

**THE
PARLIAMETARY DEBATES**

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD
AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON NOVEMBER 27, 1995

SESSION 1999—2000

VOLUME 21

SENATE

Monday, September 11, 2000

The Senate met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, leave of absence from sittings of the Senate has been granted to Sen. Philip Hamel-Smith during the period September 4—17, 2000.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: I have received the following communication from His Excellency the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, T.C., O.C.C., S.C., President
and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

\s\ Arthur N. R. Robinson
President.

TO: MR. VINCENT CABRERA

WHEREAS Senator Philip Hamel-Smith is incapable of performing his functions as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, VINCENT CABRERA, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 11th September, 2000 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Philip Hamel-Smith.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the
President, St. Ann's, this 8th day of September, 2000.”

Oath of Allegiance

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OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Vincent Cabrera took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

APPROPRIATION BILL

(BUDGET)

Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2001, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings. [*Hon. W. Mark*]

Question put and agreed to.

PAPERS LAID

1. Draft Estimates of Revenue for the year 2001. [*The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of Trinidad Tobago Forest Products Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1985. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of Trinidad Tobago Forest Products Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1986. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of Trinidad Tobago Forest Products Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1987. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
5. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of Trinidad Tobago Forest Products Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1988. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
6. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of Trinidad Tobago Forest Products Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
7. Report and Financial Statements of the Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended March 31, 2000. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]

Papers Laid

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8. Report of the Fifty-eighth Report of the Salaries Review Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
9. Report of the Fifty-ninth Report of the Salaries Review Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
10. The Value Added Tax Order, 2000. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr. President: The first question is by Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt who is not here so we will move to question No. 18. Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie.

**Lands Acquired—Tobago
(Payment)**

18. Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie asked the hon. Minister of Housing and Settlements:

- A. Could the hon. Minister state whether all privately owned lands acquired, used or entered upon in Tobago by the State for development projects have been paid for?
- B. If the answer is in the negative, will the Minister state in detail:
 - (i) those parcels of lands not paid for;
 - (ii) their acreage, location and boundaries, date used or acquired, owner/s and purpose for which the lands were acquired/used;
 - (iii) the reasons for the delay in effecting payment?

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, based on agreement, we have agreed among parties to defer this question for one week from today.

Question, by leave, deferred.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Eudine Job:

**Tobago Ferry
(Lease/Purchase of)**

19. Sen. Eudine Job asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

- (a) Is the hon. Minister aware that the level of service provided by the *mf Panorama* remains inadequate and that the situation would be exacerbated when the *mf Panorama* goes on dry dock?

- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, would the hon. Minister inform the Senate of the status of negotiations for the lease or purchase of a ferry to replace the *mf Panorama* which is due for dry dock later this year?
- (c) Would the hon. Minister further inform the House whether government proposes to purchase or lease a ferry to be used on the inter-island route after the *mf Panorama* returns from dry docks?

Scarborough Esplanade

20. Is the hon. Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development aware that the prolonged delay in completing the Scarborough Esplanade is causing severe distress to motorists, pedestrians, other residents and business establishments in Tobago?

- (a) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, would the hon. Minister please inform the Senate:
 - (i) of the date of completion for the Scarborough Esplanade;
 - (ii) the expenditure to date on the Scarborough Esplanade?

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, based on agreement, again, we have decided to defer questions Nos. 19 and 20 in the name of Sen. Eudine Job for one week.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Mr. President: Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt is now here. Question No. 17.

Infant/Maternal Mortality Rates

17. Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt asked the hon. Minister of Health:

- A. Could the hon. Minister tell this House why according to the Ministry of Health figures and those of the Central Statistics Office:
 - (i) the Trinidad and Tobago infant mortality rates have risen from 12.7 per thousand in 1990 to 28.1 per thousand in 1999, ranking this country below Haiti in this respect;
 - (ii) the maternal mortality rate has risen from 54.26 per thousand in 1990 to 70.4 in 1997?
- B. Could the hon. Minister also give this Senate the accurate maternal mortality rate for the year 1999?

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Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. President, the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Health has indicated that she would include the response to that question in her contribution, so I withdraw. We have disposed of it.

Mr. President: Pardon me.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: Sorry, I am a bit out of breath.

I understand from the Minister in the Ministry of Health, Sir, that she has agreed to dispose of that in her contribution to the budget, so I withdraw the question.

Question, by leave, withdrawn.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, I seek leave of the Senate to deal with "Bills Second Reading" at this stage of the proceedings.

Agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL (BUDGET)

The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. President, I beg to move,

That a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2001, be now read a second time.

Mr. President, this is a money Bill and was approved in the other place on September 6, 2000. This Bill provides for the expenditure of \$15,512,245,876 including capital repayments and sinking fund payments under the various heads as indicated in the Schedule of the Bill.

The proposals contained in this Bill chart a course for the further consolidation of the economic and social advances made by Trinidad and Tobago over the past five years. More importantly, it seeks to build a better future for Trinidad and Tobago by creating more jobs, providing better education and more caring for our citizens.

Mr. President, the past five years have not been without its ups and downs. We have had to weather the financial crisis which emerged in East Asia and spread rapidly to Russia and emerging market economies, particularly those of Latin America. World commodity prices, including oil, petrochemicals and steel,

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declined to low and unsustainable levels. World economic growth stagnated and the recovery was slow and fragile in some cases. Nevertheless, we confronted these challenges with confidence and with the commitment to keep this economy in control. Therefore, it is incumbent on me to briefly highlight to hon. Senators the state of the domestic economy to establish beyond doubt the soundness of the Trinidad and Tobago economy.

All indications are that the country is on the right path and moving in the right direction. Trinidad and Tobago has enjoyed uninterrupted economic growth over the past six years, averaging 4.5 per cent per annum. Indeed, in this year growth is expected to reach 7.9 per cent, the highest level in two decades.

Unemployment levels have been reduced. At the end of March, 2000, the unemployment rate was reduced to 12.5 per cent, down from 16 per cent at the end of December, 1995. This is the lowest the rate has been since 1983.

The rate of inflation has been contained averaging 4.2 per cent over the past five years. The inflation rate for this year is estimated at 3 per cent, the lowest level in two decades.

We have done all this by putting in place the right economic framework and measures. One of the results of this has been the creation of 60,000 additional jobs. At the end of July this year, the gross official reserves amounted to US \$1.7 billion, almost three times the level it was in December of 1995. We have reduced our external debt service from 15 per cent of earnings of our exports of goods and services in 1995 to 7.6 per cent by the end of 1999.

Mr. President, simultaneously with the reduction of the debt service ratio, we have reduced the public sector external debt from US \$1.9 billion to US \$1.5 billion. When I spoke in the other place of the public sector external debt, I referred to the external debt of the Central Government and government owned and controlled state enterprises and statutory bodies. This is different from the public debt as shown in Appendix 16 of the *Review of the Economy*. In the latter case, this is only central government local and external central government contingent liabilities.

10.15 a.m.

Mr. President, those on the other side, in the other place and who have been in government before, ought to know the difference. To plead that they do not, says something about their tenure in office, and their debt-management capabilities. Mr. President, let me explain.

In Appendix 16 of the *Review of the Economy* the total public debt, that is central government, increased from \$12 billion in 1991 to \$18.8 billion in 1995, an increase of \$6.8 billion; and to \$29.9 billion by September 2000. This is an increase of \$6.8 billion between 1991 and 1995; and \$11.1 billion between 1996 and 2000. What the Appendix does not show is that \$4.3 billion in debt was incurred by the previous administration, but never brought to account. We did this over the 1996—2000 period.

Let me outline some of these debts that I speak about. These include, for example: \$1.2 billion for arrears to public servants, \$883 million for the construction of the maximum security prison and some police stations, \$778 million give away of WASA to Severn Trent, \$192 million from the divestment of BWIA, and \$1,053 million for bad debts assigned to Taurus which arose from NCB, the Co-operative Bank, Workers Bank and National Fisheries, to name a few.

Mr. President, all these debts were incurred prior to December, 1995 and not brought to account. What should the correct numbers be then? Well, if these debts had been brought to account when they were incurred, the numbers would show that:

- between 1991 and 1995, the previous administration increased the public debt by \$11.1 billion; and
- the increase by this administration in the public debt was only \$6.8 billion.

In other words, Mr. President, this administration has incurred and booked \$6.8 billion, even though the public debt has increased by \$11.1 billion. And yet they talk about debt management and financial management!

Those on the other side also claimed that the fiscal balance was in deficit over the period 1996—2000. Again, they choose to fail to recognize the difference between the Central Bank as the monetary authority and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development as the fiscal authority.

The data used in Appendix 12 of the *Review of the Economy* were extracted from the accounts of Trinidad and Tobago, which have been duly audited and certified by the Auditor General and, therefore, truly reflects Government's fiscal position.

Mr. President, while we have kept on course with our economic agenda, we have also given equal importance to the country's social well-being. This is supported by the high rating in the United Nations Development Report, which

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ranks Trinidad and Tobago among the top five developing countries in the world for its effectiveness in overcoming poverty. Such success was achieved through a comprehensive approach to improving the quality of life for all our people. Our menu of programmes catered for the long and short term, for our young people and our senior citizens, as well as the disabled in our society.

Mr. President, we recognized that education is the primary avenue through which our citizens could acquire the skills and knowledge to achieve the higher standards of living to which we all aspire. It is for this reason that we have made education our number one priority. We have expanded the number of available secondary school places and installed trained teachers to make universal secondary education a reality. This is a major milestone for this country. We are also laying the foundation for universal tertiary education to become a reality in the future. We have expanded the network of post-secondary institutions to include the Trinidad and Tobago Technology Institute and the College of Science and Technology of Trinidad and Tobago. The National Energy Skills Centres have been established to provide young people throughout Trinidad and Tobago with an upgraded skills base.

Mr. President, we have also made significant strides in modernizing our health care services. Our policy in this area is to make health care available, accessible and affordable to all. We are improving the physical infrastructure for the delivery of health care services, as well as providing training for personnel in all branches of health care delivery.

In addition to strengthening our education and health systems, we also increased support to the more vulnerable groups in our society. We believe that every citizen should have access to a minimum standard of living. To date, we increased old age pension by almost 100 per cent.

Mr. President, we have worked to alleviate poverty through community intervention. Communities from all over Trinidad and Tobago are assisted through the opportunities offered by the Community Development Fund, among others.

Mr. President, when we assumed office, crime was a major concern. We attacked the issue on a number of fronts. We immediately set out to improve the infrastructure and to equip the police adequately. We built or renovated police stations. Vehicles and new technology were supplied. In addition, we modernized the legal infrastructure for crime fighting.

We see that our emphasis on education, community-based social programmes and small business is already having positive results. We are also working hard on providing and maintaining a modern and efficient infrastructure: highways, bridges, ports and airports, yes; but also telecommunications; and water. The expansion of stadia and sporting facilities throughout the country will support the aims and ambitions of our young people.

Mr. President, while we have achieved a great deal over the past five years, some work remains unfinished. Some of our projects that are still in process include:

- legislation that would facilitate national savings and asset building through employee share ownership;
- the single regulatory agency that would oversee the supervision of the entire financial system;
- the second phase of the Pension Reform Programme that would include pension portability and individual capitalization accounts; and
- mutual fund legislation that would deepen the financial and capital markets.

These have been constrained by the absence of the necessary skills and expertise to put together the required framework and draft legislation to achieve these objectives. We will accomplish these over the medium term by contracting from international sources, the required skills and expertise to give effect to our agenda.

Mr. President, this 2001 Appropriation Bill represents our commitment to building Trinidad and Tobago for the future, which means more jobs, better education and more caring. We continue to put people first. We continue to take care of our elderly, the children, the poor and the vulnerable. We continue to create the environment for economic growth and, ultimately, more jobs. Mr. President, we continue to keep the environment on the agenda.

Even as we improve and maintain the infrastructure, it is necessary to balance the need for development with conservation of our natural resources. As I have said before, protecting our environment is not an option: our future depends upon it. We are, therefore, establishing the Green Fund to provide resources for communities and non-governmental organizations throughout the country to carry out their own environmental remediation and preservation. I especially wish to encourage community-based organizations to access the fund in order to beautify and conserve their environment.

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Mr. President, economic growth in our country favours the rise of entrepreneurs and small business. Over the years, this Government has encouraged the development of small business, the fastest growing sector in our economy today. We expect this sector to play an increasing role in creating employment opportunities, and thus provide a more equitable distribution of the national wealth.

This year we have increased the tax credit for approved small business companies from 15 per cent to 25 per cent of the chargeable profits of such companies. This represents a further incentive to the entrepreneur, whether he is making bread, or selling highly valued computer skills.

Even as we encourage enterprise, Mr. President, we see that moving our young people from school to work has been a real challenge. We see the highest rates of unemployment among the 18 to 24 age group. We are therefore seeking the support of the business community in developing and implementing apprenticeship programmes for students of secondary and post-secondary institutions. Such programmes, of six months duration, will expose students to the world of work and provide the necessary experience. Companies will be eligible for an allowance of 200 per cent for all remuneration paid under such a programme. This allowance will be subject to the condition that such payments do not exceed 5 per cent of the company's total wages and salaries bill in any one year.

Mr. President, in order to ensure that our young citizens acquire the skills to lead productive lives in society, we are placing more and more emphasis on the relevance of the education system, and on making the system more affordable and available.

10.25 a.m.

We are deepening and extending the process with new school buildings, better equipment, continuous training of qualified teachers and a restructuring of the school curriculum. One of our immediate objectives is the provision of places for all children in primary schools. Universal secondary education is already a reality with 10 more schools scheduled for completion over the next year. This year we have extended the school feeding programme to all secondary schools. We are increasing the student revolving loan fund and the student loan guarantee facility, and extending it to cover post secondary education at all approved educational institutions.

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Our aim in the next five years is to improve access to tertiary level education for all citizens. This system will include a network of community colleges under COSTAATT, the Technology Institute, the National Energy Skills Centres and distance learning centres. Universal Internet access through educational institutions, libraries and community centres, will be achieved as we continue the programmes to put computers in all places of learning. Mr. President, education is the number one priority of this Government. This Bill, therefore, provides for an investment of over \$2.1 billion for education.

As important as education is good health. This Government recognizes that further improvements in the health sector can be achieved if the appropriate operating structure is in place. Every effort will be made, therefore, to support the decentralization process and to ease the transition for the regional health authorities to become effective providers of health care services.

This Government will continue to provide the required physical infrastructure, the necessary training and incentives to support those initiatives. Keeping health care affordable is one of our primary objectives. This Bill provides, with immediate effect, that wheelchairs and prescription spectacles including contact lenses be exempt from customs duties and zero rated for VAT. A total of \$1.07 billion has been allocated to help.

Mr. President, just as education and health are important in our development agenda, so too is agriculture. Our agricultural sector continues to play an important role, particularly as a source of income and employment in our rural districts. The time has come for our farmers, fishermen and agri-producers to play a more significant role in the development of our economy.

For the past five years we have focussed on providing incentives for production in key areas with a potential for export: building the infrastructure to connect farmers with markets; increasing land tenure and the pride of ownership, and strengthening the linkages between agriculture and school nutrition and high growth sectors like tourism. This year the Agricultural Disaster Relief Fund will take effect with an initial contribution of \$5 million. Disbursement from the fund will require the registration of farmers as well as an initial and nominal contribution from registered farmers. Over the medium term we will provide a promotional incentive framework similar to that available in the tourism sector. Emphasis will be placed on agro-processing, horticulture, floriculture, aquaculture and activities that will stimulate the expansion of the sector.

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Mr. President, the achievements of our nationals in the international arena have repeatedly made us proud. We have a great deal to offer the world in terms of our art-forms, our cultural diversity and the talents of our sportsmen and women. To appreciate and nurture our artistes and sportsmen, we must create opportunities for the growth and development of our art and cultural products here at home. This Bill, therefore, provides for the introduction of a tax allowance of 150 per cent on expenditure up to a maximum of \$300,000 for acquisitions of art produced by local artists or sculptors. This allowance will extend to contributions and sponsorships to groups such as steelbands, dance troupes and musicians; it will also apply to sponsorship of sporting activities and community-based cultural projects.

This Government has made adjustments in almost every fiscal year to date in order to ensure that citizens have the means to a basic livelihood. This has meant increasing old age pension from \$356 to \$720 over the past five years. We have increased the levels of pensions for retired public officers. We have also increased grants for social assistance. This year we have included a training allowance for single mothers receiving public assistance.

We have provided an additional \$158.5 million to increase public assistance, old-age pension and the pensions of retired public servants. In order to facilitate the acquisition of housing accommodation by first-time homeowners, the ceiling on loans under the approved mortgage lending programme will move from \$300,000 to \$350,000 with effect from January 1, 2001. The stamp duty exemption will accordingly be increased to a new level of \$350,000.

Mr. President, allow me to speak briefly about the tax reform agenda which supports the streamlining of our rates of taxes and systems for collections. Soon after we took office in 1995 questions were raised in this place about the huge backlog of income tax refunds which was outstanding. The backlog has been cleared in the main, and the Inland Revenue Division is now geared to issue refunds within three months after an income tax return has been filed.

The Value Added Tax information system has also been upgraded to a new computer system. The Pay-As-You-Earn system is currently being computerized. On February 28, 2001, which is the deadline date for the TD4 certificates for the previous year, the Inland Revenue Division will be able to accept TD4 certificates in an electronic format, and reconciliation of payments for the year with the TD4 summaries will be done automatically.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago entered into a technical service agreement with the United States Internal Revenue Service to assist in institutional strengthening of the Inland Revenue Division.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) team has assisted the Board of Inland Revenue in completing a strategic business plan and new organizational structure. The board's new systems will feature a centralized tax processing centre, a large case and specialty audit section, an automated PAYE system, integration of the Value Added Tax, Pay-As-You-Earn and income tax processing systems and a criminal investigation section. The improved performance of the division will mean increased compliance and strengthened revenue collection.

In keeping with streamlining the tax administration process, with effect from income year 2001 individuals earning salaried income only will not be required to file an income tax return with the Board of Inland Revenue. It will be the responsibility of the employers to ensure that all appropriate deductions are made at source. Since the onus will be on employers, they must ensure that proper deductions are made and paid to the Board of Inland Revenue in order to avoid penalties.

Since assuming office this Government has reduced the business levy from 0.5 per cent to 0.25 per cent. We propose to further reduce the levy to 0.2 per cent with effect from the year of income 2001. In order to strengthen the domestic savings effort, the tax on interest income is reduced from its current level of 10 per cent to 5 per cent with effect from the year of income 2001.

Mr. President, over the past five years Government increased the personal allowance for individuals from \$12,000 to \$20,000; this is now increased further to \$25,000. To give even more assistance to those citizens who are 60 years and over, their personal allowance is now increased from \$20,000 to \$30,000. These measures will take effect from the year of income 2001.

Our projection for the economic future of Trinidad and Tobago in conjunction with the Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund is very bright. Over the next five years the economy is projected to grow at an annual average rate of 5 per cent. Inflation will be reduced to under 3 per cent. Our external debt service ratio will be brought down to 3.1 per cent. The gross official foreign reserves is expected to increase to US \$2.5 billion. More importantly, through all of this we expect to generate another 60,000 jobs.

Mr. President, this 2001 Appropriation Bill has but one objective and that is to build a better future for Trinidad and Tobago. It reflects our respect and

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appreciation for the elderly, our young people and the disadvantaged in our society. This budget reflects our commitment to democracy, equity and to a society in which opportunity is available to all. Above all else, it demonstrates that we have come too far to turn back now.

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Sen. Danny Montano: Once again, Sir, I am here to talk about the budget, and it occurred to me after I heard the Minister's statement in the other place, I wondered what I would say on this occasion that I had not said on previous occasions.

In the same way, Mr. President, that the Minister came to the other place and here, has told us really very little about the budget and the future of the country, but rather he laid a huge pile of documents that I suppose we are expected to read. My comment is the same as on previous occasions: tell us about the budget; tell us about the future. What we have heard is a treatise on the so-called accomplishments of the UNC administration, and we are expected to go home with that.

He has provided a few meagre fiscal measures and we are expected to believe that these measures are going to lift our country into the 21st Century, to propel us forward with speed, economy and dynamism. Mr. President, I do not see it and I have not heard anything that the Minister has said that convinces me that this is going to take place.

What a budget statement should be is a comprehensive analysis of the financial *status quo* of the national economy. He should, of course, not only present the key economic indicators, he touched on a couple of them, but a proper comprehensive analysis of the indicators is required. What is required in the budget statement is an explanation as to what measures his administration created or caused the key economic indicators to be what they are; that is what is required in terms of a historical perspective, not just a political statement, political rhetoric. What we need is a comprehensive analysis of the measures that brought the economy to where it is. We have heard very little of that, and I would deal with that in more detail a little later on.

What the Minister should also do in presenting a budget is to present the basic assumptions that lie behind the numbers that he has presented; both on the revenue side and on the expenditure side. The only assumption that we received is that he has based his oil revenues on US \$22 a barrel for oil, as an average price.

