthemums in the next few years.

A great deal of work has been done on solar stills for the production of distilled water. There is a 600 sq. ft. commercial installation on the home of Mr. Selwyn Bharath at Jasper Avenue, Diamond Vale."
In Australia they are going very well with high temperature solar collectors for electricity generation. Dr. David Mills, Vice President of the International Solar Energy Society, is in charge of the group which is setting up the solar collectors for generating electricity at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Greenpeace asked them to have the games totally powered by renewable energy.

The best long-term possibility is the generation of electricity in the deserts and distributing electricity worldwide with high temperature superconducting cables. ... At the moment we have a worldwide network of fibre optic cable for telecommunications and data transfer, but more work needs to be done on the high temperature superconductors before they can be used commercially in electric cables. Such cables conduct electricity with no power loss and will save an enormous amount of electricity which is now wasted in heating up the power lines.

The next most important is the development of a cheap reliable solar cooling system, since this is needed very badly in the warm countries of the world."

Mr. President, there is a very interesting thing here. The more sun you have, the hotter you get, but the more heat you get, the more solar energy you have for cooling.

Mr. President, that is a very quick outline of the kind of possibilities for the use of solar energy that countries like ours should undertake. In the same communication, Professor Headley spoke about wind.

"Wind is much cheaper. ... in the UK under the non-fossil fuel obligation, over 400 megawatts of wind turbines have been installed in the past few years. California alone has over 6,000 wind turbines in operation. In Curaçao a 3 megawatt was installed by Kodela, the local electricity company. Here in Barbados, a supermarket chain is about to put up four 300 kilowatt wind turbines."

Mr. President, a combination of wind and solar energy in many parts of this island would result in a massive reduction in our use of oil and/or natural gas, which is being used to generate electricity; and it would, in any case, be a great convenience in many parts of the island where there are difficulties with electricity supplies. I wish to commend Professor Headley’s work to the Government, and I have from him a full Bibliography on the subject, which I am willing to pass on.
I am not going to speak directly on the environment again, Mr. President, partly because I could easily run out of time, but mainly because the distinguished Professor, Sen. Kenny has preceded me, put all of us in debt and, I notice, has created thirst all around the Senatorial Benches. I think we shall have to start supplying bottled water for meetings of the Senate. But all of my contribution is saturated, Mr. President, by the most profound environmental concern of all, a concern for the bond between people and the land that they walk and work upon; the air they breathe; the water that is lifeblood in the seas around and in the rivers that flow through veins and arteries all over the land.

Art and education have to do with the human capacity to belong to the environment, to possess the environment and to transform it. Art and education are my main topics. I want to preface this movement by reading a few paragraphs from an article called "What is art, and what is cultural confidence?" What is cultural confidence?

"Here is a tentative formulation: cultural confidence is knowing who you are and why you are in the midst of all the convulsions that are changing your life."

And changing the world.

"Knowing who you are and why you are in this dynamic and provisional way, makes it easy for you to be open to and selective about influences from outside yourself.

At the same time, it makes it very difficult for those who want to tell you what you should be. This applies to countries threatened by structural adjustment programmes and individuals in contact with Governments and bureaucrats.

But how does a society with a history of colonialism achieve cultural confidence?

How can such a society complete its recovery from the effects of that old first relation when even before it began the work it was being licensed to do with universal suffrage in the 1940’s, another colonising agent was setting up the bases that were to facilitate invasion...

What hope of cultural confidence can there be for a society that slouched into Independence after the death of Federation, only to see its youth and freedom captured by middle-class politicians trained to think as their
colonisers think, and to relate to systems and categories they have had no say in setting up?

The answer lies in education. This means something more than just providing places for everybody. It means abandoning many of the current practices and objectives and devising for ourselves an educational system that would value self-knowledge, encourage the technical skills necessary for the country’s problem-solving, and teach people to think, to listen, and to enter without insecurity into dialogue and debate in the pursuit of truth as well as in seeking from our own resources, practical solutions to our problems."

5.45 p.m.

Mr. President, there is a great deal to learn from the way ordinary people have been coming to terms with our landscape and history. If our politicians are too implicated in other people’s agendas, we can look analytically at our people, making a distinction between what is banal, beaten and brainwashed in their lives and what is inspirational in their approach to humanizing the landscape. It is here we need our educators; here we need our intellectuals and our artists. For on their record I would say that it is our artists who have made the most profound statements on vital issues of our time.

So much by way of prologue to my discussion on aspects of the social programme suggested by the hon. Minister. I speak of education and the arts because the separation of the two would lead to an impoverishment of education and a sideling of art and the artist in our society. I do not have the time here to spell out a detailed proposal, but I think the moment has come for the establishment of an Arts Council of Trinidad and Tobago whose first function it would be to find ways of paying tax-free salaries—not grants—to artists, for periods of one to three years to fulfil specific projects.

Returning to education, I hope that some of the suggestions that arise about certain needs in the system will be taken into practical account in the commendably enlarged allocation for education in the Draft Estimates of Expenditure. A brief survey of the condition of the educational provision in this country casts doubt on the claim that we provide free secondary education for all who pass the common entrance. A brief survey shows the dispiriting extent to which the children of the poor happen to be disadvantaged in the system. It also shows why we have to re-think the whole system from top to bottom.
Every year about 24,000 children attain primary school age and for each of the last five years, 30,000 have sat the common entrance examination. Of these, 21,000 make it into the secondary school system. Of the 9,000 who are left back, 4,000 repeat the examination and 5,000 take up places in the 20 or so post primary centres started by the Government and now run by Servol, plus the Junior Life Centres run by Servol itself. This is where the problem of unemployment, crime, insecurity, low self-esteem begins. The majority of those who leak out of the system at this stage come from the less well-off classes and few of them receive any further education than the basic literacy, numeracy and life skills that these post primary classes can give them.