We all know that natural gas is an integral part of our national economy at this point. Did the Minister tell us what is going to take place to stimulate the production of oil and natural gas? Did he tell us how much of the revenue that is contained inside here is coming from the reserves of natural gas? Did he tell us what the rate of draw down is going to be on our reserves of oil and natural gas? Did he enunciate any measures that are going to stimulate the further discovery of reserves of oil and natural gas? Nothing; we really do not know how these numbers are arrived at, and none of us are oil experts, but we have to take the numbers here and try to understand them without any form of reasonable explanation. I consider that to be unreasonable.

On the expenditure side, at least, give us an indication as to your policies; what the UNC policies are, *vis-à-vis*, public spending and social services; where your emphasis will be; what specifically you plan to spend your funds on, and, at least, give us some kind of apportionment as to how much of your expenditure is going to be in terms of capital works and personnel.

Now, the information is all inside these documents, but that is not good enough, because we in this Chamber are the only ones who receive these documents, and the public at large gets no information; they really do not know what is taking place. All we hear is that the expenditure is being increased by large amounts and we really do not know how it is being spent, and the reality of what is happening is that there is a growing credibility gap in what the Government says, what it does and what the public perceives to be the truth, and it starts with the budget statement.

10.40 a.m.

One would expect also that a budget statement should deal specifically with the measures that are going to stimulate growth and development. It is not sufficient to merely say that the status quo remains and that growth is expected to average 5 per cent into the future. That is not good enough. We need to know that Government is thinking about the future. The Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association is crying out saying it needs measures to help deal with the threats as well as the opportunities that globalization brings to our shores—and there are threats and opportunities. What are the measures that are going to stimulate the manufacturing and export sectors? There is none and there had been none for the past five years. The only measure I can think of which we dealt with a couple months ago and which was a kind of an odd measure at best, was the issue you would recall in the last Finance Bill which dealt with the question of leases and

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that was to grant the investment allowance that would be granted under the Aid of Industry Ordinance to lessees.

Mr. President, I have said on several occasions that the Aid of Industry Ordinance needs to be expanded. It is not that it is an archaic piece of legislation, but the fact of the matter is that it came up in the 1960s when we were embarking on a policy of industrialization and the industries listed there were the ones looking to start business back in the 1960s. We are now in the year 2000, there are all kinds of new industries and they have not been added to the list, and I have said so before. What you did was come up with an odd measure which is not in fact an initial allowance, but in fact, it becomes an investment allowance and you gave it to certain select manufacturers. Mr. President, how so? That is what you call stimulating the national economy? That is not going to stimulate the national economy. We need much more than that. Where are the measures that are going to stimulate and sustain employment?

We have heard the Minister talk about a drop in unemployment rate, but where are the measures, either in this budget or any prior budget, that are going to stimulate employment? Where are they? We should be hearing that. Where are the measures that are going to protect the foreign exchange rate? Where are the measures that are going to attract foreign investment into our shores? Where are the measures, and what has been said about that?

Mr. President, we have heard absolutely nothing at all. What we got on two occasions was a political speech telling us supposedly, what the Government has accomplished. We are not going anywhere, we are going along on the momentum that was created during the period 1991—1995, but we cannot go on like this. A radical shift in thinking has to take place, and it will take place very soon.

I talked about a credibility gap between what the Government says and the perception of the people and, while I know that the Government does not need my vote on this Appropriation Bill, the reality is that I cannot support this Bill—and it is not that I do not want nurses to get paid, or teachers to get paid, or anybody else to get paid. I want the business of Government to continue, but my difficulty is that this UNC administration can no longer be trusted with public money. [*Desk thumping*] That is my difficulty.

Mr. President, I will give you an example. In these documents, there are provisions for senior public servants and Members of Parliament to receive an adjusted level of compensation and apparently it is to go back to some time in 1998. Mr. President, understand, I have no difficulty with that at all, but come and

say so openly, but you see, where the deceit comes in, where the credibility gap grows is when the Prime Minister writes a letter that he makes public saying it is not going to happen automatically, it has to go to Cabinet first. We are grown ups in this place; who believes that? If this is a budget, then obviously, this is the plan of the UNC Government. This is how they plan to spend the money. You cannot say that you are going to rethink that part of it. That is absolute nonsense and it is untrue, it is not true. What is true? They should have done it two years ago, they should have paid the senior public servants two years ago. *[Desk thumping]* It is not for the PNM to agree, or disagree.

Mr. President, they are building an airport for \$1.5 billion. We do not agree with that, but they are doing it anyway, but when it comes to paying the senior public servants they get up with a certain amount of arrogance and say if the PNM does not agree, they would not do it. That is nonsense, Mr. President, absolute nonsense. *[Desk thumping]* That is the credibility gap and it comes from the very highest level of the UNC administration. It comes from their leader, the Prime Minister; it starts right there. You cannot trust them.

In the beginning, the early part of 1996 I was in the other place as a visitor and listened to the Members of the UNC Government saying: "Come and join us, come and join us because the Opposition is too cantankerous, always fighting. Come let us have peace and love and unity and harmony and we would not have an Opposition, and we would all do the same thing." Mr. President, whoever says that, has to be crazy. It is our duty to stand here and highlight the issues and the misdeeds of the UNC administration. That is what Opposition is for, that is what the media is for. If there were no media, and no Opposition then we would have a state that exists as in Cuba.

Mr. President, I have a very good friend who has just returned from staying three months in Cuba. In fact, she is a friend of my stepson. She says in the newspapers, no crime is reported, no murders, no rape, no beating of wives. There is no bad news in the media. Nothing bad ever happens in Cuba. You get no news from outside of Cuba, you do not know what is happening in the United States of America, Switzerland, China or Trinidad and Tobago. They have no knowledge of anything at all and as far as they are concerned, there is nobody in a Cuban jail. Mr. President, is that what this administration wants here? No, Mr. President. That is the credibility gap that is growing here and we will not accept that. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. President, you have to understand there is Opposition and there are people in Opposition and the Opposition does not merely constitute the Members of this

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House and the Members of the other House. There are people in opposition. The other day the Government was severely embarrassed over the gross expenditures at the airport. How did the Opposition get that information? It got it from the people who are opposed to what the UNC administration is doing and they want it made public. What has happened since then is that I am reliably informed that the chairman of NIPDEC has put a virtual security operation in place. All the files are being locked up and closed down and everybody is being questioned and examined. Mr. President, is that openness? Is that integrity? No, Mr. President.

There is another situation where the former legal secretary at Caroni (1975) Limited was fired and the inference was that a certain document that had been prepared by Price Waterhouse had been leaked to one of our leading Members, Dr. Rowley, which he used in the Parliament. She was dismissed wrongfully and the court has said so. She was awarded money in compensation which Caroni (1975) Limited has refused to pay. *[Desk thumping]* She is just an individual. They have appealed and they have the right to appeal it, but of course, you know the court tends to work slowly, so it is taking years, but that citizen—if in fact, that is what she did—is in opposition. Whoever leaked that is opposed to the UNC administration, but now she does not get paid and she is just one individual. She has not been paid but yesterday in the front page of the *Sunday Express* we see the over ambitious adventurers from Mucurapo have been paid \$1.5 million.

Mr. President, I have difficulty with that. Talk about a credibility gap! No, Mr. President, that cannot be and people know, they are fed up with what is taking place here. This UNC administration is slow, they are unfair, corrupt and peopled by politicians living off graft and sinecure. That is what the UNC administration is. *[Desk thumping]* That is the credibility gap we have, that is why I cannot approve of this budget. I am putting money into the hands of people whom I cannot trust any longer. They are characterized by a “Me first syndrome”. Let me look after myself first. There are Members in this Senate who have gone into Government quite clearly to fix themselves, or family business, or friends.

Mr. President: No Senator, you cannot impute improper motives to the Members of the Senate without evidence.

Sen. D. Montano: Mr. President, the UNC administration in fact, and I will show you later where they have forgotten the poor and working classes. *[Desk thumping]* What you have now—and you see it on the part of Ministers and all their friends—is a kind of “don’t look down economy” only look up. Certain sectors of the economy have exploded in wealth, while there are very real sectors

here where there is abject poverty, where children's bellies are satisfied only by a little sugar and water. That is an obscene matter in the year 2000. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, there are under classes who look at the UNC administration and they feel that there is no hope, that everything they hear, they know is not true. They are bombarded with duplicity and deceit to the point that they are virtually numbed into stupidity but, Mr. President, I can assure you that come election day, they will not be numbed and they will not be stupid because they know.

Mr. President, when you talk about the untruths, the misleading statements, let me just go through the budget and look at the real scenario.

10.55 a.m.

The Minister of Finance wants to make much ado about the public debt; and he says that the public debt really has come down and gives us an explanation this morning. Mr. President, you have to compare like with like. The numbers in the documents that he has to come up with clearly show that the public debt was \$18.8 billion at the end of 1995, and his document shows that it is now \$29.9 billion; an increase of \$11.1 billion which is a 60 per cent increase.

He says, however, that they were off-book liabilities with the prison and the police stations and so on, but Mr. President, what about the off-book liabilities that exist now? [*Desk thumping*] What is happening with the desalination plant? That is going to be a liability that they are not going to have to reckon with at all. That is something that obviously the PNM is going to have to deal with, because that is not on anybody's books at this point, but it is a liability. InnCogen is a liability of the state, because it is an asset that we would never own, but we are going to have to pay for it. So it has to be treated as a liability, but it is not. It is off the books.

The library is being financed through Fincor, and I do not think that it is in the books, I think that is one of these build/finance/construct schemes which, again, is off-book. Give us the real facts. How much are the off-book liabilities now? He did not say that there were none; he did not say that it amounts to zero. I would like him to get up and say, it is zero. I did not hear that. So I know that there are off-book liabilities. I would give you an example, Mr. President. Last year we had the same set of documents and when we look at the figures this year in terms of value added tax revenues, all of a sudden we see that the GDP has gone up and the VAT revenues have gone down, which makes no sense at all. But then the Minister says that

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is because big outstanding refunds were paid off in the current year. But you see those refunds are liabilities in the preceding year and do not show up anywhere—not to my knowledge. So what are the liabilities that we are carrying forward? We do not know. We really do not know. So all we can do is to compare like with like. The facts are there, that the public debt was increased by \$11.1 billion.

Now to be fair—and I would give the hon. Minister this—the total public debt as a percentage of the GDP is the same. I would give him that. So on a relative basis you might say that there is no real increase. But that is not strictly so. It is a relative basis. But the fact of the matter is that, in an absolute sense, the debt has increased. So I would give the hon. Minister that, but he must come and tell us the facts as they are and do not try to mislead. You get these little roundabout statements that are not completely open and true. He says that unemployment has fallen from 16 to 12 ½ per cent, but last year at this time he was boasting that the unemployment level was 11.7 per cent. Through you, Mr. President, could Senators recall that?

Sen. Shabazz: True.

Sen. D. Montano: So it has increased from 11.7 per cent to 12.5 per cent. Mr. President, very simply, the measures that should have been put in place to develop sustainable employment have not been put in place. Therefore, this economy is completely at the mercy of foreign plants being built. Last year there was the tapering off of the LNG Plant and the two new trains have not started full construction as yet. So, Mr. President, that is where we are. He is depending on that sort of thing and yet there are no measures in place that are going to attract foreign investment. Or, there are no measures in place to stimulate the local economy. So what happens with unemployment?

Mr. President, it is the same point that I have been making for the past five years. There are no measures in place. We had one measure and that was the employment allowance. Mr. President, I said it then and I say it now—because I am in the business of examining the accounts of companies, and I can tell you that I do not know anybody who hired anybody just to get the employment allowance. They hire them because they are needed. If they are going to get a benefit they are going to get a benefit, and they enjoy the tax benefit but it does not stimulate the hiring of anybody. It does not do that. That is the reality, Mr. President.

In terms of the deceit, the Minister of Finance, on page 3 of his contribution in the other place said:

“...we tightened our belts and put our fiscal house in order.”

Mr. President, public spending in 1995 was \$8.5 billion. It is projected for the year 2001 to be \$15.3 billion. That is how he tightens his belt, by increasing spending. He increased debt by \$11.1 billion and ran up a cumulative deficit of \$1.5 billion according to his numbers. Mr. President, what kind of statement is that? You see it is really not exactly true. With all of that spending, some \$60 billion over the past five years, what did they build? Apart from the airport where is the equivalent of the Hall of Justice? Where is the equivalent of the Twin Towers? Where is the equivalent of the Uriah Butler Highway? Where is the equivalent? There is none, Mr. President. And he said that they tightened their belts. Well, if they did, what did they do with the money? What did they do with it?

Mr. President, he goes on and says that five years ago Trinidad and Tobago bonds were rated as speculative grade and that, today, it is rated as investment grade. Okay, I accept that. But there is an odd situation; whereas the percentage of the total debt, internal debt five years ago was 40 per cent of total debt, it is now 48.6 per cent of the total debt. So as a percentage we had more external debt five years ago than we have now. But borrowing in Trinidad and Tobago is a higher cost than it is externally.

So I would like an explanation as to why we are going down that road. Mr. President, I do not understand it, and it seems to me to be a misleading statement. If the statement is true—and five years ago it was a speculative grade—I know that the grades have improved marginally, but I did not know that it would have been called a speculative grade five years ago. The Minister is on record as saying that he can now borrow at more favourable terms and at lower rates of interest and so on. Well, then why are we borrowing more on the local market than we are borrowing abroad? Mr. President, I cannot see the rationale. It has to be that something is not true.

Mr. President, where is the Revenue Stabilization Fund of \$415 million? Where is that money? The Minister, back in April, was talking about it and he said that there was a Revenue Stabilization Fund in Kuwait that yield them now as much or more revenue than the revenue from oil and so on, and that this is what his plan was. But between then and now you could not bring the legislation to set up the instruments for investment or whatever it is? You are still waiting? I see the \$415 million coming out of expenditure, but where has it gone to? Because when I looked at the balance sheet, I looked for the Stabilization Fund. I see other funds inside there; I see the Road Improvement Fund and so on but I do not see the Revenue Stabilization Fund.

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11.05 a.m.

In truth and in fact, what has happened is that it has simply been left as part of the Consolidated Fund to reduce the overdraft borrowings at the Central Bank. So it has not been sterilized. It is still there. It has been spent already. The cash money has gone already. This is just a number in a set of documents. It is not real. The money has not been sterilized. It has not been put down on a fixed deposit in Republic Bank or wherever else. It is not there. It is offsetting—reducing the overdraft of the Central Bank. There is misleading. It is deceit there. The whole thing is not really true.

Mr. President, the Minister said in the other place on page 19:

“We brought simple solutions to everyday difficulties...We added a third lane on the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway...” “We fixed the St. Ann’s roundabout”.

The reality is if we look at the past five years, the only thing that the Government had to offer the people of Trinidad and Tobago was small solutions to small problems. [*Desk thumping*] They have done nothing else. The big problems of the country have not been addressed. [*Desk thumping*] They have fixed the St. Ann’s roundabout but, Mr. President, the traffic congestion on the roads now is extraordinary. They have allowed these foreign-used motor cars into the country and in the first two years it was virtually uncontrolled. The result is that the population of motor cars now is nearly twice what it was five years ago and they have not built any new roads. [*Desk thumping*] They just put twice the number of vehicles on the same roads and said, “Well, take that. That is your solution”. That is a simple solution? My God, Mr. President, that is creating a huge problem that we will have to fix; and we will fix it. [*Desk thumping*]

He talked about his record of achievement. Let us just go through the record of achievement—annual deficits totalling over \$1.5 billion. There has been no increase in the savings rate despite the growth in the local economy, as a result of which it has put tremendous pressure on the exchange rate, and the exchange rate is the lifeblood of our society. I have said that over and over again; to the extent that in the last nine months the Central Bank has had to bail out the commercial banks to the extent of US \$183 million. Last year it was only US \$63 million.

You know, Mr. President, it is clearly showing up. With the kind of savings that could have been achieved, that should have been achieved, the exchange rate could very well have fallen back down to \$6 or \$5.89, which is where it was when we left it. It could have gone the other way. When that is done, Mr. President, one

is creating wealth. Instead, the pressure is on the exchange rate to go the other way, to go to \$6.50 and \$6.70 and every businessman I know talks about when it is going to reach \$6.70. The result is, Mr. President, that there is a lack of confidence in our local currency to the extent that deposits in the banking system in foreign currency have now reached the level of 28 per cent.

That is strictly a level of confidence because businessmen—and I know many of them—prefer to have US dollars in the bank while maintaining a TT dollar overdraft. They are prepared to pay the interest rate differential on the interest on the overdraft as opposed to the interest on the US account. They are prepared to pay it because of the risk—because of the lack of a consistent availability of US funds. Mr. President, that is a function of a lack of policy and direction on the part of the UNC administration, plain and simple. When we left office in 1995 the rate had reached as high as \$5.97 and had fallen back to \$5.89, and there was every reason to feel that it would have gone even lower. The Government changed and it immediately went to \$6 then \$6.20 and then to \$6.30. It is a complete lack of confidence—a lack of direction. [*Desk thumping*]

He says how he virtually doubled pensions. Let me just tell you this, Mr. President. In 1995 the total amount of pensions and gratuities paid as a percentage of recurrent expenditure was 5.5 per cent of total expenditure. In the 2001 Budget it is 5.4 per cent. It is less, Mr. President. It is a smaller piece of the pie. The PNM was willing to do more with less. That is what that says. [*Desk thumping*] Do you think that it ends there, Mr. President? In 1995 the expenditure on health was 6.6 per cent of recurrent expenditure. By 1997 it had reached 5.4 per cent. In 2000 it was 5.9 per cent, and in the 2001 Budget it is 6.1 per cent as opposed to 6.6 per cent in 1995. Mr. President, the pie is getting smaller. I will repeat—the PNM did more with less. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister says that health care is improving. I do not know where he lives. When one talks to the people who have to go to the general hospitals, they will tell you the nightmare that has become. [*Desk thumping*] Health care has deteriorated under the UNC administration. [*Desk thumping*] The PNM regime had negotiated a loan of some \$900 million with IADB, of which only about 10 per cent has been drawn down by the UNC administration, and they have botched the programme so badly [*Desk thumping*] that the loan has now been classified. That is a fact, Mr. President, and the Minister of Health has admitted it in this Chamber. Is that their record in health, Mr. President? No, we want to hear about the future. We want to hear about it with a smaller piece of the pie.

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Education—the much-touted education plan of the UNC. In 1995 the PNM spent 11 per cent of recurrent expenditure. In 2000, the UNC administration spent 8.9 per cent of total expenditure; and in the 2001 Budget it is 10.3; still less than what the PNM spent in 1995. The PNM did more with less. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to talk about water, Mr. President. The Minister of Public Utilities, up until a couple of weeks ago, was saying “Water for all”; now, it is “Water for 92 per cent”. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Mohammed: No, it is 82 per cent.

Sen. D. Montano: I do not know from where it is coming or what he was saying a couple of months ago, but it is just political nonsense. It just does not make any sense. What I want to talk about is the desalination plant. Back in 1994/1995 there was a plan to rehabilitate ground wells—water wells. WASA had wells all over the country and they had come up with a plan to have all these wells producing. At the time that they entered into these arrangements they were producing about 18 million gallons per day out of these wells.

Now, Mr. President, just to keep your eye on the ball, the desalination plant is supposed to produce 24 million gallons per day so we are supposed to get an increase of 24 million gallons from the desalination plant; just so that you have a frame of reference. The water well contractors, who were all local, worked on these wells and within a period of about 18 months had raised the production to 52 million gallons per day from the groundwells, an increase of 34 million gallons. [*Desk thumping*] The UNC administration came in and they decided for—I would not get into that, but they cancelled the contracts and the production of the water wells has fallen back, to what levels I am not completely sure but I know that many of the wells are now shut down and are not operating at all. But, Mr. President, they had increased the production of water by 34 million gallons per day.

The average cost was 90 cents a cubic metre. WASA, in turn, was selling it for an average cost of \$3.60 per cubic metre, for a profit of \$2.70 per cubic metre. We are told that this administration, the UNC administration, wants to put down the desalination plant and they are going to pay \$4.55 per cubic metre and sell it for \$7.50 for a profit of \$2.95. Now, Mr. President, while I agree that the \$2.95 is greater than the \$2.70, logic would tell me that if in fact they could sell the water for \$7.50 then they should pay the lowest that they possibly could, which would be 90 cents. They would then be making \$5.65 per cubic metre. So how do they justify the desalination plant?

Mr. President, we have to understand; this is one of these off-book liability businesses, because the people of Trinidad and Tobago have to pay for the water. At the end of five years, the people will have paid in excess of \$1 billion for water and nobody is going to own that plant. It is still going to be owned by a bunch of foreigners. That is where we are. How could that make any sense? Talk about a credibility gap? That is a huge credibility gap. Mr. President, you have to remember that operation was being set up with a series of holding companies in the Cayman Islands. Why does anybody need to set up a holding company in the Cayman Islands, unless they are trying to do something that is secret? [*Desk thumping*] That is the whole point. Who needs to be protected? Mr. President, we are talking about a huge credibility gap. I cannot, I will repeat, agree to put \$15.5 billion into the hands of persons I cannot trust. [*Desk thumping*] That is the point, Mr. President.

Tobago—we heard all about the negotiations for Tobago. That is somewhat speculative so I would not get too far into that, but let us just deal with this. Tobago, when I woke up this morning, was still part of Trinidad. I would assume, even though I was not born in Tobago, that when I speak I am speaking on behalf of all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and, therefore, what happens in Tobago does interest me and is relevant to anything that I do.

In the year 2000, this is what happened. The Government promised to spend \$29.5 million on the economic infrastructure. Tobago received \$18.9 million. In transport, roads and bridges, for the development of roads and so forth, they were promised \$23.1 million; they actually received \$12.6 million. They talk about education as being the high point and their focus and everything else. They were promised \$23.75 million; they got \$1.75. They were promised, for the design of the hospital, \$5 million; they got nothing. For the building of the stadium at Bacolet, they were promised \$28 million—which, of course, translates into employment opportunities—they got nothing. Mr. President, that has to be deceitful. If one promises them that, that is what one has to give them. [*Desk thumping*]

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

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Sen. N. Mohammed*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. D. Montano: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I come to the airport. Now, this is something that I really cannot agree with and here again we have a credibility gap. They are going to spend \$1.2 billion on an airport that I understand is the size of Toronto International Airport, some 16 or 17 gates, in Trinidad and Tobago. It reminds me of the movie where this fellow built a baseball diamond in the middle of a cornfield and the Minister of Works and Transport is standing and saying, “They will come. They will come. They will come”. Field of dreams, Mr. President. They will come.

11.20 a.m.

Mr. President, the reality is this, the Government knows that nobody is going to come and I will show you why. The Government said that the airport would be finished at the end of August, and now they are saying the middle of October, but the better part is, it is two weeks short of the financial year and the airport will be running, so you will think, great, if they are going to come—and I do not know who they are—and if they come—thousands and thousands—the Government will have increased revenues. Of course, the airport makes its money from landing fees. Last year, landing fees was \$21.9 million and it were budgeted to be \$23.8 million this year, an increase of only 9 per cent. So the Government is building 16 gates for a bare \$2 million, but they will come.

Sen. Mohammed: The PNM will come and deal with you all. It is only a matter of time.

Sen. D. Montano: The interest charges on the airport alone are \$112 million and Government’s subvention is, of course, \$108 million, which means without that, the airport would have had a mere loss of \$4 million, which I think is pretty good. Of course, with respect to the airport, we do not know when they are going to come or what they are going to do when they come. [*Desk thumping*] The airport is costing the people of Trinidad and Tobago \$108 million. Mr. President, let me just tell you—as the Minister likes to talk about pension so much—that would mean \$1,549 for every pensioner every year. [*Desk thumping*] That is what that means.

Mr. President, what is happening at the airport is happening everywhere and this is where the lack of trust; the lack of confidence; and the credibility gap comes in. I have a letter here written on November 7, 1997 on the Airport Authority’s letterhead and signed by the Chairman, Mr. Tyrone J. Gopee. It was written to a gentleman whose name I will not call for his protection. I do not know who he is and I would have to assume that he is innocent in this

arrangement. He is being offered a position with the Airport Authority and the terms of employment are this:

“You will be free to leave our employ upon giving one month’s notice.”

Mr. President, I understand this person was 57 years old when this letter was written.

“In such a circumstance, you hereby covenant and agree not to accept similar employment elsewhere until age sixty-five (65).

On our part, ‘The Authority’ covenants and agrees not to determine this appointment...prior to your attaining the age of...sixty-five.”

They could only terminate for fraud. Not for incompetence or stupidity or not turning up to work, but you could only be dismissed for fraud.

“We further covenant and agree that in the event of termination, (save and except for fraud...) this contract will be immediately honoured in its entirety to age sixty-five.”

Mr. President, his basic salary was supposed to be \$12,500 a month; a housing allowance of \$2,000; and an entertainment allowance of \$1,000. The contract is worth \$1.3 million.

Mr. President, I understand that that kind of arrangement pervades the National Insurance Board; the National Insurance Property Development Company (NIPDEC); the Water and Sewerage Authority, and Trinidad and Tobago Television, all over the place.

Sen. Mohammed: Friends and family.

Sen. D. Montano: That is what we are facing—to age 65 and if you are fired, you get the whole amount of your pay. Mr. President, you talk about credibility?

Sen. Mohammed: And poor people are suffering. Farmers in Aranguez cannot get their money up to now, from the Disaster Relief Fund from last year.

Sen. D. Montano: Mr. President, the Minister says that growth this year was 7.9 per cent, but it is clear, and I do not think that anybody on that side understands the factors that have brought the growth rate to that kind of level. Nobody there understands it. If they did, then they would be doing the right thing. Let me just explain this a bit.

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Back in the 1960's, what was clearly recognized was that Trinidad and Tobago had to meet a certain amount of competition from outside; we had to protect our currency; and we had to industrialize. In order to meet the challenges of industrialization, you had to educate your working classes and that was a fundamental. That philosophy was fixed in concrete, in the words of Dr. Eric Williams when he said that the future of the country lay in the school bags of the children. That is what he was saying and he was absolutely right then and he is absolutely right now.

Mr. President, if one compares what happens here, as opposed to what had happened in Korea and in Singapore, two things, had to happen and this is what had been attempted here in Trinidad and Tobago, but it was not as successful here. Firstly, you had to do two things, that is to increase the technical knowledge of your workers and your working classes, and increase the investment capital per worker. That is what was necessary. When one looks at the economic indices from Singapore and Korea that is what you will find, their indices far outstripped ours. When you compare ours to Jamaica, one would see that ours is far ahead of Jamaica, hence the reason our economy stands where it is now as opposed to Jamaica. So it is very clear.

Mr. President, back in the early 1990s, when the PNM was in office, they clearly understood what was the imperative. We had to meet the demands of globalization; we had to be an active member in the global market place; and a number of things were done in order to position us. The PNM removed the negative list; removed subsidies; privatized and sold unprofitable state enterprises; reduced tariffs; and floated the currency. That is the basis and that was the foundation that has brought Trinidad and Tobago to where it is now.
[Desk thumping]

In order to go forward from here one has to build on that, but when one looks at the fiscal measures over the past five years, what are they? What has been done to change anything or to improve the conditions of the productive private sector, the manufacturing sector? Nothing has been done and, notwithstanding that, the only thing that has given them a competitive advantage between 1995 and now is that the currency has depreciated from \$5.89 to \$6.30 and that falls on the back of the working classes and I had spoken about that before.

Mr. President, what has happened, for the most part, has hit the UNC administration by surprise. It has just happened and the Government does not know where it should be going and does not understand the nexus between

education and productivity. *[Desk thumping]* They simply do not understand that. The emphasis today has got to be on tertiary education—to bring the average worker up to the level of tertiary education—I am not necessarily saying university—but some form of active tertiary education. That is the plan and to increase the capital invested per worker. There are no measures in place for that. There was none in the past five years and none in this budget either. The warning is that if one does not go forward, one will go backward, because there is no standing still in today's market place. The momentum that was given to the economy between the period 1991—1995 is quickly going to run down. It will run down and we will find ourselves behind the eight ball.

The UNC administration has missed a golden opportunity to build on the platform that was given. There is no vision, Mr. President. There is absolutely no vision at all! *[Desk thumping]*

11.30 a.m.

To go back to one other matter we want to deal with: who is doing what and why. UDeCott, the Urban Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago is a company that falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing and Settlements. Obviously, it is there to build houses. What is UDeCott involved in? UDeCott is presently involved in the construction of the fly-over junction, the roundabout and everything else that is being built at the junction of the Churchill Roosevelt and the Uriah Butler Highways.

Do you know how that came about? I am reliably informed, from a very good source, that it is Mr. Humphrey's daughter who drew the plans. I further understand, and I am reliably informed, that the Traffic Branch of the police has rejected those plans. I am further advised that the Ministry of Works and Transport rejected those plans, but they are being built anyway with some ridiculous arch built in Paris, France. Talk about credibility? They want me to put \$15.5 billion in the hands of persons who will spend money that way? No, Mr. President.

I am running short of time, so I will just deal with one or two things. The fiscal measures, such as the Green Fund. How is that going to be administered? Who is going to administer it? With respect to the 150 per cent allowance for arts and culture and sport, this Minister of Finance is on record as talking about how there was leakage of funds through a charitable organization through deeds of covenant and so forth, so he cancelled that opportunity.

Those were to charities, but now we have sporting organizations that, of course, do not require any form of official recognition of registration anywhere.

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We have not heard anything about that. So, anybody who owns a sailboat, and I own a sailboat—I could get somebody to sponsor a sail for me and I could go sailing and they could write it off. Mr. President, this is nonsense! They are ridiculous.

Until he talks sense and says that those organizations which are registered in this way with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and under certain circumstances, no caveats. We do not know what he is talking about. I would ask the Minister, in all seriousness, to explain one thing. In terms of the Green Fund and this allowance, he says he referred to companies and people are asking the question whether he used that expression loosely or whether he meant businesses, because there are many businesses that are not limited liability companies. It is the question of to whom it is going to relate. I will be grateful if he will talk about that.

Mr. President: One minute to wrap up, Senator.

Sen. D. Montano: The penalties on interest; this waiver, this amnesty. How could that be fair? Earlier I said that this Government was unfair. The people who have paid their taxes and who may have been audited by the Inland Revenue Department and may have had differences with them, who have had assessments and have paid their assessments and are struggling to pay the interest and the penalties involved get no waiver, but all of a sudden, the guys who have been completely defaulting, they are saying that if they now file and pay up, they can get away. That is unfair. It is just grossly unfair. What is the rationale? Who is benefiting from that?

Mr. President, I know that my time has expired. I will say farewell to the Minister of Finance. After all, he said he is putting aside the \$415 million for another Minister of Finance and I have to assume that he will not be there anymore. It has been a pleasure speaking to him over the past five years. *[Desk thumping]*

I thank you very much, Sir. *[Desk thumping]*

Sen. Philip Marshall: Mr. President, I thank you for this opportunity to contribute to this debate in support of the Appropriation Bill in the service of Trinidad and Tobago. I would also like to extend to the hon. Minister of Finance my congratulations—and we have seen the opposite side of the fence sometimes in our various debates during these five years. I would also like to extend congratulations to the hardworking members of his Ministry in terms of their annual effort that they assiduously perform with considerable deadlines.

Mr. President, my contribution in this debate is going to relate to some of the challenges we face from a fiscal policy, a monetary policy, and I am also going to talk about competitiveness in the non-oil sector. I would also like to talk on the whole issue of communicating to stakeholders and, in particular, the importance of the economic tripartite. Overall, this contribution is really going to be about communication.

I have made the point over and over that a government of the day, any government of the day, cannot provide its people and its citizens with sustainable jobs. What a government can do is to communicate to them the challenges, the understanding and the transformation that they must face and give them the time and make available to them the tools to enable that transformation. Not all of our citizens would have the academic background to make that transformation, so equally important is the provision of some social and safety net for them to cross that bridge.

We, however, seem never to want to bite the bullet, and this is why, as Sen. Montano said, my contribution is about communication and communicating to the people of Trinidad and Tobago our overall strategy for this country. [*Desk thumping*] We have said so over and over, definitely from the Independent Benches.

What is a government of the day faced with, Mr. President? They are faced with communicating to the people their vision, appropriately enjoined by other major stakeholders, whether it be the labour market, whether it be the private sector or the public sector; their vision of where the country should be going. I am talking about a five-year vision and a ten-year vision. Where the country should be going. They should even make the attempt to begin to flesh out what may be preliminary benchmarks of performance; benchmarks that will set the policy direction. For example, in New Zealand, the governor of the central bank is held accountable to a certain percentage of inflation targeting that must not vary between zero to 3 per cent.

Inflation targeting may not be appropriate to Trinidad and Tobago, because in our situation where we are highly dependent on oil as a commodity, our variable that needs to be managed is, in fact, our exchange. Our exchange rate is the main driver of our inflation rate.

Mr. President, a confident government of the day must establish and paint for its people a journey that will talk about inflation rates, exchange rates, education levels, levels of competitiveness, what percentage of their export they hope to

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achieve, to what extent is there going to be pervasiveness of primary and secondary education reaching all levels of society.

Their plan must talk about social welfare, the plan must set out, in detail, the reform of public service and public sector agencies. In other words, what governments must do is to share with its citizenry this plan. It must manage people's expectations and get people to understand how their behaviours in the very long term must be changed to align themselves with that vision.

What is the budget, Mr. President? The same way they take the journey of a five and ten-year journey, the budget is like saying along that journey, if it is a five-year journey, we are going to make five pit stops; a refuelling stop. The analogy could be a grand prix event or a cross-country event, and every time we make each one of those pit stops, we convey to the public how much resources we have used, like how much petrol. Did we have to change tyres? Did we have to make unnecessary or unforeseen detours.

So, we may not have, at that first pit stop, made as much of the initial progress along our journey as we had thought, but the point is that everybody still knows what the journey is. They know before we start off with the second leg of the journey what we may have to make up, but again in people's minds we know where we are going. I am always reminded of a joke when someone is asking directions when one does not have a long-term plan, one is told that at a certain point in one's journey, one will see a fork in the road. Take it. *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, our policies, our engaging upon the people of Trinidad and Tobago to be responsible for themselves, the only way an individual member of our society, the only way a household, regardless of how well off or how badly off they may be, the only way they can share their own vision of what they may possibly be is if the Government communicates and reinforces what the vision for the country is.

We have to keep repeating that vision, Mr. President, so that we use the vision of a government as the overarching vision wherein we may plan, if we are a business, where we are going, because we have been told certain parameters or benchmarks that we may use.

Let me give an example. Let us say the government was able to say—and it has said it by the way—let me make this point clear, it is not that governments of the day have not done it. The point I am making is that all this information is available. It is available in the Minister of Finance's ledger to the IMF. The

information is there. The work has been done. What I am talking about has not been communicated. That is what I am talking about. [*Desk thumping*] The work is there!

In fact, Mr. President, when I read reports from consultations on work done by public sector and civil servants, the quality of the reports is excellent. I could never deliver reports like that, and I am not saying this as a jest. We have the intellectual capital to design and define our problem. What is it that prevents us from doing? What is it that prevents us from closing that gap between knowing and doing?

Sen. Daly: “Politricks”!

Sen. P. Marshall: I feel that if we paint that picture to our major stakeholder groups, if governments of the day communicate what they are going to do at the governmental level in the provision of the common environment, the provision of the collective services, people would be able to plan in their business, their family and their individual life.

Let me tell you the importance as a quick example—I was just distracted—of why government must share, say a policy on exchange rates. What it would do if people know that Government’s monetary policy and fiscal policy would lead to an outcome of stable exchange rates—which it will. What I am saying here is government has put in place a fiscal and monetary policy that has led to stable exchange rates, even though it might be a slightly managed rate or very managed rate—I do not know to what extent—the fact is that we have exchange rate stability.

11.45 a.m.

If the citizens of the country know that and if an investor knows that, he would know that if he invests in plant and equipment, if he invests in the real sector and creates real sustainable jobs and his earnings may be TT dollars, he would know at the end of a 5-year or 10-year period when he is now beginning to reap the rewards of his investment that his money would be worth the same. He would, in fact, have gotten a real return on his money.

If we do not communicate and share that type of information, another scenario of a potential investor could be this: Let me invest the money in real estate because history has shown that real estate may not have as fast a rate of return but there always is a positive rate of return and that possibly, if there is a blip in the exchange, inflation or interest rates, he knows that he will get a positive rate of return on his hard real estate asset.

What does that do? Does real estate create jobs? It does not. It may appear to us that real estate investments create jobs because the construction sector is activated and jobs are provided, but if the economy had to benefit between, say a real estate investment—I am not talking here about a golf course that, obviously, brings in tourism; not that type of investment. I am talking, generally, about people's behaviour in investing in their homes, *et cetera*.

We have to get the people of Trinidad and Tobago to so develop a confidence in their society and in their economy that they will be prepared to invest in the productive sector and create jobs. They will do so in the knowledge that the Government's industrial policy, the Government's competition policy, the Government's policies or interventions with respect to encouraging say, for example, the manufacturing sector and the export sector, will give them the required return on their investment and unless we have that long-term plan, that overarching vision of five years, 10 years or 15 years, we will not get the behaviour change that is required to enable a government to really develop the platform that is required in Trinidad and Tobago.

I mean, Mr. President, if you think about it, in the oil and petrochemicals sectors, there is foreign direct investment because they have—I am saying they have—to come. They do not have to come to Trinidad and Tobago because there are many alternative places to go but they at least have to go to a country where the hydrocarbon deposits are, so there is a natural reason why Trinidad and Tobago would be a choice.

But when you are talking about the non-oil sector where there is even a wider choice, where there is no reason, other than maybe access or very close proximity to a major market, a manufacturer would have to be assured that your entire competitive profile, both your workforce and your non-tradables, in terms of the cost of utilities—water, electricity, *et cetera*—is so significant, that he would be prepared, joining with a domestic investor, to put manufacturing and high value added plants in Trinidad and Tobago.

That is why, once again, Mr. President, it is not that it is not being done. Certainly, in the energy sector, the national energy skills unit; the whole issue of the National Training Agency; we are, in fact, beginning to build the institutional infrastructure to recognize the importance of training and development. We are beginning and we have to make a start and I agree with Sen. Montano's comments. Let us not be lulled into the false premise that the building of the secondary schools would mean right away that we are going to be able to produce

the immediate required level of those less fortunate, who have not come to secondary school at a position that is required as a base position to move forward. There is going to be a period and a base number of years where the graduating classes of secondary students may still leave some deficiency in what is required.

You would remember, Mr. President, in my last contribution in the Senate, I talked about the workforce and remember, those would be older workers. By the way, we have come a long way. We must look back to the past to see from where we have come and many of the lower educational profile of our workforce and it is just because of the fact that 10 to 15 years ago, people did not have the same level of access to education. The point I was making, specifically, Mr. President, was that a percentage that works out to be 129,000 people of our workforce—and I keep repeating that statistic—attended primary school, went on to their secondary and left their secondary school without one CXC. Five or six years of primary, three to four years of secondary, say 10 years of education, at a cost per student of TT \$35,000 per year—\$35,000 per student by 129,000. I am not quite sure what the figure is but it is somewhere in the vicinity of \$3 billion. Not that those people must not have been given the chance but, possibly, a realization of the fact that we have to differentiate into different streams. Sen. Montano talked about it.

In Korea, the government of Korea had this problem. Everybody wanted to go to secondary school and university and they deliberately had to put a cap on those going to university and send them through vocational streams because they knew that the ultimate building of their technological base would require members of the workforce who had that technical and vocational capacity. They made sure, in their long-term building, in the work with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and the other ministries involved in the social development, to insist that there was a proper balance between the long-term goals of the country and what the schools needed to produce and the importance of that cycle of development of the technical and technological institutes.

Once again, here, the Government opened two or three weeks ago—what is the name of the school? The technical—

Sen. Dr. St. Cyr: Minister Gangar's school.

Sen. Gangar: Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology.

Sen. P. Marshall: Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: The university of the Ministry of Energy.

Sen. P. Marshall: The university of the Ministry of Energy. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, there are many initiatives that show that we are on the right track but it still does not take away from my comment that we have to share and communicate our long-term plan.

Now, what is our challenge? This is what we must share. This is how we undertake the journey. The first question we must ask ourselves is: What are the visions and aspirations of the communities of stakeholders of Trinidad and Tobago? I would like to share with you some extracts from the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development's letter and correspondence to both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and, also, the visions as contained in the Tripartite Economic Compact 2000 and beyond and I certainly look forward to the contributions from Sen. Cabrera and Sen. John because I believe that the whole issue—

Sen. Daly: Which John?

Sen. P. Marshall:—of labour market competitiveness is going to be a key driver of the future of this country.

Here are some extracts of the three-year vision, the Medium Term Policy Framework vision conveyed by Minister Kuei Tung on March 16 in a joint letter signed by the Governor of the Central Bank with the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development.

Basically, Trinidad and Tobago's three-year vision included the following:

- To foster an environment of steady economic growth while containing inflation—which it has done.
- To establish a comprehensive social development framework that promotes human development—which it is trying to do.
- To generate increased permanent employment opportunities—which I do not see in the budget a focussed enough detailed measure to enable that to happen.
- To enhance the well-being of all citizens—which has been demonstrated, especially in terms of our older citizens; and
- To strengthen the protection and preservation of the country's natural environment—where Prof. Julian Kenny is just waiting with baited breath—

Sen. Prof. Kenny: And despair.

Sen. P. Marshall:—and despair for this to really take root and which the Green Fund, of course, is intended to fund.