The 21,000 who go into secondary schools are disposed as follows: 14,000 go to the junior secondary schools, the three-year schools that operate a shift system. Twenty-one of the 24 junior secondary schools operate a double shift. The rest go into the other secondary schools comprising five-year and seven-year institutions. But after three years, the inmates of the junior secondary school are transferred to senior secondary schools.

In 1975, a few years after the introduction of junior secondary schools, the Moses Report identified all the social and psychological problems the junior secondary school would cause; low self-esteem, lack of motivation, breakdown of discipline, absenteeism, violence among students and a continuous assault upon the mental and physical well-being of teachers. These problems have intensified in the last 20 years. We are dealing, not with a school phenomenon called indiscipline and lack of interest, not with an economic fact called unemployment, but with the evolution of a culture of despair. Being sentenced to the junior secondary schools is only the beginning.

Of the 21,000 students who enter secondary school, 5,500 obtain five CXC passes at grades 1 and 2. According to our system, these are the only people who are really competitive. So at this point, 15,000 young people are washed up out of the main educational stream. This is not a leak; this is burst mains, and this has been happening for many years. There can be no doubt that this semi-trained army joins in the widening circle of poverty, unemployment and crime.

This condition is reflected everywhere in our recent literature. As the budget statement does not seem to have taken special account of the importance of our artists in the struggle against re-peripheralization, in the process of self-discovery and self-affirmation, in developing the culture of the feelings, and in the ennobling of people in their landscape, I take the opportunity to continue my plea
by looking at how one of our writers expresses the despair of modern youth. It is a scene that has now become famous or notorious. It is one of the most painful scenes in recent West Indian literature. It is a scene in which a young boy, a thief, a murderer, a hired gun, a rapist, a jailbird, a jailbreaker, and now at 19, a man with a price on his head, strips down the house of his grandmother for the money that he is sure is hidden somewhere, turning upside down those rooms that he had eaten, slept, and been given love in. The money, actually, is tied around the old lady's waist and she is saving it for her funeral. No matter how terrible her life, she has to go up to glory in the finest robes. The passage runs as follows and it describes the search of the house:

"The boy searched every pot, every vase, every shelf, turned out drawers, battered trunks, cardboard boxes and pressed-paper suitcases sitting in the rafters. He pulled the bed and the mattress apart, lifted all the loose floorboards that he remembers as a child, and turned out the cheese tins in which were growing on the little verandah, a few half-dead plants. He took the photographs out of their frames, held Ma Bell's Bible and shook it, and to her everlasting shame, rummaged among her stiffly starched and pressed undergarments."

5.55 p.m.

"He conducted the search swiftly and silently, carrying the small kerosene lamp from room to room. Ma Bell followed like a sleepwalker. It never occurred to her to run, to cry out to her neighbours or to plead with the boy. She suddenly felt very old and with the pounding which had started up in her ears, she began to see and hear things as if from a great distance. She felt the thread around her heart tightening and tightening so she could hardly breathe. Ma Bell followed her grandson through his path of destruction as if he had already robbed her of her speech, her mind, her body, her strength, her will."

This violent scene of the destruction by the younger generation of the older generation—the clash of generations; this violent scene of disrespect; this violent scene of sacrilege is also metaphorically a scene of grandmotherly rape. The old lady is metaphorically being raped. This is the furthest reach of the kind of violence and despair bred by the kind of social problems I have been trying to describe by looking at the way in which we have spawned these cast-offs from the educational system.

Olive Senior's stories in *Summer Lightning* are set mainly in the country, and her characters speak in the Jamaican dialect, but these are not rustic folk living in
a sheltered place. There are frequent references in the text to those who have gone to the city or to foreign parts, and in several instances a complex drama springs from encounters between those who have experienced the outside, and those who have remained in the small place.

All the stories contain abandoned children growing up without their parents, either because the couple has emigrated or because the father has drifted to the city or the great United States of America. The children are sent to uncles, aunts and grandmothers, but in Senior's fiction these are respected elders of the tribe to whom parental caring has been entrusted. They are middle-aged and old people with too many problems of their own, who are more than likely to brutalize the children and still expect them to be guided by Christian message.

Mr. President: The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. Prof. Spence]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Thank you, Mr. President.

Senior's "country" is a modern society affected for the worse by individualism, economism, the break-up of family units and the loss of the idea of a sustaining community. Senior's world is a world of many of our young people.

The waste of human capital I have been describing and the dangerousness that we have allowed to grow in them, can be appreciated when we note that of the 3,000 students who eventually proceed to A'levels, nearly all are successful; 1,000 plus get two As plus GP, while around 120 get three As and a minimum of C in GP. These are quite brilliant results. These talented young people proceed to University, but I refuse to believe that they necessarily have more potential than those whom the system was unable to help to overcome their starting handicaps. God alone knows what a vast extent of talent is lost to this country by the educational system that we have embraced.

Mr. President, a number of problems can be identified from this description of what prevailed. These problems include how to bring social equity in the flow from primary to secondary to tertiary; how to counteract the prejudicing of the educational process by the CE, CXC and A'level exams; the need to provide a secondary education for those 20,000, that is an education for life as well as a prerequisite for the next stage; how to rationalize the whole system of education
from one level to another, with education for self-fulfilment and for the world of work as equal goals; what to do about the junior secondary schools and how to repair the damages caused by this hasty and political provision.

In order to save time, I am going to quote from an old address delivered at the Cedros Composite School's graduation ceremony, to concretize some of the ideas and purposes that I think should be included in our secondary school system. These ideas are to be included if we are to stop the system from being seen simply as a route with three sets of traffic lights: CE, CXC and A'level; all of which one must catch on green if one is to do the done thing and get to university. To these students at the Cedros Composite School I said:

"I want to believe that this can be a school which belongs to the whole community, and to which the whole community can belong.

I mean by this, in the first place, that the technical part of the syllabus should be inspired by the kinds of work people have been doing here for generations.

If those of you who are about to leave school had been introduced to the chemistry to fish and coconut processing, to the woodworking skills and fibre-glassing techniques required for boat-building; to marine biology; and to the technologies that have developed in fishing and deep-sea diving to name only some obvious examples, would you be wondering what you are going to do with yourselves in a few months time?

If the students in our school were taught to approach through modern technologies those tasks and activities that their parents are still conducting with traditional methods, wouldn't there be the possibility of a healthy dialogue between generations, a dialogue that would humanise the technology, and make our traditional lore a little more scientific?

It is good to know in your head where the fishing banks are, but wouldn't it be a help to be able to make use of a fish-finder?

If the syllabuses of the school were relevant in the ways I am suggesting, wouldn't the school be able to offer extension classes for adult education, wouldn't the school be on the way to becoming a community centre, the pulsing heart of a vibrant community?

And if we had a school that was so completely involved in the life of the place, wouldn't it also be a source of employment for people who make
furniture and school uniforms, who grow food and prepare meals, who clean and paint and repair buildings and fittings?

The cultural identity, the wholeness, the self-sufficiency, and the independence of means and spirit I am hinting at do not seem to be in fashion these days."

6.05 p.m.

Mr. President, I believe that our revision of the educational system, particularly at the secondary school level, should be informed with this notion of the school as a community school combining the arts, sciences and technology in as close a relationship with the environment as I have just described in relation to the Cedros Composite School.

The question of the standardization of the textbooks is dealt with in the report of the Cabinet-appointed committee for making school books affordable and available. As this is the subject of a Motion to come before this Senate, I turn to another part of the problem.

Mr. President, I am arguing once more for a revision of the whole system of education, but I do not wish to speak without demonstrating an awareness of the different levels. I did want to say some things about the tertiary system, but I believe that the primary system is the most important part of the educational system.

I will like to refer to sections 19 and 20 of the Report I have just mentioned where a discussion of the role of the textbook is followed by the following:

"Not many will disagree with the view that in the early school years the child should be given opportunities for self-expression, for the development of the culture of the feelings, and for learning through projects involving activity at home and in the school, in the classroom and outside of it. Such a regime would have less use for text-books than the present one.

The orientation towards the 11-plus examination gives a killing prominence to the text-book. It is worth considering that the money spent on text-books at this level would go a longer way and do more good if directed towards upgrading primary schools and creating in them an atmosphere encouraging emotional development and self-expression in forms like music, art, poetry, handicraft and other
creative directions. Such an attitude to the question of early education would be consistent with the view that in countries like ours, the primary school ought to be equipped to make up for some of the deficiencies in family life and housing conditions and to provide a certain degree of emotional sustainment."

Mr. President, I am embracing the programme suggested by the hon. Minister of Finance, and I am trying to apply it to the educational system and to suggest that this is a system to which a lot more money and thinking have to be devoted.

I am also of the view that education in countries likes ours is political education. Education was and is an instrument of colonial control, and education is an instrument that we can use to break that control and become ourselves.

I have linked art and education, because art has the same liberating capacity.

I want to close with a reference to the plan for land distribution and to do a reading from the final pages of Earl Lovelaces’s forthcoming novel, 'Salt', a passage that has a bearing upon the issue of land distribution but which also, ought to be made to relate both symbolically and fundamentally to the need to make reparation to the thousands of people of African and Indian origin who were coerced into labouring on the land a long way from home and who still remain deprived of the meaning of their different emancipations and who still lack a sense of hope. It is the closing pages of the novel. The main character Alford is thinking of a procession that is coming towards the savannah, and I read:

"The praying stopped, and Alford turned from that far near distance and walked out on to the veranda alone, thinking still of that self beyond his reach in a faraway place, as loss, as something he had been deprived of. But how do you feel the loss of a self that you did not have to lose? How can you lose an Africa you did not know? How can you lose an India you did not know? But that was what he felt: the loss of not having had that loss to lose.

Later that morning, as he stood on the podium of Cunaripo recreation ground, the sense of that loss came back, flooding him, as he heard in the distance the sound of the steel band, soft, muted, metallic and the faraway tramp of feet. Bango and his troops were on the march. He felt for home, for family, for the people he had never really got close to. He looked out among the crowd hoping to see Carabon and Lochan coming. He looked out among the crowd to see if any of his brothers were there. And then he heard the
cheering, and over on the other side of the ground, he saw Bango, all in white, his flag held aloft, on his shoulders his epaulettes, on this chest the medals that he had won in wars no one but he himself had recorded, at the head of his troop of soldiers and the children he had costumed to represent the different races in the island. As the marchers passed before him their eyes turned right to take the salute, their out-turned palms across their foreheads, in front their eyes, at the side of their ears, with the pathos of their ragged and delightful disarray, Alford lifted his hand to salute them. Suddenly, he felt small before Bango. And all at once it hit him: Bango had kept the self that he, Alford, had lost. Bango had crossed the chasm into that past to link up with Jojo, to carry still his sense of violation after the granting of the 'Emancipation’ that neither acknowledged his injury nor addressed his loss.

And then he felt shame, at himself and his community that had left it to Bango alone, to be outraged at the indignity its people continued to live under. It was of this shame he spoke. It was of his loss of a sense of loss, of the blotting up of the outrage he should feel at the insult and indecency that had made their way from the past into their living from day to day. He wanted himself to feel he was outraged. He wanted the whole community to feel outraged at injustice and indignity and cowardice.

How can you free people? he asked. When every move you make is to get them to accept conditions of unfreedom, when you use power to twist and corrupt what it is to be human, when you ask people to accept shame as triumph and indignity as progress. How can you free people? What is power if power is too weak to take responsibility to uphold what is to be human?"

Mr. President: Hon. Senator, I am told that you have two minutes to wind up including injury time.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Thank you, Mr. President. I just want to repeat the last paragraph:

"How can you free people? When every move you make is to get them to accept conditions of unfreedom, when you use power to twist and corrupt what it is to be human, when you ask people to accept shame as triumph and indignity as progress? What is power if power is too weak to take responsibility to uphold what is to be human?"