Sen. Prof. Spence: To fund?

Sen. P. Marshall: The 10-year vision shared by this Government with the World Bank—so I am saying, Mr. President, that the visions are there. What we need to do is share them. Understand my point. This contribution is not about the work has not been done; it is about communicating it so we could understand it and enjoin with it.

The ten-year vision:

Increase the economic rents from the oil and gas sector—obviously, a vision that realizes the importance.

Facilitate private sector led employment generation and entrepreneurship and inclusion of labour intensive agriculture and export service sectors. Inclusive of this would be some strategies:

Streamline the investment approval process;

Remove the labour market rigidities;

Reform the agricultural sector; and

Stimulate the services sector.

Increase human capital through investment in education, health and social programmes:

Improve health care facilities; and

Improve the efficiency of social programmes;

Improve the delivery of public services in an effort to support private sector led economic diversification;

Diversify risks in the economy; and

Ensure environmentally sustainable growth.

The words are there; the thought processes are there; we have now to say when we are going to make the first step. That is the point. Everything is there. The framework is there.

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Mr. President, in any organization, there is a vision. I do not see there should be any difference between a business vision and a national vision and so, these comments that I am about to make, I feel, would equally apply to a national vision as it would to a business vision. The quality of the vision only accounts for 5 per cent of its success; 95 per cent of the implementability of a vision is the alignment of the organization to the vision. In other words, the organization has in place a leadership style, a management style and a style of sharing information and knowledge to ensure that that vision is met. The organization has in place a performance management system and a measurement system to make sure that the progress, both along strategic and operational lines, keep us on track.

12.00 noon

The organization has in place, a reward and recognition system, where the compensation structure, the reward structure, is aligned to the individual performance objectives of departments, teams or individuals. The organization has in place, an education and training structure to equip people with the new jobs that are expected of them. The organization has in place, a communication plan, so that all stakeholders are aware of what the vision is, what is the progress in achieving the vision, what little adjustments we may have to make in the direction of our journey, and that, therefore, the alignment of behaviours is in place to assure that the vision is accomplished with the least wasted resources, and in the shortest possible time.

Mr. President, we need an alignment of our education systems, our public service and compensation systems and our reward and recognition systems. We need an alignment of how we design our decision-making structure in government. The day has long gone by where you can afford not to involve people. We cannot have central decision-making in every aspect. We have to decentralize our decision-making in most ministries. We have to put it back out into the community. We have to make sure that every single public-sector-facing organization that provides services, gets surveys and feedback from the customers they serve, and that people who perform are rewarded and people who do not perform are exited. We have to change! We have the words. We know what we have to do.

I keep making the point: if, as a result of these changes, individuals in an organization lose their job security, we have to look after them. You cannot put somebody through the fear of being sent out in the street, economically destitute, because these changes have to be made. Do you know what happens, Mr.

President? You do not make the change, because the problem now is too vast to make the change.

Let me give an example. You would know what company I am taking about. This is a company somewhere in the middle of Trinidad that employs 10,000 people and maybe the under-performance is \$200 or \$300 million a year—say \$200 million a year. Mr. President, that company needs some organization re-design. Some very good efforts have been put forward, and plans are in place that could improve its performance substantially, but a large number of people may be affected. This is why labour market policies and government policies are so important. Because, if the initial view is that 5,000 or 10,000 people will be affected for \$300 million, just think if the change over in performance could stop that flow from the Treasury, could not that same \$300 million be shared among the 60,000 poorest households in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. President, when you have any state enterprise, in commercial activities, which does not meet the benchmark of market performance, what you are in fact doing is, the Government is being robbed of its money to institute its social and other development policies. In fact, I believe, in these conversations with the IMF and the World Bank, the hon. Minister of Finance has referred to looking at the whole issue of the role of the state. This problem is not a Trinidad and Tobago problem. Every single government throughout the world is saying that where the outputs of an agency are quite specific—where there is a lot of contestability to provide those services; meaning where you can go outside and get alternative people to bid to provide those services, where you can measure those outputs specifically, where there are many alternative service providers—start by giving the respective government agency the chance to provide the service, and be price competitive in terms of a comparator with the market. If they cannot do it, outsource it, because we cannot continue to have cost of services being greater than what they should economically cost.

Mr. President, a lot of people do not realize—although I said the foreign exchange rate is an important driver of price stability—we have also to consider the cost and lack, if there is, of efficiency or maybe any gap between required and actual efficiency in our non-tradeable sector. The provision of domestically provided goods and services—whether it is water, electricity, and service from government agencies, involving the greatest of all resources: time. You cannot have a situation where you are trying to encourage a specific sector in manufacturing to be price competitive in export, for example, and inputs in terms of utilities are higher, or that they kill themselves, they re-engineer their business

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processes—I am not saying that this happens, but it could happen—but they have to wait for customs approval either to ship or open a container.

We have to get to understand that time—the elapsed time to achieve and accomplish certain processes is a key ingredient of competitiveness. We have to align our public sector agencies to the private sector challenges together with the whole philosophy of the Economic Tripartite Agreement.

Listen to this. This is the *Tri-partite Economic Compact 2000 and Beyond*. I think this is exciting. My understanding of this is that the private sector and the labour market sector want to sign this—I may be wrong—and the Government have yet to sign it. It says:

“DECLARATION OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERS TO ADDRESS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES.

The social partners comprising representatives of the Business Sector, the Labour Movement and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Here are their stated values, basically:

- “(i) That tripartism is a feasible and effective strategy through which commitment to economic and social development may be achieved;
- (ii) The impact of globalization and trade liberalization will require all sectors of the society in Trinidad and Tobago to embrace change and consider all its implications for flexibility, adaptability, sustainability and justice;
- (i) The policy-direction for the country in such an economic environment should be one to ensure macro-economic stability and sustainable economic growth with social equity;
- (ii) The general aim of all policies and programmes is a better quality of life for all and should reflect a basic people-centred philosophy.”

That was driven by a number of needs. I would just read out one or two of the key ones.

- “(a) The crucial need at this time to increase the level of investment in the economy, particularly in those sectors where there is potential for generating sustainable employment opportunities, reducing poverty levels and increasing our productivity and competitiveness;
- (b) The urgent need to encourage a high level of savings in the society as a whole through appropriate policies;

- (c) The need to maintain a disciplined monetary stance, with the aim of maintaining price and exchange rate stability, enhancing the country's foreign reserve position and ensuring that an adequate amount of credit is available to the private-sector to facilitate the growth process;"

12.10 p.m.

Mr. President, these are just examples of what I see to be a commonality of vision by different groups: labour, the private sector, and Government, who have expressed in writings and meetings that they have a basis and a platform for moving ahead. Underlying every one of these issues for change is the whole issue of training and competitiveness. Do we really understand that although physical infrastructure is important and is needed—and this is not a criticism of the Minister of Works and Transport—in terms of bridges, roads and access, that just as important is the social infrastructure; the infrastructure that enables us to develop our intellectual capital to improve the competitiveness of our workforce and our public sector?

Let me share the definition of competitiveness from—I cannot remember her name now, but she was the head of the sort of American competitiveness and private/public sector body. A valuable definition of national competitiveness is the ability to produce goods and services that meet the test of international markets while our citizens enjoy a standard of living that is both rising and sustainable. Workers would be rewarded in line with the value that the global economy placed on their contribution.

Sen. Montano has talked about where we have come from in the past, where we are in the present and where we are going. Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago has demonstrated this competitiveness in the Caricom arena. We can see it when we look at our very positive balance of trade in the *Review of the Economy*. However, for us to grow we need a larger marketplace. To be successful in a larger marketplace maybe the benchmarks, the comparators of prices and competitiveness that will enable us to squeeze through in the regional games, may not enable us to squeeze through in the wide open Olympic Games. We have to graduate to being an Ato Boldon of manufacturing.

Despite the criticisms of a writer, a very well-known economist in the newspaper, I would like to make a recommendation that the *Review of the Economy* and the *Medium Term Policy Framework*, as a first start in the communication process, find themselves in every single school in Trinidad and Tobago; compulsorily. [*Desk thumping*] These two documents together with the

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Public Sector Investment Programme should be in every single library, and when the hon. Sen. Wade Mark has his way he will then have it on his website for people to access.

In Appendix 26, "Trade With Caricom Countries," let me show you the importance of the need for us to foster the encouragement, and these are very positive results here of the non-oil sector. In 1995 the balance of trade, excluding petroleum, was \$1,318 million, and in 1999 it was \$2,011 million. Including inflation this was a 53 per cent increase over the five-year period; a 53 per cent year increase in the balance of trade in the non-oil sector, but it includes inflation.

With respect to the oil sector, I have calculated the figures for oil products so you will now see the specifics. The balance of trade—this is trade between Trinidad and Tobago and the Caricom countries—was \$1,408 million in 1995, so it was a bit more than the balance of trade with respect to non-oil, and in 1999, \$1,869 million. In fact, it was less, a lower balance of trade than the non-oil sector. That would be, of course, because of the external shocks with the fall in the price of oil.

The figures might not be exact, but I believe the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development would agree, I believe that the fall in the price of oil meant that our terms of trade fell about 13 to 14 per cent; in other words, underlying the value and purchasing power of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar must be the price of oil. So when we have a fall like that in the price of oil—and the whole reason for the constant reminding of everyone that we must diversify—so often you see that delays in our Public Sector Investment Programmes stutter or start because it comes back to the same song: we had an external shock; oil prices prevented us from, in fact, having the adequate reserves.

Back to the point, Mr. President, 1995—1999, the balance of trade in the oil sector grew by 32 per cent, whereas in the non-oil sector by 53 per cent; this is trade to Caricom countries. So right now trade to Caricom countries in the non-oil sector provides us with a greater contribution than the oil sector. As barriers go down throughout the Caribbean, as we have a great need to, maybe, go into the Dominican Republic, as we sign these various bilateral and trade agreements, we are going to find that our level of competitiveness will have to be increased.

In talking to the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association let me say a word here. They have said to me that the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation, which is sometimes a maligned organization, provided them with significant assistance in providing the development opportunities in the past year

and over the past years. If in fact, we begin to look at the trend of increasing exports by the non-manufacturing sector we would have to begin to come to the realization that the benefits of very important decisions take time to be realized. The distance in time and space between cause and effect could be five, six or seven years.

Whether the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation or whatever government organization is so charged, there must be an organization that helps the non-oil sector to identify markets; identify the processes and the procedures to enter those markets; identify the significant aspects of competitive advantage, which our manufacturers or service providers need to have. The Tourism Industrial Development Corporation must be viewed as a collective service that an individual company will, of itself, not be able to afford.

We must have government organizations and government institutions that encourage that research into market access, innovation and development; that is the only way we grow. I am coming back once again to the same comment. If you look at our medium term framework, the various initiatives in the Medium Term Policy Framework and in the Public Sector Investment Programme, they are all there. What I find needs improving from the Government's side is a communication to show us how they are all tied together. What progress should we have reached a year from now? Are the strategies and assumptions that we have made correct? If they are not, we simply change them.

Mr. President, if a survey was done—[*Interruption*]

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. J. Spence*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. P. Marshall: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you hon. Senators.

Mr. President, successful companies are not those that have the best strategies. Successful companies are those that, when they embark upon a strategic plan, they measure the results of achievement and if the assumptions that they have made to formulate their strategies are the correct ones, they proceed; if they are not, they change them. In other words, it is action orientation and the link between the assumptions and the results that cause the performance. We need to expose in greater detail the policies that we develop.

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I take the opportunity to quote from the *World Development Report Finance and Development*, an article entitled, "Improving the State's Institutional Capability". The article is talking about strengthening policymaking and about Australia:

"Australia provides an example of reforms aimed at creating a more transparent, competitive and results-oriented policymaking process. Of particular relevance is the emphasis on publishing the medium-term costs of competing policies, facilitating debate and consultation within the government on policy priorities, setting hard budget constraints, and evaluating outcomes."

That is the point that we have constantly been making. What are the policies? Show us how the policies funded by the budget process are guiding us, as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, through our long-term journey.

I would just like to go through what I believe are some of the key transformation issues that we have to address. I would summarize our desired outcomes plausibly over a 5-10-year period along the following lines: we want growth and competitiveness in every one of our sectors: energy, manufacturing, tourism, financial services, information services, agriculture sectors. Social outcomes: we want to reduce poverty and the dependency on the state; we want to enhance the learning capability of our citizens and put in place an opportunity for possibly lifelong learning, which could be a very important impact on pensions; we want to reduce crime; we want access to effective public services and we want equitable opportunity for all our citizens.

In terms of governance and transparency, my recommendation is that the Government must put in place a strategic management framework, which it has in terms of all these documents, but it must communicate it to all the key groups of stakeholders. We need independent public authorities that may be responsible for regulating—like the Regulated Industries Act—the performance of public services companies to ensure cost transparency and other issues meet all worldwide benchmarks. We need to perform. We need in the public service to put in appropriate performance measurement systems.

If those are our outcomes, taking us from where we are now, here is the transformation gap that we have to close. We have to have different policies or share them relating to accumulation investment; we have to have more efficient resource allocation processes; we need to install market competitiveness in all private sector and public sector companies and we need a whole organizational redesign of our public service in certain areas, especially those that face the market.

Here, therefore, is a summary, I think, of an architecture of solutions that must, of course, be supported by action. Mr. President, if I may have the liberty to just read these out; there are about 20 of them. They are much less than possibly the 160 or 180 initiatives in here.

12.25 p.m.

The first one is that Government must have a ten-year vision and very broad supporting action strategies for us to have the stability and confidence with our economic community to encourage people to make the right investments. We must measure strategic performance at the annual budget presentation. Our budget is simply an operational annual plan that we can support by more detailed operation measures that may or may not be shared with Parliament.

Our public service. We have to install competitive pay and we must expect competitive service. Why the issue of the Salaries Review Commission is a political circus, I do not know. It is simply costing the country so much money not to have a situation where you are expecting certain outputs of a certain quality and productivity of people and you are not prepared to pay them. You have to make the first step, even though people may say that you are going to pay people who are not performing. Why are they not performing? This is my next recommendation.

Public institutions. Do we have the enabling infrastructure for those people in terms of adequate business processes, network software and so forth? In today's work, carbon paper, no stationery, typewriter, no computer, no communication cannot work. Our public sector must be brought up-to-date in the modern world else they could never perform, and we still spend the money. We have to redesign, in organizational terms, how we manage our public authorities, agencies and utilities. I made the point earlier on that the cost of our non-tradeables in terms of support and services could affect the long-term competitiveness of those very sectors that we are expecting to provide us with work.

State-owned enterprises. We must govern our state-owned enterprises with measures of shareholder value added. Any commercial organization that belongs to the state that does not add value destroys value. I know there is a problem that there are many state-owned enterprises that provide social benefits and are so expected to do and my response is: Go ahead and do that, but communicate and separate out the results of its performance, its social cost from its economic cost. Do not hide them, mix them up and bury them together and then there is no accountability for the economic cost.

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This next recommendation is what I believe applies in New Zealand. Legislate as part of the budget process that is brought to Parliament for each public sector agency the specific outputs, the unit cost, and the target outcomes of that agency. In New Zealand, every single major public sector agency, in addition to simply a cost and revenue budget has to specify its target outputs in physical terms—what the unit costs are going to be for each of those outputs and what are the intended outcomes. So if it is a hospital, it has to say the cost per hospital bed night is “x” dollars. That we are going to produce 1000 bed nights and when you review the budget performance in expenditure, what is worked out is that your budget allocation is sort of given on the basis according to actual outputs produced. The Government must communicate the alignment between its choices and the priorities afforded to the mega-projects that involve substantial borrowing in the national strategic vision.

Mr. President, of our total budget, the debt repayment which includes local and foreign debt repayments and interest repayments account for 32 per cent of our national budget and it is shown as a one line item figure. I really feel that should be broken down if that is possible, to the original purpose of the loan so when we present the budget, we analyse that \$5 billion according to which ministry benefited from the loan, so 32 per cent of our total spending is not visible in terms of what function.

Any major Government projects must not only show the loan, it must show on a life cycle basis the interest charged because of loans taken out for that project and an annual maintenance cost.

Hon. Senator: Like the airport.

Sen. P. Marshall: That is where you want a soft landing.

Training and competitiveness in the export-led sectors is going to be a key issue. Vocational schools, looking at the whole curricula.

Social infrastructure. We have to begin to outsource to non-government organizations and other community-based organizations, those organizations which demonstrate they can deliver certain social outputs effectively. I am talking about the Servols of this world. Let the Government get these organizations to help achieve its social policies.

We should implement the economic compact. I really look forward to your contribution, Senator.

Hon. Senator: The social compact.

Sen. P. Marshall: Sorry, the social compact, Freudian slip. The hon. Minister with his taxes and amnesty, I do hope after this, with this assistance from the IRS, that from now on we are going to stop the leakage in tax collection and tax calculation. We must collect the taxes due for the Government to fund its policies. We must enforce the law and continue to invest in the institutional capability of our state and in the end, the Government must communicate in such a transparent way to our citizens that it makes people and families hold themselves responsible essentially for their economic well-being. This cannot be done overnight. We are going to tens of thousands who, over the next 10 years are going to have to be taken and cradled through this transformation process, but we have to keep speaking it. If we keep saying that the economy is good, everything is good, everything is bright, people do not think they have to change their behaviour and we are simply going to reinforce the dependency on the Government.

I do not know what the population demographics are, but how many secondary schools are we going to have to build 20 years from now? I do not know. Do we really have the funds? So, compared with the immediate past, we have made tremendous strides; compared with the challenging future, we still have to build our nest egg to fund the massive transformation. A simple aspect of transformation.

We say \$1.8 billion is given to the Ministry of Education. I would like to know—and we should put in these techniques in Government, activity based costing—how much of the salary, say in the Ministry of Education goes to teachers who teach as opposed to people who do desk jobs and administrate about what people should teach. In other words, we have a \$3.5 billion personnel budget. Is 50 per cent of that budget a back room budget or a front room, on the line budget? We have to look at those issues, we have to eliminate non-value-added services and work.

Mr. President, with that, my contribution has not reflected on the detailed measures because I really think those detailed measures must be fraught with an over-arching policy, medium and long-term policy, so we can be assured whether the alignment between the resources we allocate and the long-term objectives we have to achieve are correct, sustainable and have positive contributions among various stakeholders in our community.

Thank you.

Mr. President: We will suspend for lunch for one hour. The sitting is now suspended until 1.35 p.m.

12.35 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.37 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Carlos John): Mr. President, colleagues, I thank you for this unique opportunity to participate in this budget debate; a historic one for us on this side of the Senate. Towards the last in our current term of office, the first for the millennium for the country, and our foundation budget as we proceed into our second consecutive term in office. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, permit me to get straight to some of the facts outlined in the measures taken by the hon. Minister of Finance. At first glance I was a little disappointed in the contribution made and some of the statements made by my colleague on the other side, in his contribution this morning, Sen. Montano. Sen. Montano accused the Government of having forgotten the poor and working class, Mr. President. Our view of the estimates—and I am not going on political rhetoric; I am not going on political hyperbole nor political hysteria. These are the facts.

In the estimates of expenditure for the fiscal year 1995, the last budget by those who are in Opposition—and that is why they are in Opposition today—the budget for that year 1995 was \$10 billion. Of that sum, according to the records, 23.6 per cent was allocated to human resource development. That being:

- Education;
- Training and Distance Learning;
- Health;
- Housing;
- Community Development;
- Social Development;
- Sport and Youth Affairs.

Those are the facts.

Our budget this year is \$16.2 billion. When one excises almost \$6 billion for past liabilities; covering debt service, pensions and gratuities, and charges to the

public debt, there is a balance of \$10.2 billion. Of that sum, our Government has allocated \$4.1 billion or 40.5 per cent to human resource development. [*Desk thumping*] I ask this honourable Senate: Is that turning our backs on the poor? Our social safety net—our social conscience—is geared to place emphasis on education, health, food and housing. Those are the facts, Mr. President; and our social programmes have been more than only job creation and wealth creation. It is this Government who alleviated the lines of poverty; who alleviated exploitation of the working class by increasing the minimum wage to \$7.00 per hour. No other Government did it in previous years. [*Desk thumping*]

So it is a bit surprising that the Opposition will come here this morning and mislead the country and this Parliament, by knocking our people-centred programmes, when they have not made any attempt in the past to match our performance in the last five years as far as social programmes are concerned. They talk about turning our backs on the poor and impoverished. We have enhanced and reformulated the entire School Feeding Programme. At the present time, we provide 80,000 meals per day to poor children of this country. We provide breakfast and lunch; two full meals per day so that even on the odd occasion where a child has to go home at night without something to eat, they would have had two full meals for that day. In many cases, I have been told from the head of the School Feeding Programme, there are normally overages and children take home meals. That, in my view, is a benchmark that is yet to be realized by any previous administration.