Mr. President, I commend the Minister of Finance and the Government, and hope that what I see in this budget is indeed the
willingness of this Government to take power with strength, to take power
to take responsibility to uphold what it is to be human for all our people.

Thank you.

6.15 p.m.

Sen. Nathaniel Moore: Mr. President, on this my first contribution to a
debate in this honourable House let me take this opportunity to join my fellow
Senators on both sides of this House in congratulating you on your appointment
to this august Chamber. I note that your even temperament and noble bearing
qualify you admirably for this most prestigious position. I wish you a long and
fruitful term in this House and all the blessings of this new year as you steer the
business of this Chamber.

I also congratulate the Minister of Finance for providing this budget which is
so widely accepted in all parts of our national community. It is not often that
there is this kind of acceptance to a budget especially the first one of a new
government. I think the Minister of Finance deserves our highest commendation
for this most outstanding bit of work.

As I have been listening to the various other contributions, I wonder what is
left for a recruit like me to say. I was highly impressed by several of the
contributions, especially those from the Independent Benches. It was so timely,
with such confidence and so fatherly. I wondered if we did not have a group of
Independent Senators what our Parliament would have been. I think they are quite
a stabilizing force as I view the operation of the House. I do not know how much
the entire country gets from the contributions that are made here. I thought that it
would be a good exercise if the students from our schools could be exposed to
some of the advice that we get.

Of course, I am sure that sometimes people are unhappy about the manner in
which business goes on in the House. In fact, before I came here, from viewing
the conduct of Members in the other place on the screen, I wondered what
impression some of the students got as they too viewed the proceedings. I found
out that I am in very good company in this Chamber. I am not trying to detract
from the importance of the other House.
The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, I beg to move that the Senate continues to sit until 8.00 p.m.

Assent indicated.

APPROPRIATION BILL (BUDGET)

Sen. N. Moore: Mr. President, before I get my teeth into the meat, I want to make just a brief observation of the contribution made by Sen. Dr. St. Cyr. I was very impressed with his candour and bravery in making his conviction quite clear about gambling in our society. From all the reports we have heard, it seems to be a big revenue earner. These are some of the contradictions which we have to face in our society. This gives us the opportunity to be strong and discriminating in what we do.

As I said before, so many things have been said about this budget that I do not know what I could add. I would say something about what I know best and that is how this budget relates in some way to Tobago. I am sure that my honourable colleagues expect me to say something about Tobago. Other Senators have spoken generally about Tobago. There was one contribution which dealt largely with Tobago and mine will be another.

Before its union with Trinidad at the turn of the last century, Tobago had its own assembly; made its own laws and budget among several other things which it did under the supervision of the British government, just as Trinidad did at that time. Today, both Trinidad and Tobago make a joint budget. The present arrangement provides for the Tobago House of Assembly to make its own estimates of expenditure and calls on the Minister of Finance who by law must consult with the Assembly on the provisions of the budget. Often the Minister does not agree with the budgeted proposals of the Assembly as he claims the national purse would be unable to afford many of the demands of the Tobago House of Assembly. He therefore makes adjustments and more often than not in a downward direction.

In the present situation, with the new Minister of Finance in this new Government, I do not know what approaches were made in the adjustments of the estimates of the Assembly. There were discussions about the budget between the Minister of Finance and the Tobago House of Assembly as has been done every year since 1981. I am not sure what powers the Minister has in deciding what
changes will be made in the estimates or what are his limits in increasing or reducing the provisions suggested by the Assembly. I do know that the Members of the Assembly are often unhappy about incisions and dissections of the estimates by the Minister.

My view is that the Minister and his Cabinet—I am not speaking about this Minister but any minister—must be fair and understanding about the peculiar circumstances of existence and living in Tobago and agree with the Assembly on a total sum, reasonable and adequate to the needs of our population resident in Tobago, and permit the Assembly to decide how this sum will be allocated among the varied demands and needs of the island.

6:25 p.m.

No Minister in Trinidad can be wiser than the whole Assembly when it comes to deciding how to allocate the resources of the island on behalf of the people. Remember I did not say this Minister. I mean any Minister of Finance.

The correction of the present unsatisfactory situation must await an adjustment to the present administrative arrangement. In this regard, I am extremely happy that the UNC, the NAR and this present Government of national unity are all united in their determination to allow the citizens of this country, resident in Tobago, to have greater say in the way their lives are regulated in our twin-island republic.

Mr. President, if anyone in Trinidad or Tobago argues that particular care should be taken when dealing with providing for the people of Tobago, whether it is in the area of development funding or in recurrent expenditure, his views will have to be listened to and respected. I do not know if it is necessary to point out to hon. Senators that Tobago and Trinidad as one country are separated from each other by almost 20 miles of ocean and as many miles of air space. No Tobagonian ever got into his car and drove the more than 90 miles to Port of Spain as we do in Trinidad when those of us from Icacos or Toco want to go shopping in Port of Spain. Neither does any Trinidadian resident ride the bus to Store Bay in Tobago to enjoy a typical Tobago sea bath. Why do the people of Sangre Grande, Cumana or Matelot not drive the less than 55 miles from their home to see for themselves the load of fun which we derive in Tobago from attending and participating in our annual Heritage Festival?

Mr. President, added to the fact that travel between Tobago and Trinidad is expensive by air and difficult or tiring by boat, most of the amenities, even
necessities for modern existence provided for citizens in this country, were and are located in and around North Trinidad by policy or design. All the specialist health services, higher education and the major commercial and recreational facilities are in this larger island and in this northern part of it. In fact, the general development of Tobago has been neglected so long that Tobago is seen by many as merely the backyard of the country.

The general idea is that when certain facilities are laid down or provided in say, Port of Spain, it is intended that they serve all the citizens of this country. Well, if we in Tobago cannot make use of them, then we do without. If not, then we must be adequately provided for. But experience over the years does not demonstrate that this is the case.

For several years now the general tendency is to devote less than 3 per cent of national material resources on Tobago. Since 1987, the percentage of the national budget spent in Tobago for both development and recurrent needs has shown these figures:

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The main point I am making is that we were allocated under 5 per cent, and if we notice something about these figures, 1989–1991 were years when the National Alliance for Reconstruction government was occupying these areas. From 1992–1995, it was the People’s National Movement. If you notice, Mr. President, there is a distinct difference in the figures from 1987–1991 and those from 1992 to recent times.

The picture of the allocation for development is not much happier. The population in Tobago for some time now is just about 4 per cent of the national
level. It is this fact that perhaps inspired the Ministry of Finance in recent times to consider 4 per cent a reasonable level of development funding for Tobago. The picture is this:

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<th>Year</th>
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It is slightly more in 1996—a very small fraction which I cannot define.

Again, if we look at the years, we can see that there is a definite trend. The year 1992 is outstanding in its group—we had 7.9 per cent; in 1993, it was around 4 per cent; and there was the beautiful situation in 1994 when it was 1.9 per cent. During the years, again under the NAR government, there was a low of 2 per cent in 1988, but the other years there were figures like 15 per cent and 9.3 per cent.

I do not know how hon. Senators view this situation, but I do not see it as a satisfactory state of affairs. No wonder the Father of the Nation—not the present claimant—had on more than one occasion confessed that Tobago had up to his time suffered equally the neglect of both the old colonial masters and the neglect of the new and more recent massa.

6.35 p.m.

One would have thought, Mr. President, that the "Father", having made that discovery, would have set about to redress the ills which he confessed were inflicted upon his brethren in the sister isle. In his time he did very little and his successors did no better. Since 1956 to the present, with the exception of this budget and those presented between the years 1986 and 1991—the time of the NAR—all our national budgets were prepared and implemented by one political party, the People’s National Movement. They are the ones largely responsible for setting the stage for the state of affairs in Tobago.
It is false to claim that they did not address some of the ills and problems of the island. Their development programme was, nevertheless, very selective. Very often priority was given to the wrong projects. Putting it another way, they almost always attended to and developed projects which we in Tobago did not demand as priority. The idea was, as we saw it, never to develop so that we become self-sustaining or to any extent, economically independent, as they feared we would become too haughty and would want to leave. That seemed to be the idea and it was vocalised very often.

There was always a long list of projects to be undertaken and every election campaign the list would be lengthened. These projects included an international airport, a deep water harbour, Scarborough Parkway—later known as the Claude Noel Highway, a modern hospital, secondary and primary school buildings, health centres, shopping malls, fishing facilities and many more. These projects would make their rounds in the manifesto almost every election campaign, but only a few of them would be undertaken after intense agitation from citizens of Tobago—and I would not be uncharitable, perhaps sometimes citizens from Trinidad too.

As I said before, priority was often given to the wrong projects. For example, in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s when Tobago pressed for development and asked for the promised international airport—Mr. President, we were seeing very little development happening around us at the time, especially during the time when we had so much oil money which the Jamaicans said, seemed to be passing through the system as castor oil passes through the human system; that is how they described what our money was doing for us here—and the deep water harbour, we were given instead the Claude Noel Highway and the airport terminal building at Crown Point. We were told at that time, "now Tobago has an international airport". That is how the PNM described the terminal building, without one inch added to the relatively short runway.

In 1976, we demanded self-government—to us it was more than material and the unanimous decision of the Parliament of the day was to grant internal self-government to Tobago. A Joint Parliamentary Committee was set up; guidelines were drawn up in the form of House Paper No. 6 of 1978—of which we are hearing much these days—and Mr. Lionel Seemungal was given the job to draft legislation for the implementation of the decision to grant internal self-government to Tobago, using that same House Paper No. 6 of 1978 as a guideline. After he produced a draft Bill and presented it to the PNM government, what did they do in keeping with their philosophy and policy, Mr. President?
They threw the draft Bill into a corner and upgraded an old County Council legislation and called it the Tobago House of Assembly Act. I wonder if I would still be invited to the other side. [Laughter] In spite of all amendments to that piece of legislation thus far, it is the cause of much bitterness in and between Tobago and the Central Government.

In 1995, when the people of Tobago were becoming thirsty and sick, they cried out to the PNM government for fresh water and a modern hospital with up-to-date facilities. The PNM, with the general elections pending, hastily began construction of a coastal project which is now known as the Milford Road Esplanade. This is the pattern of the development which the PNM wants for Tobago, and which the people of Tobago resent to the very core.

I am sure that my honourable colleagues remember the fate of the report of the Wooding Commission of 1974 and the recent episodes of the fruits, and perhaps the leaves of the olive branch in Tobago. I do not know if Senators would remember the hasty marriage between some elements in the Tobago House of Assembly and the agents of the Central Government.

6.45 p.m.

Mr. President, that document came out of a meeting between these two bodies on the eve of a general election, hoping that it was good enough to cover the eyes of the people of Tobago and blindfold them into support of decadence. The people of Tobago are fairly well mature in their political thinking. They observed the ploy and rejected the overtures. The point I am trying to impress is that many promises were made to Tobago about development, but the projects chosen for implementation are those which are marginal to the sensitive and effective development of the island. Somebody or some people on that side do not realize that when one treats people with respect and honesty they honour you and love your company. Someone over there does not understand how the principles of reciprocity operate in human relations. It is my view that this budget as it relates to Tobago has begun to address seriously some of the problems which we encountered recently in that part of the state. [Desk thumping]

For example, I note with satisfaction and most people in Tobago are delighted to know, that at long last some effort is being made to start work on the long promised hospital for Tobago. This project has been honoured by inclusion in several manifestos up to recently, but this is perhaps the first serious attempt to have it started. The resolve of this Government of national unity is to push right
on with this project until its completion within the framework of its medium term plan. [Desk thumping]

It is also heartening to see that funds are now being provided to expand the secondary school system as well as the primary school system in Tobago. It is a well-known secret that Tobago is scandalously short of secondary school places. While the national average intake is above 70 per cent of primary school leavers, in Tobago the level is still below 50 per cent. That is to say, Mr. President—[Interruption]

Sen. London: Mr. President, I would just like the hon. Senator to tell this Senate whether he is aware that work on the Signal Hill Senior Comprehensive School started before the general elections, and that the feasibility study on the Mason Hall School also was completed before the elections, and in fact, construction work on bridges and other facilities has already been completed.