In knocking the Government's social safety net and social programmes, it is totally erroneous to say that we have turned our backs on the poor and the working class. We have done more than that. We have faced them forward and alleviated the suffering that they have been experiencing in the past. This Government has changed the way Trinidad and Tobago is perceived by international investors; the way Trinidad and Tobago looks in the eyes of the world. We are considered the trade and investment capital of the region, and we have emerged today as the region's premier financial services centre. Mr. President, as we prepare for another term of national governance, I am proud to say that our record of achievement, certainly in terms of the social safety net, is one that has not been emulated in the past and one that would be very difficult to follow.

I want to turn to infrastructure development for which I am directly responsible in the Ministry of Works and Transport under my colleague, Minister Baksh. Mr. President, in case the other side does not know or appreciate it,

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infrastructure plays a crucial role in facilitating business; in facilitating our competitiveness as a nation. Infrastructure is not just about asphaltting roads. That is a very myopic view. That is why we carefully went about our task at the end of June in writing each Member of Parliament, asking him or her to provide us with a list of the five priority roads in their constituencies. So we would address the country's infrastructure in one fell swoop in a macro plan, to come to grips with the problems that we had faced in coming into office. My colleague, Sen. Baksh, would attest to the fact that when he came into office as head of the Ministry, we had to countenance a backlog of 15 years of maintenance work on our roads. Craters in the middle of the roads; potholes in the middle of the major highways, causing fatal traffic accidents.

1.45 p.m.

I was a bit surprised when, in a recent paid advertisement by the Opposition, they alluded to the fact that our plan was to spend \$180 million—the total amount voted for this project, Mr. President—on roads in UNC areas. Well, having regard to previous press reports by one of the deputy political leaders on the other side, not the Attorney General-in-waiting, one of the other deputy political leaders, we were told, “This is PNM country”. So how come we are now paving UNC roads? I thought this was PNM country. How come we are now paving UNC roads?

Mr. President, naively when I came into office I made a mistake. The first projects that I visited, as the Minister responsible for the national road enhancement programme, were projects in Belmont, Laventille and Morvant, at the request of my very good friend, Sen. Shabazz. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] I would have expected that when this ad was put out, Sen. Shabazz would have made a public statement and said, “No, that is not true”. I am prepared to take my seat now and give Sen. Shabazz an opportunity to set the record straight, because if my leader, or anyone on this side of the Senate, had misled me or anybody else, I would have gotten up and said, “No, you are erroneous. You are misleading people. This is not so. You have to come straight with the people”.

I toured for an entire Saturday morning and the first project we did was in front of his home, [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] and the thanks one gets for it, for bending over backwards and, of course, being politically naive as well, is a full-page ad stating that we are spending all the money in UNC areas. I only hope, Mr. President—I wait with bated breath for Sen. Shabazz's contribution tomorrow when I know, I have every confidence in him, that he will make good and correct the record.

Having said that, Mr. President, to date we have also achieved an unbridled level of commitment in terms of performance in that programme. In two months we have completed 160 road projects and by the end of the year [*Desk thumping*] we expect to complete another 100. The only thing that we have heard from the Opposition so far on this is that the project is geared towards friends and family. So all the people living in Maloney are friends and family of the UNC. All the people who live in Belmont and Laventille are friends and family of the UNC. Mr. President, they distort the facts so openly, they twist them and they keep talking about friends and family. Do you know why? I sit here. I have been in this Government for the last three months and if one has a dinner mint, “you t’ief it”. They have to stop that nonsense and give credit where credit is due.

We have \$210 million to spend and every time we open—our contracts are done in full view of all the contractors or their representatives. We have made—more or less we have a marriage going, one could say, with the Contractors Association. We consult them at every turn in the administration of this programme and when this programme is finished, Mr. President, we intend to have the books and the accounts audited and presented in Parliament by a firm of reputable auditors. So when they talk about corruption and friends and family, I have one piece of advice to give them. Do not judge us on this side by the company they keep, nor by their own standards. Do not do it. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to turn to URP, a culture that was foisted upon us when we came into office and for which we are now saddled with so many problems. I do not like it, but Carlos John’s opinion does not really count. The people who work in URP, Mr. President, they are the ones who do not like it. At this time of the year URP normally shuts down. My colleague, the Minister of Finance, has made funding available. He says there will be no shutting down of URP. I want to make it abundantly clear in this Senate this afternoon that no longer will there be any more 10-days. It is 365 days; nothing less. The people of this country deserve nothing less. URP will undergo a metamorphosis. Starting this month, Clyde James is going to kick off with a seminar for URP workers, in fact, for the supervisors—transforming the URP mind-set. That is the name of the workshop—because the people in URP are appealing for help. They are crying out and telling us, “We do not need to live this way any longer”.

If I only work 10 days in the month, what am I to do with the other 20 days, lock somebody’s neck and live in prison for the next 20 days? We cannot continue to insult people’s intelligence and diminish their self-worth and dignity like that. So we on this side of the Senate, immediately as we get back into office, the programme will be to

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transform URP, get rid of that 10-day mentality and get the URP people back to work, make them productive. They want to work. They do not only want to work 10 days. They have to eat 30 days a month, not 10 days a month, and we have nurtured that culture, foisted it on people and given handouts. We say on this side of the Senate, that is too demeaning. So we are going to revolutionize URP, Mr. President. We have not had time in our five-year stay, our 60 months in office, to do it in our first term but you have my solemn pledge, Mr. President, that it will be done immediately as we return to office. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

No, Mr. President, just to answer an aside from the other side of the Senate, the Ministry does not have to be allocated to this Minister to make that pledge on behalf of the Government. We sit in caucus and we decide on the way forward. [*Desk thumping*] You see, contrary to the fragmentation on that side, we operate as a team here. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Montano talked this morning about job creation and where we are going and the levels of unemployment. All this political hype—jumping all over the place and not focussed, in my view. I am not knocking the Senator. It is just a personal opinion because I thought that, given his background, the contribution would have been a lot more pointed. Take the energy sector, for example. When we came into office, as you know, Mr. President, we encountered inflation in the region of 19 per cent. In our 60 months in office we have reduced that to below 12 per cent and our objective—[*Interruption*] It would be turning into 60 months in our first term. Our objective is to target lower single-digit unemployment in the country next year.

There are a number of significant projects to take place almost immediately as we speak. While my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, who will have all the particulars at his fingertips, will deal with it in more detail, I just thought I should take the opportunity to outline a few, to satisfy some of the disquiet that seems to be emanating from the other side. The shareholders of one of the largest conglomerates in the region, Clico Energy, Mr. President, only last week agreed to the establishment of a new M-5000 methanol plant which will see the employment of 1500 persons at the peak of construction.

That plant is the largest single investment in US dollar terms in the energy sector. It will have a production capacity, on completion, of two million tonnes of methanol per annum. The plant will use a Kaverner technology system, a proven system, a system that has already been used by the four methanol plants owned by that company and a system that is used in several of the leading plants around the

world. On completion, the plant will employ 350 people full time. Caribbean Nitrogen Company, Mr. President, has already started construction of an ammonia plant, CNC-1, at Point Lisas. That plant, at the peak of construction, will employ 1200 persons. Construction has started, so this is not pie in the sky, this is talking about what is on the ground, what is taking place as we speak.

Only last week again the board of directors of that company took a decision that they will do a second parallel plant. So while CNC-1 is taking place and under construction, almost immediately CNC-2, a second ammonia plant, will commence construction, again employing 1500 persons at the peak of construction. On completion, both plants will have full-time employees, 350 each. The real value added to Trinidad and Tobago, though, Mr. President—when my good friend, Sen. Montano spoke this morning about attracting new investors—is the fact that new investors have been attracted as equity partners for these plants. Two new investors who would be involved are Enron Oil and Gas and the world-renowned Duke Energy Systems. So already, because of Trinidad and Tobago's favourable investment climate, world-renowned energy specialists are looking towards this country to invest heavily in our energy industries.

The world market for ammonia appears very buoyant and the investors are already signalling that once market conditions prevail as they are into the long-term, a third plant is possible. One of our joint venture partners has a sufficient supply of natural gas to supply all three plants. But the investment levels do not stop there. The troika combination of Clico Energy, Ferrostaal and Proman, along with its other investors, is embarking on a further billion dollar investment in the downstream petrochemical sector and plans are already underway for a world-scale urea plant, a resin plant and a melamine plant.

So I think it is essential for the Opposition to know that when we talk about the economic future of this country, we base it on fact, we base it on negotiations that are underway and we base it on the fact that those players who we have brought to the table have credibility and will continue to maintain the agreements already reached, be it with National Gas, be it with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries or be it with Tidco—whichever agency with which they deal. I thought it would be useful to share that bit of information with this honourable Senate so that we can bring into perspective—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Shabazz: Mr. President, through you, I just want to ask one question. You spoke of one of our investment partners—*[Interruption]*

Mr. President: Sen. Shabazz, let him finish his contribution. The tradition is, he is not disturbed.

Sen. The Hon. C. John: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Mr. President. Senator, you will have your say.

Mr. President, I want to turn to tourism, one of the sectors in which the Government has decided to diversify the economy. I remember during the last debate, my very good friend who sits on the Independent Benches, who wears silk when he is on his feet addressing their Lordships, my very good friend—in fact it goes beyond that, he is my partner—[*Laughter*] was pretty savage on the Minister of Tourism, I believe, in the last debate on the Tourism Development Bill. I thought I should just put into the *Hansard* the plans that Government now has for the training and development of the human resource base in the tourism sector.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. President, when we came into government in 1995, tourism contributed 1 per cent to the country's gross domestic product. Today, in the short space of 60 months, we are bordering 3 per cent. Our objective next year is to push that to 5 per cent—and not only for my friend on the Independent Benches, but for Sen. Job on the other side. I just want to place into the record some of the initiatives taken as far as the development of our human resource base is concerned for the tourism sector.

In 1997—1998 we had 264 persons enrolled in the Hospitality Institute, which now possesses two campuses: one at St. George in Tobago and one at Chaguaramas in Trinidad. At the present time, there are 500 students enrolled, an increase in that number of 71 per cent. The courses entail a wide range of subjects pertinent to the modern tourism industry. There is the facility in place for scholarships, so people can pursue their B.Sc. degree in tourism at the University of the West Indies. So it was a little unfair, in my respectful view, when during the last time this Senate sat, I heard that the Government was doing nothing to train and develop the human resource base in the tourism sector so that locals could assume the commanding heights of the tourism sector.

Mr. President, the fact that one or two expatriates are now resident here—as the sector is in its embryo stage—does not mean that we are in no way patriotic. Of course, we are still patriotic. The plant is expanding at a very rapid rate and we need new skills. You could bring the people who you believe are eminently qualified to do it and I am certain that my colleague, Sen. Brig. the Hon. Joseph

Theodore who heads the work permit committee would have no problem in slotting a suitably qualified national to fill the slot. I just want to record that in terms of our development of the tourism sector.

This morning, the Opposition did not touch much, in any meaningful way on education, except to say that tertiary education is a must, but we want to go a step further. We believe that in the world of the future—we do not believe—we know—the country's intellectual capital and its knowledge-based industries will play a key role in our global competitiveness. Plans are far advanced for the establishment of a Science and Technology Park at Wallerfield and, in fact, we already have a few interested parties who are willing to invest in our Science and Technology Park at Wallerfield.

As recent as March this year, the former chairman of TIDCO—

Hon. Member: Who is that?

Sen. Mohammed: Is it Mr. Jack Warner.

Hon. C. John: —travelled with a team—I said former—*[Laughter]* of executives from the Chamber to have consultation with INTEL in Phoenix Arizona. When our plans were laid to the executives of INTEL and they examined the country's geographical location; the economic buoyancy; and the level of literacy, within 48 hours of our returning to Trinidad, a fax was received from INTEL saying that Trinidad and Tobago was now placed on their site selection list, as they scan the global landscape looking to install plants. That is precisely the first step that INTEL took in selecting Costa Rica. So the Government has made one stride in that direction. We heard you all say nothing about science, technology and the development of the country's human resource base. They kept talking about how many people the Government put in schools. That is only one aspect of it, but you have to get into the school classroom first, before you can get to quality education. The Prime Minister said it; the Minister of Education, the Acting Prime Minister said it; and I will only repeat it.

Mr. President, we are going in a certain direction, which is very difficult for the other side to keep up with, but we understand that. That is why they are there and we are here. The country understands that and our Science and Technology Park will embrace everyone. The Leader of the Opposition will tell you that he was invited to a presentation in the Science and Technology Park, because we did not see it as a UNC matter, we saw it as a national initiative.

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Mr. President, in talking about the Leader of the Opposition, I just want to make a little observation about the 10-point plan. *[Laughter]*

Sen. Jagmohan: Which 10-point plan?

Hon. C. John: Your 10-point plan, Sir. *[Laughter]* The Opposition has outlined a 10-point plan but they were in Government for four and one half years. If they had used 10 points per annum that would have been 45 points, but to date, they did not implement any. Now they are in Opposition and they want to come and tell this Government how to run this country saying, they would have done this, they would have done that. They were there before; why did they not pay public servants? They were there before and there were problems in the health sector; and why did they not do something about it? The roads were bad since 1956; why did they not do anything about it? Now they have all the answers. It is so dishonest and misleading.

Mr. President, what the Opposition did not do in Government when they had power and authority, they want to try to dictate in Opposition. It does not work like that. That is wishful thinking. The country is going to judge you not on your promises. One does not get any prize for effort. When the bell is rung and you get the political silver medal, they will not be on this side, they will be on that side. One does not get any prize for coming second. You will be judged by your performance in office—national governance—and this Government has a proud record of national governance and it is proud of that. When the Opposition comes with all these points, that “basket does not hold water”.

So they are promising all these phantom solutions that they will do this and they will do that—all the payments to public servants and the defence force are all in the estimates. The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development has elaborated on it exceptionally well. The provisions are there in the budget for all the public servants that the Opposition is talking about. There will be no surprise. Whenever negotiations are completed, the Government will pay immediately. We are committed to that. That is what honest responsible government is all about. That is what we are about.

Mr. President, I do not believe that we can embrace these false promises that have been made in a vacuum. When you come to the table, as the people say, “show me your motion”; show me what you have done. In order for the Government to get to that point it had to have been somewhere. If the Opposition could not deliver when they were there the last time, we have no assurances that they will deliver the next time around, particularly, when one observes that the

Opposition is returning, more or less, with the same team. If the same team did not do it then, the only thing that would have changed is the age of the team and that scares us. *[Laughter]*

2.10 p.m.

Sen. Montano mentioned this morning that the big problems had not been addressed; we are looking only at the small problems. I thought that a reduction in the country's unemployment from 19 per cent to 12 per cent would be noteworthy; would be something for the record books. I did not see that as a small feat. That is a very big feat. Seven per cent in five years and 80,000 school meals per day for poor hungry children? Is that a small feat? A minimum wage for people who were being exploited?

The confidence of the business sector in the strategies and policies of the Government need not be articulated anymore. The level of investment. In fact, between 1990 and 1997, the Caribbean received total foreign direct investment, what you call FDI, of 202 per cent. Of that level of investment coming into the region, 48 per cent came to Trinidad and Tobago alone—almost a quarter. Is that level of investment not indicative of the fact that the Government's policies are sound and that we are in charge of a stable and secure democracy?

In case the hon. Senator and those on the other side do not know, capital goes where there are the best incentives and capital stays where it is best treated. Trinidad and Tobago's track record for treating capital is very good. We have a proud record of achievement. We are ready to govern for another five years and we are not going back, Mr. President.

I thank you. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. President: Congratulations on the Minister's maiden contribution. *[Desk thumping]* Before calling on the next Member, I did not want to interrupt the Minister's contribution, but I think I heard somebody's cellular phone ring. Please, ladies and gentlemen, both in the Senate and members of the public gallery, switch off your sets. We do not wish to be disturbed by the ringing of your cellular phone. If that happens again during the course of this debate, there will be serious repercussions.

The Minister in the Ministry of Health (Sen. The Hon. Vimala Tota-Maharaj): Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution in this debate. However, before I begin my contribution concerning the health sector, I wish to thank the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development for the allocation received by the health sector for this year. We are all well aware

of how difficult it is for the Minister of Finance to attempt to balance multiple claims on the public purse and satisfy our requests. However, it must be noted that the Minister of Finance, during the past year, visited several health institutions across the country and is well aware of the requirements of our sector.

Mr. President, the health sector was once an almost dormant entity, sadly limping along. However, since 1995, a breath of life entered this sector and it has been growing from strength to strength. The visible evidence is there for all to see and note for themselves. Improved infrastructure, new equipment and supplies, increased availability of drugs, a new ambulance service and training opportunities for all categories of health sector personnel are just to mention a few.

There are 90 primary health care facilities in Trinidad and Tobago. Under the Health Sector Reform Programme, all these facilities will either be rebuilt, renovated or refurbished. Mr. President, before 1995, our primary health care facilities were generally neglected and members of the public went directly to one of our major hospitals for service. That is, clients went to the major hospitals for first point of contact service when they were supposed to go to the primary health care facilities. This trend is quickly reversing as our clients are now sensitized and trust the primary health care facilities to provide adequate service after a short waiting time. Not only has the infrastructure been drastically improved, but also, the necessary staff is being assigned to our health care facilities.

Mr. President, there is still a great deal to be done, but this administration is committed to ensuring that quality health care is available to all in Trinidad and Tobago. Primary health care is a responsibility of the Minister in the Ministry of Health, and I would like to share with you and Members of this honourable House, the development programme, for primary health care. I start with the Northwest Regional Health Authority:

George Street Outreach Centre	Refurbishment taking place.	Proposed completion date— January 2001
Success Laventille	Refurbishment and extension of existing buildings	Proposed completion date— November 2000.
El Socorro Health Centre	Refurbishment taking place.	Proposed completion date— October 2000

Santa Cruz Health Centre	Refurbishment and extension of existing building.	Proposed completion date— October 2000
Maraval Health Centre	Refurbishment and renovation of existing building.	Proposed completion date— October 2000
Las Cuevas Health Centre	Demolition of existing structure and reconstruction	Proposed completion date— November 2000.

These are just a few under the Northwest Regional Health Authority, Mr. President. I can name all, but I do not want to spend too much time. May I share the information on the Southwest Regional Health Authority:

Moruga Health Centre	Reconstruction	Proposed completion date— February 2001.
Lengua Health Centre	Reconstruction	Proposed completion date— February 2001
Cedros Health Centre	Reconstruction	Proposed completion date— December 2000
Penal Health Centre	Renovation and extension	Proposed completion date— December 2000
Fyzabad Health Centre	Renovation and extension	Proposed completion date— January 2000

I can go on and list all the other health facilities under primary health care in Southwest Regional Health Authority, because every single primary health care facility, district health facility and outreach clinic in Trinidad and Tobago will be either rebuilt, refurbished or renovated.

Mr. President, I must mention that we recently signed the contract for the designs of the new hospital in Tobago. This will be completed in October 2000 and the building process will commence in February 2001. In addition to the normal requirements of a hospital and what has been factored in for the Tobago Regional Health Hospital, the facility will include a dialysis unit, an ICU and a blood bank.

Under the primary health care in Tobago, with respect to the Moriah Health Centre, the land there was recently acquired for the Indian Walk estate in Moriah,

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so construction will begin very soon and Canaan, Bon Accord have been approved. Minor works and renovations will also commence shortly in Parlatuvier, Castara, Delaford, Speyside, Pembroke and all other outreach centres in Tobago.

Mr. President, I would like to acknowledge this afternoon, the yeoman's service and the fantastic job which is being done by the Chairman of the Tobago Regional Health Authority, Mr. Clive Adams. [*Desk thumping*] He is really performing yeoman's service at the Tobago Regional Health Authority.

Under the Southwest Regional Health Authority, at the San Fernando General Hospital, in 1995, the bed capacity was 653 and the daily occupancy rate was over 90 per cent. It must be noted that for those parents who had children in hospital, there was no overnight facility provided for our mothers who had to leave their children in hospital. In this year 2000, there are now 720 beds with a daily occupancy rate of 80 per cent or just under, and there is now an overnight facility for mothers. So, they do not have to go home and leave their young ones at the hospital.

For the first time under this administration, also, at the San Fernando General Hospital, there is a 40-bed paediatric ward, a 22-bed female orthopaedic ward, and a 22-bed psychiatric ward. There are six theatre surgical suites and also, the establishment of a centralized sterile service unit and a vastly improved accident and emergency department. The waiting time at the emergency department has now been reduced from over an hour and a half to approximately 15 minutes. This has been achieved under this administration.

Certain things which have occurred due to births and mortality at San Fernando General Hospital have raised concerns among members of the public and also Members of the Senate; in particular, the hon. Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt. I would like to share this information with members this afternoon.

With regard to prenatal mortality at San Fernando, the Ministry of Health was extremely concerned about the high level of prenatal mortality. The Southwest Regional Health Authority has undertaken the following steps to address this:

1. The establishment of a neonatal service. The equipment has already been procured.
2. Construction work on a new antenatal ward.
3. Eight new ultra sound machines and equipment have been purchased.