Sen. N. Moore: Mr. President, I made a statement today, very early, that it will be wrong to say that some amount of work was not done by the PNM in Tobago. I will have more to say on some of those things.

In addition, primary school facilities in the sister isle need urgent upgrading, and there is a total absence of tertiary level educational institutions in Tobago. We look forward to urgent attention to so vital a part of our human development in our island.

I also note with some degree of satisfaction, not only the modest increase in total funding for Tobago, but as well, the other policy initiatives projected for the medium term such as the open sky policy and the emphasis on agriculture, fishing and tourism.

I want all our citizens, especially those resident in Trinidad, to know that we in Tobago are willing and anxious to pull our fair share of the burden of elevating our twin-island nation to the social and economic heights which we all aspire to attain. We believe that Tobago with its rich human and material resources can contribute much more to the income of our beloved country, but we want to be equipped with the tools to do the job. We still have many young, brilliant minds to develop, many fertile hectares of land to put under cultivation of food crops and other economic raw materials. We have many square kilometres of ocean and seabed ready for economic exploitation, we also have skills to apply to these resources for the benefit of all our citizens.
If Tobago is not now contributing enough to the economic life of this republic it is because some people in the past did not apply the correct policy to the development of the island. My colleague on the other side of this honourable House told us yesterday that we in Tobago do not beg; we do not believe in that, but we believe in using our physical, spiritual and mental powers to take care of our needs and we are not afraid to do that. Our spirit of independence is still quite alive.

I am happy that the policy of this UNC/NAR Government is to grant more adequate power to Tobago and to work with the people's representatives in the island, seeking to honour the legitimate wishes of the people resident there. It is only through mutual respect and regard that we can work together for effective nation-building and enhanced respect in the Caribbean region. Mr. President, the big stick paternalism and political patronage would not work.

Let me turn now to address some of the concerns expressed by my hon. colleague on the other side and to correct some of the misconceptions and prevarications he offered in his contribution to this honourable Senate yesterday. My Friend expressed disappointment over the share which Tobago got in the national budget in the light of the heightened expectations of the people of Tobago whose two representatives in the other House made the formation of the Government possible. I hope I conveyed correctly.

Mr. President, I too, like my fellow Tobagonian wish that Tobago had a bigger share of the national cake, but I doubt that our two representatives were thinking only about one year's budgetary allocation, or only of what they could get for Tobago in monetary terms. There are many more years' budgets to come—[Desk thumping] and there is also the consideration of the faith which our people in Tobago—and I am absolutely sure I am speaking for the majority — have in the relationship with our UNC brothers in Trinidad, I include sisters. A faith which they lost in the PNM during the long years of neglect, disrespect, and callousness to the well-being of the people of Tobago, for whom at present, we have higher hopes of success in the quest of dignity and respect for Tobago through partnership with the UNC. I know that my goodly Friend on the other side, and many of his friends of like political partisanship, had preferred to see a PNM/NAR coalition but they know that the PNM did nothing worthy of the confidence of the people of Tobago to warrant such a union. [Desk thumping]

6.55 p.m
He claims that development funds for Tobago are less for this year than in 1995. Indeed—and before I go on to this I must say it before the idea leaves my mind—everybody in Trinidad and Tobago who is of age, knows something about the psychology of the Tobagonian. If, for any reason, the UNC decides to play traitor, well they would get the same treatment. We have no qualms about that.

I come to the second point where he claims the development funds for Tobago are less for this year than in 1995. Indeed, funds listed under development for 1996 are marginally lower than for 1995. I want to make it clear, I do not want people to jump too quickly, but not the $1,800,000 shown on page 7 of the report. When allocations under the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community Development are added to the THA allocations, a clearer view will emerge. While the Senator made heavy weather of what he perceives as a small reduction in development funds, he dismissed the significant increase in the current funds as inevitable, an increase of about 12 per cent, making an increase in total allocation for Tobago of over 10 per cent of that of last year. What is stranger yet, is that the goodly Senator belaboured a comparison between 1995 and 1996 but failed to mention other years like 1989−1991 when the NAR government spent 8 per cent, 15 per cent, 9.3 per cent, respectively before those years of the national development fund and projects of Tobago.

Mr. President: The hon. Senator’s speaking time has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. W. Mark]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. N. Moore: Thank you, Mr. President and colleagues on both sides of this Senate.

Nor did he make comparison of these years with the 1993−1994 period when the PNM government spent a grudging 4.1 per cent or 1.9 per cent in development in Tobago. Thus far, the PNM government was the stingiest provider of funds to Tobago. From 1992−1995, that government spent 2.8 per cent, 2.6 per cent, 2.4 per cent and 2.5 per cent of national allocation in Tobago, while for the previous years, 1988−1991, the NAR government spent 3.1 per cent, 3.6 per cent, 3.8 per cent, 3.4 per cent respectively. Why could the Senator not find the figures for these years which I mentioned and make his comparisons? If he had done this, he
would have found out about the marginal treatment that the PNM was meting out to Tobago all those years, spending more funds in election years as in 1992 and 1995 and less in other years. This was the problem, spending when it expected to get support for additional spending.

My Friend also failed to address the matter of releases to the Tobago House of Assembly which are very irregular, small and often very late, coming at a time when they cannot be used for the purposes for which they are required. This kind of behaviour was characteristic of the PNM—

**Sen. London:** Mr. President, is the Senator aware that despite what he says about releases, in fact, the revised estimates for 1995 which include all the releases exceed allocation for 1996 which is a promise of releases?