4. Construction of an obstetric operating theatre. The plans have been finalized.
5. Increased accessibility to specialist care for pregnant women.

Also, the information which we have concerning infant mortality for 1998 has not been completed by the Central Statistical Office (CSO), so they have not compiled all the figures for us at this stage. We do have the 1997 figures for infant mortality, which is 15.6, the figure which differs greatly from the 28.1 figure which was mentioned in the reply to the question on the Order Paper from the hon. Senator.

Also, in 1990, the number of maternal deaths was 13 and the rate was 54.3 which is calculated per thousand live births. In 1997, the number of maternal deaths did not increase. It remained at 13, yet the maternal mortality rate is 70.4. This has occurred because of the success of the Ministry of Health's Family Planning Programme in reducing the number of births which was 23,960 in 1990 and 18,452 in 1997. The reduction in the denominator will obviously have a rise in the rate. Mr. President, I want to reiterate that we have not received the final figures from the CSO for the past two years.

I would like to move on now, still in the southwest region, to the Point Fortin Hospital. In 1995, the Point Fortin Hospital had no ambulance service, no laundry service, no back-up power or water supply, and an unreliable x-ray service. In the year 2000, under the United National Congress administration, we now have an efficient ambulance service which is being referred to as "Angels on Wheels" because of the response to accidents and to the type of services being provided.

We also have a fully functional laundry service, backup generators for power and a backup water supply. [*Desk thumping*]

2.25 p.m.

Mr. President, we must also note that Point Fortin now has new x-ray equipment and there is also a registrar who is there at the Point Fortin Area Hospital dealing with gynaecology and obstetrics. Never before has this happened.

The Eastern Regional Health Authority—at the Eastern Regional Health Authority, the Sangre Grande Hospital was in a sad, sorry state in 1995. The Eastern Regional Health Authority now has an Accident and Emergency Department which is functioning full speed ahead and the waiting time has been reduced from three hours to 45 minutes.

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Also, at the Sangre Grande Hospital, new x-ray machines and staff have been brought on board and there has been a complete refurbishment of Wards 1, 3 and 4. There is also a well-maintained ambulance fleet of approximately 15 ambulances. When I share that information with hon. Senators, it is not information provided to me by the technocrats but actual one on one visits which I have made to all these institutions, or the Minister of Health has made to all these institutions and these are the notes which I have made from our personal visits to all our institutions across Trinidad and Tobago—the advantage of having two Ministers in a Ministry such as health, which always has daily fires occurring. That is life. That is reality.

Mr. President, the Northwest Regional Health Authority—St. Ann's Hospital. I was fortunate to visit St. Ann's Hospital on a recent visit two weeks ago. I spent the day there and I could spend a lot of time there, not as a patient, though. The environment is conducive to the care of our patients. I spent some time with the patients themselves—the younger patients—and this really touched my heart. I know we can do a lot of work there but a lot of work is being done and we have dedicated staff working at St. Ann's Hospital. Since 1995 when this Government assumed office, 60 infrastructural projects have taken place and have been completed at St. Ann's Hospital alone. That gives the Senate an idea of the criminal neglect of the previous administration when it came to the St. Ann's Hospital. [*Desk thumping*] Repairs to the roofs of nine buildings; improvements to the electrical system; refurbishment of the wards and an improved water system.

Sen. Daly: I thank the Minister for giving way so graciously. I think I heard a reference to St. Ann's. I wonder if she could indicate whether there are still young men naked and locked in cages in that institution.

Sen. The Hon. V. Tota-Maharaj: Mr. President, I did visit that area known as the cage. For their safety, there is such a place in existence.

Sen. Daly: The cage.

Sen. The Hon. V. Tota-Maharaj: It is not the cage. It is an isolated area where certain subnormal people are kept—if I am using the correct terminology—and it must be noted that these people, because of their ailments, rip off their clothes; eat their clothes; bite their skin and other various things. For their safety, sometimes they strip themselves. I do not want to be too graphic this afternoon, but that is what happens. They have to get one on one care. They have to be monitored all the time.

Maybe the Senator is referring to the picture which appeared in the *Trinidad Guardian* several months ago. That was mischief, pure mischief. That was done because certain people—and I asked how these people got in there because those areas are very secure. How did that happen when patients are at their most vulnerable? Patients are not in control of themselves in that condition and certain mischievous people opened the doors to allow members of the media to go in and capitalize. Do you know the psychological effect? I am not a doctor, but I have heard from the staff there, based in that area, the psychological effect and the type of heartache it brought to the parents of some of those children to see their children in the newspaper. That is not to be done. These people need to be monitored all the time but we must respect their privacy. We must respect their needs.

Sen. Daly: Well, I thank the Minister for giving way again. My question is very simple. Never mind whether the media should be there or not. Are there cages and are these people kept in cages or not?

Sen. The Hon. V. Tota-Maharaj: No. There is no cage, hon. Senator. We do not have cages for human beings. We have an isolated area for the safety of the patients. I prefer not to dwell on this too much because we have members of the families, if this is covered in the media, who would be aware of what was happening. I do not think if my child or a member of my family was there, that I would like to hear a prolonged discussion of the situation in which a member of my family found himself or herself.

Sen. Prof. Kenny: Thank you, hon. Minister, for giving way. I wonder whether the hon. Minister can tell us whether it is the norm of treatment and I would not use the word "subnormal". But is it the norm of treatment of people who have that disability, of putting them in isolation, in some container, or in some cage? Is it the norm in the Western Hemisphere in civilized countries?

Sen. The Hon. V. Tota-Maharaj: Mr. President, I am not sure if that is the norm. I have had the good fortune to visit the mental hospital in the Bahamas and there is an area isolated for those types of patients because they could do a lot of harm to themselves and to other patients. Also, I visited two of these facilities in the United Kingdom, so I am aware that this still maintains for the safety of those and other patients.

Continuing with the Northwest Regional Health Authority, Mr. President—the St. James Medical Complex. Since 1995, approximately 30 infrastructural projects were undertaken at St. James. The medical complex was considered one of the most depressing facilities to visit previous to 1995. This Government has

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undertaken general repairs, especially in the areas of plumbing and roof works and also a new fume cupboard and exhaust was installed. There was previously no fume protection for the chemotherapy mixing station. Also, a new skin cancer machine was recently installed and services will begin very soon.

The Mount Hope Medical Complex also falls under the Northwest Regional Health Authority. The Mount Hope Medical Complex was once called the "white elephant" or the "sleeping giant". Well, the sleeping giant is coming awake and since the merger of the Central Regional Health Authority into the Northwest Regional Health Authority and also parts of the Southwest, some changes have taken place at the Mount Hope Medical Complex. We are attempting, at Mount Hope, to provide some services free of charge to the public.

In the adult wards, free services, in 1995, were non-existent. In the year 2000, one medical ward has been opened up free to the general public. Adult open-heart surgery—this programme commenced in 1994 and in the year 2000, there are now 60 to 70 cases per year.

Joint replacement—in 1995, at Mount Hope Medical Complex, joint replacement was non-existent. In the year 2000, the programme has begun with approximately eight cases per year.

Renal transplant—in 1995, there were no cases done. This service was not provided at the Mount Hope Medical Complex. In the year 2000, eight cases per year and the programme is expected to be expanded.

Paediatric open-heart surgery—in 1995, this was non-existent. To date, this year, 2000, under this administration, approximately 60 paediatric open-heart surgery cases have been performed. This is free to the children of our country.

The Children's Hospital—in 1995, there was one ward open. By the year 2000, this year, all the paediatric services have been transferred from Port of Spain General Hospital to Mount Hope and three wards have been opened with 72 beds. If I can share a personal experience concerning this children's hospital. Recently, one of my nephews got very ill—he does not carry the same surname as me so nobody knew he was related to me—and his mother was in a panic because his appendix had ruptured. She took him to Mount Hope where she received service instantly. There are some cases where the service is questionable; some people have queried the service provided there but, on this occasion and on several other occasions, I have heard parents talk about the very good services being provided at the paediatric hospital for our children, the children of this

country. Sometimes when you visit that hospital, you will see numerous parents from right across the country with babes in arms, sitting there, waiting for the excellent services being provided for our children.

The Port of Spain General Hospital: the Port of Spain General Hospital also falls under the Northwest Regional Health Authority. Since 1995, over 100 infrastructural works have been done at the Port of Spain General Hospital. I spent two days of the past weekend at the Port of Spain General Hospital, not as a patient, but visiting patients at Port of Spain so I got another firsthand look at the services being provided at the Port of Spain General Hospital. It has changed drastically.

I would like to share with you, Mr. President, something about the intensive care unit which was recently reopened. In 1995, this department, the ICU, was characterized with equipment for only four beds, which were in poor condition and the services were unreliable. The hon. Minister Lindsay Gillette recently opened the new ICU and we can boast of a 10-bed unit. But I had the good fortune to visit that ICU, an impromptu visit to the ICU. There were seven patients there and I must share with the honourable Senate this afternoon, if I should become very ill, I would like to be taken to the ICU at the Port of Spain General Hospital. Before I could never have said that. I would have gone to a private nursing home but when I walked into that ICU, I felt as if I were in another country, in the United States or in Great Britain.

2.40 p.m.

There is state of the art equipment, efficiency and service. I do not mind getting ill now. *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]* This is provided free to our citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. It is good to see the type of service being provided at Port of Spain General Hospital.

Mr. President, in 1995 the X-ray machines at Port of Spain General Hospital were obsolete. In 2000 a new X-ray department with state of the art equipment has been installed. If one has to wait for an X-ray at Port of Spain, the most one would have to wait is 10 minutes, almost no waiting time at Port of Spain.

There was no CT scan in the Port of Spain General Hospital. The CT scan will be commissioned very soon in 2000 and all the services would be opened up to the public.

With respect to ultra sound, in 1995 there was one ultra sound machine in a sad, sorry stated. In 2000 there are two new state of the art machines to serve the maternity and general X-ray departments.

When I visited the Port of Spain General Hospital on Saturday morning, during an impromptu visit to the lab, there were lab technicians at work coming in to give free time. We do not know these things. The public does not know about the committed service of these people who give up their weekends and evenings to work. I would like to acknowledge the yeoman service being provided by some of the health sector workers in this country.

In 1995 the technology for the lab was obsolete. In the year 2000, we have purchased state of the art haematology equipment, biochemistry analyzers and blood gas analyzers.

In 1995 only two operating theatres were equipped to deal with surgical operations. Today we have equipped five operating theatres. Mr. President, I can go on and I can keep you all here until tomorrow, but I know my time is limited.

Mr. President, we laugh when we hear the mortuary and we say this is not important. This is a very important area of the hospital. In 1995 the mortuary lacked maintenance. It was one of the most depressing and disgusting places to go to at the Port of Spain General Hospital. We have now refurbished the mortuary building. One feels a certain level of comfort when one has to go to that building. Mr. President, I can go on and on about Port of Spain General Hospital.

At this stage I would like to share with the Senate this afternoon a very important exercise which the Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Authorities have undertaken, that is the backlog of cataract surgery in this country.

In 1995 the United National Congress met a waiting list of 2000 patients for cataract surgery. In 2000 it has remained the same 2000. Even though there was cataract surgery taking place, the list was building up faster than we could do the surgery. We held discussions with various members of the sector, and came up with ways in which to deal with this backlog in the cataract surgery. Finally, we started our cataract surgery this weekend.

Mr. President, the hon. Minister of Health, Dr. Hamza Rafeeq, went to San Fernando General Hospital to witness what was taking place and to participate in the screening, and also witness the surgery in San Fernando. I spent the weekend in Port of Spain.

On Saturday morning alone, when I arrived at Port of Spain General Hospital, there were over 250 patients waiting to be screened for cataract surgery. Yesterday we commenced our cataract surgery at the Port of Spain General Hospital. To date, almost 100 patients have received surgery for their cataracts.

[Desk thumping] Some have fallen through the system. Some may have migrated or some may have done their surgery through private means.

Mr. President, it was heartening yesterday when I went back to Port of Spain General Hospital to check to see how the surgery was going: whether it was running smoothly and what was happening. By the time I got there at 10 o'clock yesterday morning, 10 patients out of the 35 scheduled for yesterday had already been done. I sat with those 10 patients. Those patients are willing to give testimonials to the public about how they felt. They are so pleased. There was one patient who said for 40 years she has been going to the doctor and she could not afford to go for surgery, and she finally got it. This is service to our people. This is communicating what we are doing for our people of Trinidad and Tobago, and no discrimination has taken place. Everybody and anybody who wanted cataract surgery—we advertised on the newspapers for two weeks and members of the public responded. Even those who were not on the list were screened. If they were ready for surgery, they were scheduled. By the end of this year, we hope to clear our backlog of 2000 patients.

Mr. President, the hon. Sen. Danny Montano said there is nothing happening in the health sector. I would like to invite the hon. Senator and all our critics to join us out in the field one of these days. I try to spend at least three days out on the field to see what is happening in our health facilities and to get a feel from our clients, what they need and what we could do to improve the health sector. Today is the second time I have heard Sen. Montano mention the Health Sector Reform Programme and the IADB loan which we are now dealing with.

The Health Sector Reform Programme is a part-financed loan from the Inter-American Development Bank and part by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I have acknowledged it, and I will acknowledge it again: the negotiations for this loan commenced in 1994, under the previous government. Yes, we are in agreement that health sector reform is necessary. Yet, I still ask myself the question: if the PNM administration knew that reform had to take place and they had to do certain things to take the service to the people, why was it that the then Prime Minister decided to call an election a year before time, and not implement certain sector reforms that were necessary? Mr. President, I have to ask this question because we are constantly being attacked and knocked for this health sector reform. This reform cannot be judged at this stage, because we are halfway through the reform. This reform will be terminated in 2003. We did our mid-term review in June 2000.

Mr. President, when I listen to Sen. Montano he seems to be privy to confidential documents for what he has been saying about the classification of the loan. I am not sure what information he has, but I can bring him up to date on the status of the loan at this stage.

2.50 p.m.

I am the Minister responsible for the implementation of this Health Sector Reform Programme, so I am well aware of where the loan is and where it has to go. Mr. President, the health sector reform programme is working, just by judging the services that are being provided right across the country. It is just that due to certain information lapses or communication lapses the entire public has not realized that all the works taking place in Trinidad and Tobago are all part of the Health Sector Reform Programme. Every health centre and all the refurbishment works at the hospitals, all this is part of the Health Sector Reform Programme.

I am proud to say—and the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development is aware of this and he has commended the Ministry of Health for this—that the Ministry of Health on the infrastructural aspect of our reform programme is doing extremely well. We all know that the area where we have fallen or where our hands are tied behind our backs is the area with the transfer of staff from the public service to the regional health authorities; this is where we are having this little setback at this stage. Certain things have been implemented and we are finding innovative ways in which to deal with this.

We are working. We are doing work, and I appeal to Members of the Opposition, please do not judge a reform that is half way through its stage. At least, let the programme continue. The People's National Movement administration was part of this reform. We are the ones who have implemented it, and we would have little setbacks now and then, because we are dealing with human beings; we are dealing with a labour force and we are dealing with different variables in this entire reform programme. We are appealing to Members of the Opposition to support us in this reform programme.

Mr. President, the National Health Insurance pilot project is expected to come on stream in the second phase of the Health Sector Reform Programme. However, because of the performance of certain aspects of the Health Sector Reform Programme, the Ministry of Health has decided to commence a pilot project in the near future for the health insurance programme. Presently, the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs is preparing certain aspects of that for us, and also our staff is putting together, with the assistance of other members of the

sector, how we are going to implement our National Health Insurance Programme. Some may have heard that the pilot project will be launched in Tobago. We are hoping that will commence in the next six months and we will see how that programme begins and how that health insurance scheme develops.

The reason Tobago was selected was because the Chairman of the Tobago Regional Health Authority is very enthusiastic about the health insurance programme and also because of the fact that Trinidad and Tobago has three regional health authorities and it is much more difficult because of the movement of our people and other variables. So Tobago has indicated that they are willing to be part of this National Health Insurance Programme.

I would just like to touch on one or two other areas before concluding this afternoon; the area of training, especially training for our nurses. Mr. President, it is sad to say but in 1995 the previous administration stopped all training programmes for our nurses and nursing assistants. When the UNC administration came into office we recommenced that training programme and in the year 1996, 100 students were brought in and trained. We accelerated that programme last year and now there are currently 200 students being trained in this area.

As you know there are various categories of nurses and, hopefully, by next year when we come back into office we will have 400 students training per year, so we will have a fast turnover of training, and making sure that our nurses are trained. I have been holding discussions with the Nursing Council, the Academy and also the Registered Nurses Association and they have identified certain categories of nursing where they would like additional training or where they think we need to pick up the slack in the training of our nurses.

Our nurses have asked that we provide a Bachelors programme for them at the University of the West Indies. As you know, this year the budget approved a nursing administrator programme for our nurses and we hope that will commence in the new year. Our nurses are also looking at programmes for themselves and training opportunities for young people coming into the system in the areas where we are weakest such as in the mental health area and other areas of nursing, and also to encourage young males to get involved in actual nursing.

We have done a tremendous amount of work and we continue to do work and to serve the customers and clients of our country. Once we think of the patients—
[Interruption]

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

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Motion made, that the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. V. Tota-Maharaj: Thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. President, can I just ask a question of the Minister before she resumes? I think she said that the National Health Insurance Scheme would come into effect in six months' time in Tobago. Is that my understanding? The question I want to ask is, is there not going to be legislation required for such a development and is the legislation on stream?

Sen. The Hon. V. Tota-Maharaj: Yes, Senator I did mention the pilot project, but I also mentioned that the Attorney General's office is working on that aspect of the legislation for us.

Mr. President, mental health also falls under my purview as Minister in the Ministry of Health. It has now become one of my pet areas. Since going into the Ministry of Health I looked at what was happening in mental health and it was an area which was sadly neglected. Since I have been at the Ministry of Health we have been able to put forward and get approval from Cabinet for our mental health plan and also initiate training for our protective services. I am very proud of this programme. The Minister of National Security and myself worked on this programme—forensic psychiatry training for our police officers, those in the Coast Guard, regiment and fire services.

This came about when we held discussions, the Minister and myself, and there were certain cases where when the police officers met—how should I say it—vagrants or people out on the streets, they did not know how to deal with them, because they could not identify the state of mind or the frame of mind of these people. So we put in place a nice training programme with the help of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and a number of our officers have been trained and have now become trainers. Any new recruits coming out of the protective services have to do a programme in mental health training so that they would be able to interact with all levels of people and identify those patients who need to be treated in a special manner.

Mr. President, I would just like to let Senators know this afternoon that this Government has done a tremendous amount of work in the health sector and, as I mentioned previously, we are halfway through the Health Sector Reform Programme. We still have a lot of work to do and we have to work as one: as

Members of Parliament, as brothers and sisters to ensure that a proper service is provided to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and that our citizens get quality health care.

Mr. President, I thank you.

Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. President, I would like to start by complimenting the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development on his presentation of this budget. I see he is not in the room, but just for the record, he has said that he expected it to be his last budget, and I certainly hope it would not be, because I think that we have been very fortunate in our choice of Minister of Finance, Planning and Development. [*Desk thumping*] A large part of our relative financial stability is due to his approach towards dealing with the budget and his management. I think we should be grateful for this.

I do not think any of us knows if we are going to be here for another budget, it is out of our hands for most of us, but I would just like to place on record my appreciation for the work he has done over the last five years.

I also would like to congratulate Minister Carlos John on his maiden presentation—[*Desk thumping*]*—it was beautifully done, and appropriately controversial and very lively, and we look forward to many more contributions on national debates from Minister John.*

Mr. President, a budget debate, traditionally, should be an occasion that is a highlight of the parliamentary year, and to me and, I think, to many people who have been in Parliament for a long time, the purpose of a budget debate is to discuss policy and strategy, to set policy directions in respect of the coming year, to talk about changes from previous policy directions and then to chart new directions along with budgetary allocations for those policy directions.

Mr. President, it seems over the last 10 or 12 years that I have been in the Parliament, however long it is now, that this tradition is deteriorating and the debate seems to be turning into a lot of number crunching, which is unfortunate, because it means that we do not focus on the policy issues that we as people desperately need to focus on.

I have a plea to make to this Senate and, particularly, to the Government Benches, that during the budget debate in the Senate all ministers of government be requested to come to Parliament and to do us the courtesy of letting the Senate and those analysts who take the trouble to come to the Senate and to read the *Hansard*, know what the policies of each of the government ministries are and how these relate to the allocations in the budget.

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I am very grateful to the Minister in the Ministry of Health. I am grateful to her first for her answering my questions during the course of her presentation and for giving us some very strong pictures of what is going on in the health sector, but also for giving us glimpses of what the policy decisions are.

3.05 p.m.

In previous years—and I think I am talking about four or five years back, and Sen. Marshall has made reference to this too. The Independent Benches have asked over and over again for a very simple thing which relates to performance management anywhere and that is, that each ministry presents a written annual report which we can read and save the mind-numbing hours of recitation of how many cubic feet of soil is moved from point A to point B in county Caroni and how many telephone calls had been made to Tidco or whatever, so we can save much time, read what has happened in each ministry during the previous year, and just come prepared to ask questions on those facts which are relevant.