**Sen. N. Moore:** Mr. President, the Senator criticized the lack of allocation to the L’Anse Fourmi/Charlotteville project, any PNM including the goodly Senator, should be ashamed of even mentioning the name L’Anse Fourmi/Charlotteville. Do you believe that is the same party which took away a grant—not a loan—of over $100 million from that project provided by the European Community negotiated by the NAR government? Mr. President, not one red cent was spent on that project!

7.05 p.m.

**Sen. London:** Mr. President, on a point of correction. Is the Senator aware that the sum of $130 million, of which he is speaking, was in fact money allocated for a basket of proposals including roads throughout the country? Is he also aware that two feasibility studies were done and rejected by the Ministry of Planning and Development in Trinidad because they did not meet the conditions set forth by the bank? That is the major reason why the link road has not been built at this time. In effect, the total sum allocated or recommended was $18 million—

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senator, please ask questions; do not make a contribution.

**Sen. N. Moore:** Thank you, Mr. President. Not one cent of that grant was spent on the project. We know that the money was spent because I think Members who were in Parliament at the time heard the question asked by the Member for Tobago East and the answer given in the written form by the Prime Minister and his other ministers. That is also a very open secret in the country. In 1995, the sum of $1 million was allocated to the project but only $200,000 of that sum was
released to bulldoze a few tonnes of rocks to sheet a few hundred metres of the road. I stress, the sum of $1 million was allocated last year but only $200,000 was released and a bit of work was done on that road. PNM kept the other $800,000 and the Member has the gall even to refer to the project!

Some funds have been earmarked from the multi sectoral programme allocation to the Ministry of Planning and Development, partly funded by the IDB - see page 28 of the Estimates of Expenditure - for that project in 1996; the sum of $2.75 million.

The Senator scoffed at the allocation of $1 million to start work on the Tobago hospital. I ask the goodly gentleman: How much did the PNM allocate to that project? All the years they talked about providing a hospital to Tobago, not even a plan was drawn. This year a plan will be provided. The PNM had no intention of letting Tobago have a hospital.

This kind of treatment of Tobago is part of their big stick plan to repay us for not voting PNM in Tobago. But may I remind my learned Friend of some prophetic words from Dr. Winston Murray—I am sure you would remember him—quoted in Hansard on January 28, 1977, some time around 5.55 p.m. He prophesied:

"Now, Mr. Speaker, because he has lost, he deliberately withdrew it ...."

referring to the Ministry of Tobago Affairs—

"... hoping that my countrymen would come to him pleading as mendicants saying that they are sorry. This will never happen and you shall never get back Tobago."

I am sure my Friend likes the words.

In addition, Mr. President, there is a saying in Tobago—I do not know if it is said in Trinidad; I think I heard it here—that when the PNM puts hand on a man, he is blighted. I am sure you know one recent example of a man who does not know where he is now. The man is well-meaning but he has been laid hands upon. Anyway, sorry, Mr. President. I am afraid that my goodly colleague has fallen under the curse. Trying to justify the indefensive action of the PNM in Tobago is a lost cause which may not be too late but I advise my Friend to run for his life. If he moves quickly enough, the people of Tobago will forgive him and shelter him. Leave this PNM thing alone!
I hope that we have been energized somewhat by my contribution and I reiterate my appreciation to the Minister of Finance for providing the country with this budget which has touched the hearts positively of so many people. We in Tobago will use what we have been allocated very economically and, as I said before, I am sure that the sum will be swaddled as we go on and that our detractors will be silenced. Tobago will be developed economically, socially and also spiritually. I like the word, "spiritually". We will press on working together with our brothers and sisters in Trinidad.

I know I must close now and that is why I have to state this briefly. We have no intention of separating but what I said in relation to the PNM and in response to a bit of heckling about the UNC, the same situation holds, that we know when to break and when to want to run. We have no intention of leaving the union but our brothers and sisters must know that we want mutual respect and regard. Once we have this, we would work together and we can well make this country—I know Tobago has a contribution to make—a greater country than it is and indeed to make it a real world-class country so that we can find our rightful place under the sun in the 21st Century.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. Vimala Tota-Maharaj: Mr. President, I extend to you and all those who serve in this esteemed Senate all the best for 1996. May God shower his choicest blessings on each and every one of us for continued good health to serve this beloved nation.

I take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to the Minister of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung, on the highly efficient and competent manner in which he prepared and presented the 1996 budget, taking into consideration that he had a mere eight weeks to deliver a people-oriented budget. Minister Kuei Tung deserves our commendation. Already, the positive effects of this budget’s fiscal measures have trickled down to permeate every level of society.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Social Development under this Government of national unity will provide the new impetus for the creation of a strong and well-focused society. One of the key areas where there is much concern is the crisis of values which is leading to a breakdown of the family system. The entire value system which guided our families is now in transition and it might be correct to describe this transition as a state of normlessness—no set standard of moral values. As we rush headlong into a new millennium, it is imperative that we go
back to the basics and assist the national community to rediscover and revalidate
the ethics and values which sustained our families in the past, that is, before the
boom days. During the boom, money was spent extravagantly and very little was
properly channelled to prepare the less fortunate in our society for self-reliance.
Which government was responsible? We all know.

7.15 p.m.

This Government’s vision and plan is to equip the population with the
necessary skills to enhance their total development. As a parent myself, Mr.
President, I can vouch for the bewildering disjunction between the values of my
generation and those of my children. In this situation, we parents may concede
greater power to our children in order to avoid painful confrontation. Under those
circumstances, established values and support systems become irrelevant, and the
family system becomes overburdened, but some still advocate that the state must
assume the traditional functions of the family.