It would make the debate a lot easier, better informed and it would also mean that those of us who contribute to the debate could have time to get more informed queries and questions from the members of the public, because they all come and ask us to bring certain issues. It is not only that we would get the information we need, but it prevents the practice that has happened in the past—I am not saying that it has happened so far in this Senate, because it has not—of Ministers coming in and repeating things they have told us the year before and the year before that, not just what has happened in the last fiscal year, but the last three fiscal years hoping that we would forget what was said last year, but we do not, actually. We need to know what their policies are. We get glimpses, but we do not get a full searchlight view and it is like looking through a lace tablecloth. You get a glimpse here and a glimpse there and then you get some solid, but what we need is to be able to look at these things directly.

We had a debate recently on a motion by Sen. Prof. Ramchand about education and I do not think that I know up to now what our educational policy is in Trinidad and Tobago. We know about the number of places that have been supplied and the number of schools, and I am very grateful for this data, and today we got another glimpse for which I was very grateful, as well, about universal tertiary education which I welcome. As Sen. Marshall has assured us, “everything is in place, we are on the right track”, but tell us what the track is, because these things are relevant to all of us.

For example, while I know that we are concerned with tertiary education, with the education of all our students, I noticed looking through the figures in the budget, that Servol's programmes including the Early Childhood Programmes which do all the early childhood pre-school education in Trinidad for the Government—their subventions had been slashed by \$1 million from what they had requested in the budget. They had lessened the programme which takes care of many people who drop out of the junior secondary schools, not the ones who have now been put into these special classes, but the ones who drop out after that. That budget figure has been slashed by \$1,800,000 and Servol provides technical education and computer education every year to young persons who do not have the academics to get into other educational programmes. As for their three high-tech centres where something like 1,600 young persons a year are trained in technical computer-aided education, that has been removed from the budget altogether. I do not know how this relates to what policy glimpses we have been given; it seems to be contradictory.

Mr. President, we get a lot of data, but we do not get information and I am not quite sure that people make the distinction between data and information. Data are figures, information is information that gives you something to go on. For example, I do not think that the hon. Minister of Finance checks all the figures that he brings out of the budget. I expect that he is given figures by his public servants. I would not imagine that he goes through each one of these figures and all these towers of documents himself.

He gave us in his budget speech a statement which said they had set up 19 safe houses for victims of domestic violence. What did that mean to you? Did that mean that our Government has built, staffed and equipped 19 safe houses for women and children, men, elderly persons, and those who are handicapped, where victims of domestic violence can go? That is what most people took it to mean and that is a truly caring policy, I thought. Then I tried to find out where they were because the victims of domestic violence do not know where these 19 safe houses are. I have been involved in helping victims of domestic violence for the last 30 years and I talked to the community police and they did not know where they were and they are also involved in dealing with domestic violence. The Coalition against Domestic Violence did not know where they were, so it certainly has been a big secret and a very well-kept secret as to where these 19 safe houses are. I checked with the staff in the Ministry of Gender Affairs and they did not know where they were either.

We do have the usual Government community centres and in some of them—certainly not 19—one day a week for eight hours a day, there are one or two counsellors who sit at a desk and give some very badly needed information to victims of domestic violence for those people who want it. It is a valuable service, but it is not 19 safe houses.

I believe it is the Ministry of National Security that supplied the safe house next to the Four Roads Police Station which the Coalition Against Domestic Violence has equipped and has furnished. We know about that one, and I know about the several shelters and safe houses that have been provided by religious bodies and non-governmental organizations, but as for the 19 safe houses to which Minister Kuei Tung referred, we desperately do need them and if he was intending that to be a policy directive, I am extremely grateful, but it was numbers, it was data, it was not information and we need information. I am hoping that Minister Kuei Tung will, sometime this afternoon, return to this room, and some time during the course of the debate supply us with this information because we really need it.

I do not blame him for the discrepancy, because I do not think that he goes out like the Minister in the Ministry of Health and personally checks everything that goes into the budget as she does in her ministry, quite rightly and quite commendably. I do not think that he has time. I think the figures are given him by somebody else, but this is my point. I think one of the things we are not getting is the extent to which policy and the allocations tie up, and we need that as members of the public, and as Members of the Senate.

I would try to define my greatest concern which has to do with the investment of “social capital” and I have tried to do this in the past, but I do not think I have done it very well because I do not think the message is getting through. I wonder if I could take a few minutes and try to do this once more, Mr. President. There are a number of different kinds of investments and when you invest capital, it is not just money investment, it is not just bank investment. Investing national capital means a number of different things; you have “financial capital” and we have heard about that. “Financial capital” includes things like foreign exchange, balance of payments, external and internal debts, trade liberalization and all those kinds of things, licensing provisions that allow big retailers from abroad to come in and set up huge conglomerates that completely knock out small local retailers.

These financial policies do not come to Parliament for our approval, nor do the allocations that allow them. We have no voice in this Parliament in where all

this money goes to, and that, I think, is one of the systems which needs changing. In other countries, when somebody is going to bring an Act, Provision or Regulation to Parliament, they come with the financial allocations for that. We do not get, either the financial allocations to approve in the name of the people, nor do we get the right to approve or disapprove things like capital expenditure on whatever it is: twin towers, airports, whichever latest structure there is. I think of this as something which needs to be changed.

In addition to “financial capital” which is just one area of capital, we have the investment of a “natural resources capital.” Natural resources are things like oil and gas, of course, and I am sure that Minister Gangar will tell us all about that, but it is also things like forests and fisheries. When we talk about forests and fisheries, we invest in our forests by virtue of the attention we put to the policies and to the regulations of the people who look after them. It is not money only, it is money, yes, but it is also status, focus, attention and the attention that is being paid to the environment in relation to our forests. We all know how our forests are being over-logged and denuded. I see fisheries, where our waters are being polluted and I will return to that because I would like to talk a bit more on environmental policies. Those are national policies and we have to invest our attention in them.

There are also things like “productive capital”; this is the use of machinery, equipment, refinery upgrading and those kinds of things. There is “infrastructural capital” and “human capital”. We have had some discussion today about “human capital” and I was grateful for that, because it includes things like tertiary training, technical training, putting money into pensions and social security which is an admirable thing and I think those provisions are very admirable ones in this budget.

I listened very carefully to Sen. Carlos John talk about the 350 permanent jobs which we were going to get from one of the methanol projects and another 350 from urea and another from resins and so forth which added up, I think to 1,050 permanent jobs, thereby putting an enormous amount of “money capital” and “infrastructure capital” in setting up training, which will provide Trinidad and Tobago’s citizens with the technical training to attract foreign investment—because we would have trained literate people. But if you try to work out the ratio between the “money capital” and the “infrastructural capital” and the result in terms of jobs, we would realize that we are back to the trickle-down economic theory where all of this is supposed to help people generally. It does not happen anywhere in the world, but we still have to go ahead, because we still want to

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attract investment. While we are doing that, my first impulse—had it not been a maiden speech—would have been to ask the hon. Senator, whether or not we are going to put in environmental and pollution controls with all the new happenings in the industrial sector and I want to come back to that.

3.20 p.m.

I would also like to concentrate, if I can, just briefly, on what my major concern is. I have mentioned this before and that is investment in what is called social capital. I am not talking about money. Social capital—if I can perhaps use words that are more elegant than my own. Mr. President, I am reading from *Development Strategies Macro Economic Policies written by Stefan De Vilder and published by Radde Barnen in Stockholm, Sweden*. This is in English. They are describing here what “social capital” is. One of my problems is that I have not made it clear enough why I am concerned with this.

“Social capital” includes parliamentary democracy; a free press; respect for human rights; norms for social interaction; systems for rapid dissemination of new ideas. I think that Sen. Marshall was getting to this when he talked about communication; trade unions; a myriad of large and small social organizations; NGOs that work; a judiciary system which, by and large, upholds law and justice and other institutions. This is what is called social capital.

It is more egalitarian in character than other forms of capital because other forms of capital, such as financial and productive capital are usually owned by individuals or by the state. “Social capital” belongs to everybody. It is what gives you confidence in the institutions that run your country. It is what gives you confidence that whether you have money or you do not have money, that you will get a fair deal from the judiciary, from the press, from the trade unions, and from the Senate.

Mr. President, I stand here in this room every week and I look at my fellow Senators. Over the years I have worked with them and I have come to admire and respect and be very fond of them, and I know that they are human beings, and I know that they have families, and I know they have friends. I am quite sure the same thing that happens to them happens to me. That is, when we pick up the free press, or issues are debated, that we get newspaper articles which come out like the ones over the weekend; this is just for one weekend in the *Sunday Newsday* of September 10, about “Rowley charges multi-million dollar airport corruption; “Cabinet behind the rape of Treasury;” another one by John Eckstein about “Cabinet to shoulder the blame for T&TEC ‘dark age’.” These go on and on. “Remember the oil that spilled?” “The Govt has ‘cocoa to hide’”; “People are unhappy with Government’s work on crime”.

People who are our friends, or members of our family, come to us and say, “What are you people in the Senate doing about this?” They were specifically saying to me, “What are you going to do?” What are our independents going to do about this? Are you raising all these issues? What can you do? When I try to explain the nature of a budget debate they just say, “Well, why are you in the Senate anyway? What do you people do? What use are you?” And why they say this is because they see these issues being raised, they do not see answers coming and they lose confidence in the integrity of Parliament; in the usefulness, not just of the Senate but of the financial systems, the Tenders Board, all those institutions which, they are told, are here to protect their interests from the service commissions going on through.

Mr. President, when I make a plea for investment in social capital, I am not talking about giving us more money to put into this or that. More money is just part of it. What I am asking for is genuine attention to be paid to policy issues which develop the confidence of people in this country in the integrity of the institutions that we are running. With all of these allegations which have been made over the last few days in the press, I hope that the Ministry of National Security has a policy. I hope that the call for investigations will take place into whether or not there was mismanagement and corruption, as is alleged, I hope that the Ministry of National Security has invested enough in the Fraud Squad, and in the police so that they have the expertise to be able to detect it. And I hope—as does every other citizen in the country—that if these allegations are proven true, that appropriate criminal action would be taken. If they are false, I hope that appropriate action would be taken to expose the fact that they are false. But whatever action is taken, we cannot sit back and not reply and not comment. I do not have the expertise; I do not think any of us here has the expertise to be able to say, “yes, these are true” or “yes, these are false”.

I am certainly not an accounting person, and I do not think that any of us here can do anything very much more than to query the numbers. I am not in a position to sit with the Government auditors and go through line after line of all these books to find out if somebody “cooked the books.” All I can do is put my faith in those who run the system. Presumably, those people in the Ministries who dealt with this are the same ones who have been dealing with the last three administrations under which I have served. And every single budget speech we get, there are these allegations of misuse of funds. Either all three administrations have been in collusion with people who are misusing funds, or all the allegations are merely political figures of speech, or there is a lot of mismanagement. I do not

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know, Mr. President. That is not the point. The point is, that we are losing the public's confidence in Parliament, in the Judiciary, in the ministries, in our institutions in this country including the free press, because we get allegations about press manipulations, and are they really manipulating?

All those things make up a democracy; and we are allowing our social capital to be dissipated and to be devalued. I do not think that there is anyone in this room who will say, honestly, if they care to be honest, that when their parents were their age their parents had as little confidence as they have in security in their communities. Did your parents feel more secure in their communities than you feel? Did your parents have more faith in the integrity of the police and the integrity of the courts? Did your parents have more confidence that the Government, by and large, managed finances well? Did your parents feel more that the press, at least, gave a reasonably unbiased view of what was going on? If you have to say, "yes" to this, then you have to say it is time we do something. Because what are we going to leave to our children in terms of "social capital"? These are the things that keep communities together. And there are also things, incidentally, which mean that—and I am quoting here again.

"A society rich in social capital is better equipped to solve conflicts without recourse to violence and dramatic changes in political power and economic policies."

Let us not forget that it is when people have most lost their faith in their institutions that there are attempts at violent and dramatic changes in political power. Every one of us in this country has seen this in the last 20 to 30 years.

3.30 p.m.

It says that social capital reduces transaction costs in the economy and creates a climate in which productive investment and employment prosper. In other words, if supported by social capital, other forms of capital are better utilized.

Mr. President, this is really my plea here today, and what I am looking for is a change in the system. When I ask about policies, amongst the policies that I would look for which we have not got, and I hope this budget debate would give us one, is a policy statement on the environment. As near as I can ascertain, and maybe Prof. Kenny can tell me whether I am right or not, there is either no policy on the environment in this country or the people who are responsible for it are being criminally negligent in carrying it out, in which case they should give clear and open explanations as to why they are not carrying it out or they should

be removed, as Sen. Marshall said this morning, and we should put people in there to perform. But, have we given them the chance?

Is it that we have an Environmental Management Authority that has absolutely no authority at all? Is it that they are not carrying out environmental policy because we have environmental legislation which has been lost somewhere in Parliament and has never actually been passed? If I recall, the last amendments to the Environmental Management Act were brought here in November of 1999—am I correct? And they got lost somewhere. They have never been passed so we do not have an environmental commission.

Sen. Daly: We passed it.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: Well then, where is the commission if it was passed? We have no commission that has been set up and, as a result, near as I can see, private companies are doing their own environmental impact assessments to self-justify whatever they are doing and there is nobody to say them “nay” because we do not have an environmental commission. *[Interruption]* Well, perhaps we have got a board of directors but we do not have an environmental commission as far as I know. As I recall, back in 1995 we passed an Act that said within three years, regulations would be passed and an environmental commission would be set up. At least, Mr. President, we seem to have the beginnings of a recognition that we must have a general and effectively monitored policy in the establishment of the Green Fund, and I thank Mr. Kuei Tung for that.

Sen. Prof. Spence: That is a distraction.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: It may be a distraction, as one of its detractors has said, but the fact is, even if it is only a Band-Aid where we need radical surgery, it is attention being focused on the fact that we need to have environmental change.

I have mentioned previously, and I want to read into the record from *Risks in Chemical Industries*, a report done by Drs. H. Farabi and I. Ramroop. It is titled “Health Risks and Occupational Health and Safety Unreliability in Chemical Industries” and attached to this is Mortality Rates in Polluted and Non-Polluted Areas for 1993 and Over the Period 1983—1992. I have already referred in this respect to the Point Lisas estate. The industrial development, which Minister John is so kind to point out is now getting larger and larger and has been more and more attracting industries into Trinidad:

“...has resulted in the siting of 14 industrial estates in the western portion of the country, the home of 80 % of a population of 1.2 million.”

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Mr. President, this includes you and me and probably everybody else in this room in the very polluted areas. Those are areas that—I do not know when was the last time that you had the privilege or the honour of going to work for a day in the Point Lisas area, but I can assure you that every time I do, when I come back and I lick my lips, I can taste metal. When one works there every day—listen to these figures: in the polluted areas, particularly in the polluted industrial areas, the mortality rate for cancer is 260.5 versus 50.7 in non-polluted areas. For pulmonary tuberculosis it is 8.9 in polluted areas versus 0.45 in non-polluted areas. I could go down the list.

Acute myocardial infarction—111.3 in polluted areas to 56.9 in non-polluted areas. Diseases of the respiratory system—these are mortality rates. People are dying. This is not just getting ill 118 to 31.7 and so forth. The difference in the rate of leukaemia is 1,233 per cent. For TB it is 1,977 per cent and for atherosclerosis it is a 1,421 per cent increase in the polluted areas over the non-polluted areas. Yet, we still do not have an Occupational Safety and Health Act. It is 25 years since the first draft came out and has been circulated for comment, yet we still do not have one. We have still not invested in a proper Factory Inspectorate, which is one of the vehicles with which we check pollution.

The idea of a Green Fund is a good first small step but we need a Factory Inspectorate that can grade toxic emissions from all these fantastic new high-tech plants that are coming in, and tax them accordingly. I do not know why we have to tax an ice-cream parlor, which does not pollute anything, to help offset the cost of lead emissions or lead soaking into the ground. I think what we should do, if people want to invest in these kinds of industries, they should put their money where their mouth is.

Skin-deep beautification is one thing. I agree we need to stop the littering that goes on in this country. It is disgusting, but I think that the money that is being raised from this fund should be higher. I think it should be pollution which should go to medical coverage, income loss compensation and relocation expenses for those who have already suffered from these pollution-related diseases. I think that they should also go to emission control facilities for plants for the entire area. Also, I would say for institutions like boat-building and maintenance systems, hotels and restaurants, all the marvellous hospitality industry things which Sen. John hopes will now bring in 5 per cent of our revenue, the money should be used in stopping their toxic emissions—the sewage that goes into our waters so that we are all eating fish and shrimp that have been caught in polluted waters.

We are destroying our natural reefs. This is where the money should be going: to the control of pollution and helping the environment. As far as I know, absolutely nothing has been done to repair the sewage treatment plants in Tobago. The last I heard, every single beach in Tobago was, in fact, polluted to some extent, and I have very personal interest in what happens on beaches in Tobago because my family live and swim there. These are small children about whom we are talking. It is not just the tourists though I am concerned about them too. I am very concerned about Tobago.

I am concerned about Tobago for many reasons, but certainly environmental problems are among the reasons. I wonder if the Minister would be so kind, and I am really asking if he would be so kind in this case, to let us know in relation to Tobago, because I was not quite clear from some of the controversy, either in his original budget statement or what has been said recently, whether or not services to Tobago in the budget, in other words for the Judiciary, for providing judges, national security, immigration, police, civil aviation, meteorology, all those things, foreign affairs, legal affairs, sport and public utilities come into it, if those are a charge on the national coffers of Trinidad and Tobago or do those come out of the allocation to the Tobago House of Assembly? In other words—*[Interruption]* They do not? You mean, Trinidad and Tobago pays for it?

Well, in that case could he let us know how much of the Government budget, apart from the allocation to the THA, goes into providing Tobago with all these services and so forth? Can he tell us—because again this is one of these “confidence-in-our-institutions” things—what this Government plans to do to address the lack of accountability that seems to exist with the Tobago House of Assembly in terms of spending public funds and not answering for them; not being able to pay teachers because recurrent expenditure has been used for capital expenditure and *vice versa*? Do we intend to just let this go on and on, or are there systems in place that will return the confidence of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in how funds are spent in Tobago? We are losing social capital. Our confidence is being devalued. These are some of the policy things that we need to know.

Mr. President, I have not really asked or intended in this presentation to talk very much about domestic violence because I have spent half the year talking about domestic violence. However, there are a couple of questions that I feel I must ask. While I recognize that Government has made a number of statements, very commendable statements, about their concern for domestic violence, when I look in the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year 2000/2001, and I try to

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find what moneys have been allocated to fight domestic violence, I notice that 0.5 per cent has been allocated to the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs, which means this covers both culture and gender affairs in which we get the domestic violence unit.

I mentioned earlier that the 19 safe houses do not exist. We have, what is it, 14 drop-in centres—[*Interruption*—22 drop-in centres, but they are not safe houses. They are places that are staffed for eight hours a day and the Ministry has never been given the allocation to do what it wants to do, and what it needs to do in order to help deal with the problem of domestic violence. That is a very small percentage of what is needed. There are five major pieces of legislation coming up within the next three weeks, I hope, dealing with children and dealing with the many abandoned children, the abused children, the children whose—there have always been children whose fathers did not remember that they had anything to do with producing them. We are now getting mothers who have been driven to that stage of desperation where they have abandoned children as well.

We will be setting up a Children's Authority where children who are at risk will have safe houses to which they can go and be taken care of, but I do not see allocation in the budget for the establishment of the machinery to deal with this. We have policies being developed, legislation being developed, to deal with orphanages, to deal with homes for the elderly and to deal with youthful offenders. We do not incidentally, Mr. President, have any institutional establishment for young girls who are youthful offenders. We only have such facilities for young men. In other words, for boys between the ages of 14 and 18 we have the Youth Training Centre. There is no place to send girls who are used as drug mules or otherwise get into criminal acts.

This is in the year 2000, when we have a new millennium, and therefore those girls end up sometimes on the street, sometimes in the women's prison, usually in conditions which are going to lead them directly into restarting the cycle of domestic violence. Sen. Marshall's vision of a productive workforce which is to come from the whole country is also going to come from the children, these children who have been abandoned and are children of young girls who have ended up in trouble and have nowhere to go. They do not have anywhere to go if they are drug offenders, they do not have anywhere to go if they are criminal offenders and we are in the year 2000.