Mr. President, for any community to prosper in peace, happiness and
harmony, the basic unit of the nation, which is the family unit, must be
strengthened and empowered. This is one of the primary goals of this
Government of national unity. We on this side are committed to doing those
things which will improve the quality of life for all our citizens in a truly, truly
equitable manner. From frank and sincere appraisal, the remedies we fashion will
serve their purpose, and the national community will be united as a family in the
noble task of healing, loving and embracing one another as members of one
family of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, "we care" are two dangerous words. Does this ring a bell?
When the promised care provides incentives for individuals and families to shun
their responsibilities, a situation is created whereby the state usurps the duties of
mother, father, brother, sister, uncle, aunt and grandparent. Our Government does
not advocate this. It is recorded in the pages of Holy Scriptures that the love of a
parent is a wonderful thing. It is essential for the proper emotional nourishment
and development of a normal human being. Hugs, affection, comfort and
companionship are all free, so every parent can afford these priceless
commodities.

Mr. President, this Government would like to encourage all parents and
guardians to love their children, and to love a child who has no parents. This tone
was clearly set by our caring Prime Minister, Hon. Basdeo Panday. Our
Government of national unity will do all that is possible to care for abused
children and those unwitting victims of the silent, but tragic, consequences of structural adjustment and social changes.

Prevention is always better than cure. This ancient wisdom guides our Government, and it is the reason why I spent so much time focusing on the role of the parent. We can set good examples as Senators, Members of Parliament, principals, teachers, mothers and fathers, wherever we may be seen as role models. The most powerful lessons are never spoken aloud. Children learn by observation. A leader of exemplary character, thought and action communicates the ideals which guide him/her in every committed word and deed—and here, Sir, I draw reference to our honourable Prime Minister and the Minister Extraordinaire for putting aside their differences and uniting to form this Government. [Desk thumping]

A good carpenter, mason or mechanic teaches his apprentice not so much by words but, by the act of doing. I reiterate, the instrument of example is the most powerful tool we have to use in our crusade to guide and save our children. Our Government has increased the allocation of resources to assist those in need. We do not only analyze and offer theories. This is an action-oriented Government, acting on well-thought-out ideas, not a Government of only vision and no implementation. This Government of national unity increased allocations for subsidies and transfers, that is, relief for the poor, help for the destitute and aged; increased allocations to train sufficient probation officers who will assist those youths gone astray to adjust to lawful activities and lifestyles. Government allocations will increase the help which the Ministry of Social Development is mandated to deliver, that is, help to the dispossessed, sick and handicapped.

Mr. President, the Prime Minister has always advocated an equal opportunities commission. In our small country we cannot avoid each other, and complaints of discrimination are made daily—sexual discrimination; religious, racial and discrimination against the handicapped and the aged.

We need transparency and, of course, this Government is already working on legislation to put in place a neutral institution which will address every complaint of discrimination without fear or favour, to ensure that justice and equity is not only done but seen to be done.

This Government will address with vigour the developmental needs of all, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups. We plan to deliver cost-effective and targeted projects needs-based, and we seek to enhance the ability of the poor to exert control over their own lives. The provision of immediate relief to
individuals through the disbursement of non-contributory benefits such as Old Age Pension; expansion of Social Health and Rehabilitation Efforts, that is, SHARE, to cater for an additional 8,000 individuals; the introduction of a foster care system and a facility for displaced children; a halfway house for ex-residents of children’s homes; and a treatment and rehabilitation facility for the homeless.

7.25 p.m.

In the Draft Estimates of Development Programme for the year 1996, on page 92—Summary Head 45, Ministry of Social Development, I wish to read these allocations, very briefly:

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Revised Estimate</th>
<th>Actual</th>
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<td>2,520,000</td>
<td>3,791,812</td>
<td>180,000</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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Our Government is serious. This shows a marked increase in allocations for the Ministry of Social Development to address the social infrastructure of the nation. This is an indication of our Government's serious approach to social development.

Core components of the programmes of these facilities will be counselling, the provision of basic life skills and vocational training skills. I desire to make reference to the yeoman and outstanding services rendered by the non-governmental organizations. Their contributions have been recognized and applauded by this Government of national unity. These organizations are instrumental in assisting to fulfil basic human needs of the sick, homeless and dispossessed.

This Government acknowledges the pivotal role these NGOs can play in assisting to effectively implement programmes and help realize the desired goals of our Government. Here I wish to quote from our budget statement, page 15:

"The delivery of social services will benefit from our efforts to establish an integrated and co-ordinated approach to such services among the Ministry of Social Development and those Government and Non-Government agencies which are currently engaged in the many diverse delivery mechanisms. The objective is to bring all these units under one common umbrella Organisation. The actual form of this Organisation will be the subject of consultation and consensus of the many groups and agencies involved in the delivery of these services."
To further strengthen the social programme, Government will make provisions to render assistance to victims of crime who are evaluated as being in need of state assistance. Government will discuss with the relevant NGOs the mechanism for establishing and operating the service.

I would also like to draw reference to our Medium Term Policy Framework. I quote from page 21:

"(ii) to improve and expand service delivery to include greater participation and involvement by NGOs."

Mr. President, this Government intends to pursue fundamental changes to ensure that the poor are protected and already this is evidenced in our budget presentation which has impacted positively and immediately on the ability of the lower income group to feed itself at a less prohibitive cost.

Basic food items comprise a major proportion of the expenditure of the poor; this burden is harder on the unemployed and our homeless. The vast majority of our lower income population cried out for relief in order to be able to eat, and to feed their families. Thousands can now eat a balanced, nutritious meal, formerly unavailable, because this Government's fiscal policy has caused the prices of a range of food items to be reduced.

Our Government of national unity will speak for the voiceless and defend the defenceless. One of our primary responsibilities is to safeguard human rights and to create the atmosphere which ensures that minimum conditions of human dignity are met for all.

It is important that the economic policies of our Government's budget be evaluated in the light of the impact on life of the weak, the poor, the homeless children and on the stability of the family and the nation. This is a budget for the people.

We propose and support measures that will halt the further erosion of family and community because, as the scriptures state:

"We are our brother's keeper!

We are the family of one God!"

Mr. President, I thank you.
Motion made and question proposed, That the Senate do now adjourn to Wednesday, January 24, 1996 at 10.00 a.m. [Hon. W. Mark]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.31 p.m.