I would like to get, if I could, and if the Minister would be so gracious, an idea of how much in his budget has been allocated to the community police to assist in

the work that they have to do—including their transport—to assist in training. We have been told in a public statement by, I cannot remember if it was the Minister of National Security or the Commissioner of Police, that all new entrants into the police force are now getting psychological screening so that incidents of police overreaction will no longer happen. I have gathered, and it is simple logic, that since the police service has one qualified psychiatrist to deal with some 4,000 people and that 300 or 400 at a time come in as recruits, he manages to be able to psychologically test these people for five minutes each, where any normal psychological test takes between 45 and 90 minutes. I would like to know what allocations are being made to improve that situation.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. President, once again, if I can just return to where I started, I think that it is very important that we get a grip on the purpose for which a budget debate is held, and that is to deal with policy in relation to ministries. I repeat my request to the Government of this country to make sure that all of its Ministers come here prepared to give us policy statements as to what are their ministry's policies. We should not wait until election documents come out. This should be a standard feature.

We have talked over and over again about joint committees being set up to oversee different ministries. Once again, I ask that we get a formal detailed written report from each ministry before the budget debate as to what their activities have been over the previous years, so that this debate will not become just a litany of what happened, and how many roads were built and so on, and we could actually have a debate on the issues.

Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mahadeo Jagmohan: Mr. President, I wish at this juncture to join the discussions taking place in this Parliament. Before I proceed, through you, and with your permission, I wish to congratulate Sen. Carlos John, the Junior Minister in the Ministry of Works and Transport on his maiden speech. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, on this occasion, because of what an unofficial group is saying out there, and what is being said through the grapevine, it could very well be that some of us are making our last contribution in this Parliament. I say this against the background that an unofficial group is saying—through the grapevine—that at the culmination of this debate, the hon. Prime Minister will ask the President of the Republic to prorogue Parliament, and he will name a date for election. I say it against that background, because there are many people of an unofficial group talking about this.

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Mr. President, however, that being so, I am embracing the opportunity to put on record my thinking on the presentation of the hon. Minister. Before I do this Sir—as this could very well be the last opportunity that I will have to do this let me say that if I were not appointed a Member of this Parliament, I would not have known that the most efficient group of public servants that I have come across is the Parliament staff. [*Desk thumping*] Those in the administration section; the *Hansard* section; and all the other sections, including the pantry, kitchen and dining room staff. They have all been caring, efficient and doing their work with devotion to duty. They are not only doing it because they have to do it; but they are doing it with love for people. I congratulate them for their efficiency and devotion to duty. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, I have also noticed that there are not many changes with respect to the security personnel in Parliament. They too have been very caring and efficient—those on the outside and those on the inside. We congratulate and commend them for their efficiency and devotion to duty.

Mr. President, it has become habitual for the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, in his wrapping up, to ignore what I have to say. [*Interruption*] I do not have a problem with that. I have a very large constituency of people in Trinidad and Tobago in every corner, but I do have a problem. Perhaps, as the old saying goes “different strokes for different folks” is applicable to the performance of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development. Mr. President, very definitely, I am not challenging the educational qualification of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, which is beyond me, but I am challenging the manner in which this budget has been written. It is inconsistent and the language is incoherent.

Now, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development went on television to say that it is the same public servants, Members of Parliament—and he picked on the hon. Leader of the Opposition who spoke in the other place to say that he is attacking public servants. I wish to say that nobody in the People’s National Movement in both Houses of Parliament has attempted or will attempt to do any such thing. If it is anything we have for the members of the Budget Division or the entire civil service, who put this budget together, in terms of advising the Minister, is commendation and we know them very well. We have had working relations with them long before the hon. Minister became Minister of Finance, Planning and Development.

I wish to state that we have a great deal of respect for the press, and we think that they are doing a good job and they are human beings. Sometimes they may

not meet the expectations of certain people. I say that against the background—and I am merely referring to the *Sunday Express* newspaper dated September 3, 2000 on page 10, which says “Manning at his best in budget debate”. The *Express* is a great newspaper and the journalist who put this down is a journalist of great integrity. *[Laughter]* So this matter that the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development went on the television to discuss and—I will not tax my vocabulary to use harsh words—“bad talk” the very distinguished Leader of the Opposition who is actually the Prime Minister in waiting—

Hon. Member: That is right.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: —before December 31, the Leader of the Opposition will certainly be the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Gangar: That is if he is looking for a seat, but all are taken.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: I wish to say that this budget document is definitely a part of the UNC’s election manifesto, because of the language used. We blame nobody from the Budget Division or any section of the civil service, but the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development and the advisors in the UNC Government for the way they have written this budget.

Mr. President, I merely wish to state that the Government of the day has tried and tried to do whatever it had to do.

3.55 p.m.

Sometimes I feel sorry and I think it is a sad mistake for very honourable men of the integrity and stature of Sen. Lindsay Gillette and Sen. Carlos John to throw away their integrity and their lucrative positions and income elsewhere to come into this business. I know they regret it, because the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development talked about no turning back. No “back back”, but how come they “back back” on Sen. Lindsay Gillette and he is not the Acting Prime Minister anymore? *[Laughter]* Why that backing back?

Mr. President, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development seems to think that he is very fortunate that many people rang him on the telephone and many people saw him personally on the street and gave their advice on what proposals and conditions should be contained in the budget and he then proceeded to write up the budget, most likely with that advice. I am referring to page 1 of the Budget Statement.

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The people of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly Trinidad, were not decisive in their voting—and that is their right—as to who should rule the country and who should form the Government with each party getting 17 seats. That is old history, but the way the budget is written, we must refer to it. I am hearing speeches about the UNC Government, but as far as some of us know it, there is no UNC Government in here. There is a UNC/NAR coalition government; a coalition that is under heavy pressure.

Sen. Shabazz: Collision!

Sen. M. Jagmohan: Pressure that is unbearable for the hon. Prime Minister and a few other honourable people, but they are somehow making the grade. Mr. President, with regard to the schools, there is a haste and anxiety to have a certain number of buildings ready for small secondary schools and for the principals and the children. We of the People's National Movement have no quarrel about that, but what we observe is that in their anxiety and in their mad rush to build schools, things that are worth \$5, this Government has paid \$25 for those things and the contractors are laughing their way to the banks.

The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development seems to think that he is an expert, but Mr. President, on the same page 2, the hon. Minister referred to 60,000 new jobs. Before I expand on that, the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources is on record as saying, “a job is a job. If one gets five days’ work in one of the corporations for a year, that is a job”. If one gets five days’ work in one of the corporations for the year, that is a job too.

The hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development indicated that there are 9,000 jobs somewhere and 10,000 somewhere. I am arguing that if someone gets three fortnights of work in the Unemployment Relief Programme, that is quite good; that is all such a person could have got, but these jobs must be classified and they must not be lumped together. If someone gets a small contract in the Water and Sewage Authority to do something, is that a job as well?

This 60, 000 is not going down well, and the Minister would have been quite okay if he categorized these jobs in the very budget statement; how many people got how much work, and so forth. Some foreigner reading this budget statement would think that 60,000 people got jobs for one calendar year. That is what they would be talking about. This is absolutely not so.

If one of the statutory boards is doing a particular piece of work and that statutory board is funded by the state, whether they are creating revenue or not, and they employ 100 people just for one month, those are not 100 jobs. That is not

the way to classify it. So, we have serious problems with 60,000 jobs. It is not too late. The hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development has at his disposal very efficient technocrats who could deal with this thing before this debate is finished and come with the truth. The truth is hidden! This is not the truth.

The last line on page two talks about “we reduced taxes”, but along with the reduction of taxes, why somewhere in the budget statement did we not hear about the price of medicine either being stabilized or reduced, especially for the poorest of the poor? As I speak for the poor and the poorest of the poor, I have a concern.

With respect to the utilities, prices are increasing. Not a word! As for the price of food, each week at the food outlets or the groceries, one will see different prices, and no one in this honourable Chamber, people in the public gallery and the technocrats around, as advisors, can say anything different, that the price of food is increasing much more than anything else in this country. The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development has some questions to answer.

Mr. President, like I said before, and I am repeating myself, Sir, food across the board is beyond the reach of the poor people of this country. If an average person can buy a certain quantity of valuable food in the groceries or in the markets, there are people who, in this country, will go and sometimes may be able to buy 10 per cent of what the other person bought.

Do you know what is happening, Mr. President? I will remind your good self, Sir, and this Senate. There was an industrial dispute on Frederick Street in Port of Spain and the employees did not wish for people to purchase. It was the then Transport and Industrial Workers’ Union, and the name Vas Stanford will come to mind. The very lovely ladies who worked and were on strike had coined their own phrases, one of which was “pass by, mamaguy, if the boss pass, give him an eye but do not buy!” That is what is happening. Our people go to the groceries and only look and cannot buy the quantity of staple foods that they need. Why did we not hear about direct subsidies? We did not hear about that.

On page three of this document, the first line, the authors have written, “we doubled foreign investment”. I am arguing and I am putting it to the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development and the Government, the PNM plans are in there for the foreign investment to double up. I am urging the Government to not behave like Sir Francis Drake who went around the world plundering and looting as the first man who went around. Do not behave like Christopher Columbus, who discovered Trinidad, when they say that they doubled foreign investment, as though you did not meet a base. *[Laughter]*

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They said that they more than doubled their foreign reserves. Where in the budget statement—excuse my limitations in that regard—does he talk about the national debt? Where did he say that? What I can say is that I have problems with the way the budget is written, but we will respect it for the time being.

On this same page 3 at the last paragraph, Mr. President, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development went out of his way to attack the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the longest serving statesman in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] for talking about illusions and preaching gloom. Well, I heard my good friend, the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Health talking about when the UNC came in 1995 they did this and they did that. The *Hansard* record will verify it.

Maybe she got carried away by the very well structured presentation she had and she had the assistance of the technocrats. I will come to that later. She said the UNC did this and that, and so forth. She is our good friend. It is quite all right. [*Laughter*]

On page 4, this is a serious matter, Mr. President. This does not only concern the People's National Movement or the UNC. In the last line of page 4, they are saying that we are better off today. Better off in what way, when in 1995 alone, the Government chalked up a foreign debt of \$5 billion? Somebody put the lie to this, that they borrowed or had some mechanism in place that in 1999 alone they chalked up a foreign debt of \$5 billion. I want to believe it and I also do not want to believe it, but what is the truth?

Here on page 5, these are the things that bother me. I am not hitting the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development hard, but I am looking at paragraphs 1, 2 and 3. The third line which says:

“This budget is meant to be a toolbox, full of the equipment that the people need to build our Nation together.”

A toolbox does not carry equipment. A toolbox carries tools to repair and build equipment! [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] Did the Minister edit this?

4.10 p.m.

He goes back again on page 5 and talks about:

"And creating another 60,000 new jobs."

Is this 60,000—he said another 60,000—to be added to the 60,000 on page 2? I do not know. Somebody has to explain this. However, if it is 60,000 twice, you must tell us how many are casual workers? There is such a category of worker in Trinidad and Tobago. How many are occasional workers? How many are seasonal workers? How many are regular workers? How many are permanent workers and how many are workers on contract?

Recently, I met a young man on the street and we had some discussion. He does a job of a high level. I do not know what pay he gets. He is auditing the books of business houses and their tax business and he said he has six months again to work.

Sen. C. John: Is that Danny Montano you are talking about?

Sen. M. Jagmohan: No. Not him. Too many of us and people in the entire nation are having difficulties in understanding what the Minister actually said in the budget. I have said it and I want to repeat myself, I am not challenging his ability and knowledge to use the English language; I am not challenging his ability to manipulate and handle figures. I am told he is a chartered accountant and that is what worries me. How could a chartered accountant prepare such a wishy-washy document? On page 6, in the second paragraph, he said:

"Firstly, it is my duty, and in today's expanding economy, my pleasure, to report where we stand today on jobs, growth, inflation, revenues and the fiscal conditions."

In my view, that is put there to make that statement flowery. That "ain't" making sense.

Mr. President, you see, my very good friend, Sen. Danny Montano, whom I congratulate, has dealt extensively with the figures and the financial implications, so that it will be an exercise in futility for me to attempt to repeat what he has said or to cover new ground in that regard. I am tempted to talk about the percentages here.

On page 7, there is another 60,000 new jobs. Which 60,000 jobs are we talking about?

Mr. President, I want to put the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development and also the Leader of Government Business at ease at this juncture. They have repeated it at page 10 and it reads thus.

"Yes, Mr. Speaker, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have come too far to turn back now."

What they are doing is begging the population not to change their political allegiance or not to identify with the People's National Movement when the next general election comes. English language is put in such a way that you also have to read between the lines [*Laughter*] and this sentence is grammatically all right. There is no malapropism in it. [*Desk thumping*]

There is an appeal, Mr. President, in paragraph 1 of page 12 where the Minister is talking about:

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"But the police can't do it alone. Not only do they need the support and help of every citizen, Mr. Speaker, they need appropriate legislative and judicial support."

But, there is an array of laws passed here, bills passed that are now part of the statute books whether they are put together or not. The first Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, and the incumbent as well, loads up us up here with all kinds of amendments on bills. Some of the amendments are not really necessary but I suppose somebody wants to go on record, or this Government wants to go on record as having done this, that or the other.

Much is said about the health sector. I am glad we got a progress report from the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Health that was not about anything but a progress report. I am tempted to touch on some of those things but another hon. Senator might do that—I do not know—because when the Senator spoke about the Point Fortin hospital—no laundry, no kitchen, no food and no X-ray—I want to know: When did she go there?

When I wore another hat, I visited there once in two weeks and for that period, they had laundry; they had X-ray; they had laboratory; because they inherited it from one of the most efficient institutions in the country, the Shell Oil Fields Limited. I do not know. Let us go on. We will find out something "just now".

So much is being said of a little increase here and a little increase there. Okay. Commendable. You talked about a little increase here and a little increase there. Last year this time, what was the price for one Panadol and what is the price today? In essence, what am I saying? The price of medicine has doubled, trebled and quadrupled, in some instances.

I do not know. The hon. Gentlemen who are Ministers, when they speak and maybe they will talk about it and give the lie to what I am saying. Whilst I can take on ministry by ministry, I am more dealing with the budget statement. This is false; this is erroneous; this is an untruth and this is an injustice to the reading, taxpaying public, paragraph 3 on page 18.

"When this Government came to office five years ago, only 8% of our population could count on getting water all the time, that is, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week."

That is not true. That figure is bogus and cooked up. Mr. President, with due respect to all Senators. Courtesy demands that when one speaks to you, you listen and, *vice versa*, when another speaks, you also listen.

Sen. Theodore: It is the President to whom you are speaking and he is listening.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: That is something I feel very sorry about.

Paragraph 7 on page 18 says:

"Five years ago, only 85,000 people in Trinidad and Tobago enjoyed pipe-borne water 24 hours a day. Today, that number has increased to 356,000."

I am very sorry, Mr. President. I regret it. If you tell me it is unparliamentary language, I will withdraw it. That is a notorious lie. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President: Senator, I am sure that the literature which you would have been given when you entered the Senate would tell you that the word "lie" is unparliamentary.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: I sincerely regret it, Sir. I apologize and I would be guided by your ruling.

Sen. S. John: And you have to withdraw it.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: I also withdraw it, Sir. May it be expunged from the *Hansard* record. I am a real big man, Sir. [*Desk thumping*] I withdraw everything and apologize for everything.

About the 356,000 people—

Sen. Kuei Tung: I thought you wanted to start over.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: Do not be afraid Minister, through you, Mr. President, I have the capacity to speak for three hours non-stop.

Mr. President, I am continuing. I do not wish to go through the entire budget statement page by page, but I merely wish to say that this is the only major point I will make—well, not only—but the major point I want to make on education.

There are private institutions in Trinidad and Tobago organized for all fields of education but there is specially one educational institution spread over the country giving tuition in technical fields and it is—if that is appropriate—agent for City and Guilds of London. I am wondering whether the Government is considering giving some kind of support to the Trinizuela Technical & Vocational College of San Fernando. It has an outlet in Port of Spain as well. It is doing extremely well and people are availing themselves of the service that it is giving.

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At this time, I will not say much on it because anyone with first-hand information giving that information to the Parliament, it would be like the testimony of an expert. The hon. Minister in the Ministry of Health spoke about the refurbishment and/or extension of the health office at Penal and the health office at Fyzabad. I state that both buildings were removed completely. Columns are up for the one in Penal.

Mr. President, I am only talking about this from a labour perspective. It was, indeed, very callous and uncaring of the Government to treat nurses and health personnel in the manner in which they were treated. Their salaries were deducted and untold hardships were brought to them. I know I am going to be told by somebody that when you do not work, you do not get paid. Somebody would say that, but we have an answer for that.

4.25 p.m.

Mr. President, I am talking about this because—there are no Ministers from the other place, however, other hon. Ministers are here.

I heard a certain sound from the back bench when the hon. Minister, in his presentation this morning, attempted to talk about agriculture. I heard sighs and so on. I want to state that some new rules have been initiated at a very important agricultural institution, that is the NAMDEVCO Fruit/Provision/Fish Market in Debe. The hours have been changed and difficulties have now been created for buyers as well as sellers. Someone from the Government Benches should take notice of this and have the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources intervene immediately.

Mr. President, on page 31 of the Budget Statement, reference is made by the hon. Minister in the first paragraph. It states:

“We trained hundreds of teachers under the On-the-Job Training Programme, so that new teachers begin with real classroom experience.”

Mr. President, that was a People’s National Movement project. Why did the Minister not say that they continued the On-the-Job Training although the present Government suspended it? When they saw the great good of it, they reintroduced it. This will give the impression that the Government of the day has now brought this about.

The hon. Minister in the Ministry of Works and Transport, Sen. Carlos John, made a statement earlier on as part of his contribution. The manner in which he used the language, it is going home to the whole nation that 80,000 children get lunch and breakfast. That is not true. *[Interruption]* The extra food to carry home is all right.

The last time the present Minister of Tourism was Minister of Education, he said there is going to be a pilot project where 1,000 children would be given breakfast to see how it works. We do not know about 80,000 children getting breakfast. I think the Minister should look at that a second time.

What I have observed, Mr. President, the point just made is on page 31. There is a village or district—on page 31. The Minister of Finance alluded to it as well. There is a village/district in the Oropouche constituency, in the County of St. Patrick, more to the eastern end. This area is called Black Water. Presently, a project is taking place there. That project involves training people in certain skills. I have an observation to make. The location of that village, and the difficulty to get there is something to think about. Whatever Ministry is responsible for this—I am wondering why this project was not located in the centre of Penal or in Siparia where more of the young people whether they are UNC or PNM, could have availed themselves. Some people tell me sometimes there is no quorum in that project but it is a very beneficial project. I thought I would draw this to your attention. It is referred to in the Budget Statement.

What came to my mind is that project is in the centre of the Oropouche constituency. The sitting MP, of course, is well known in the Oropouche constituency. People from the surrounding areas spoke to me and said there should be no fear that PNM people from the small town of Siparia, in the Siparia constituency, or people from the small town of Penal in the Siparia constituency would have come in a big way and taken up the places and, perhaps, created difficulty for other people. That is something to ponder upon.

Mr. President, the Minister of Finance made—*[Interruption]*

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

Motion made, That the Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes.
[Sen. B. Kuei Tung]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. President: The Senator will continue after the tea break. This sitting is now suspended until 5.05 p.m.

4.33 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.07 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. M. Jagmohan: Mr. President, I am pleased for the opportunity to continue. I wish to state that the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Local Government have not established a clear understanding of who

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should deal with agricultural access roads. More than 30 years ago it was decided that agricultural access roads will be beneficial to agriculturists in farming areas. The local government bodies have not done any new agricultural access roads over the last few years, maybe somebody else is doing them or will attempt to do them. This has to be clarified in order to help the farmers.

Mr. President, this is under local government: garbage collection, Sir, took place six days per week in some areas; under the regional corporation the Local Health Authority's section did this. Some of the six days per week areas have been reduced to three or two days per week. My argument is that this is a dangerous thing to do, garbage must be collected daily in areas that are built up and where there is a heavy accumulation.

Sir, this is an unpleasant part; I would leave this for later on, we just came from tea. Washroom facilities at pavilions, abattoirs, fish markets or provision markets across the country are in a state of neglect over weekends, because the administration is reluctant to pay overtime work. These places deteriorate, and the public is there to use them.

Sir, there is an Association of Local Government bodies that is a legal entity in this country; since this Government came into being I would like to find out if any such meeting of the Local Government Association took place. My information is that none took place, the Government is fearful that there are more PNM aldermen and councillors, and the outnumbering could cause some embarrassment, and that is the problem. I thought we should get on with it.

All the cities, boroughs and regional corporations are labour oriented. Right now there is an acute shortage of tools for workers to be productive; productivity of labour is adversely affected. There is not enough protective gear and clothing. I plead with the Government to give thought to this area and do something. The chief representative of the majority of workers in these areas is present in the Senate and he also has this information.

I speak advisedly although it is an old matter, but 50 per cent of the road tax is supposed to go to local government. I am advised that none of this money is going to PNM-controlled corporations, and that is discrimination of the highest order and this should be corrected. Moneys for developing and maintaining local government roads must be allocated to local government bodies. I am advised and, perhaps, I have seen that the Minister of Local Government is attempting to

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handle some of these projects all by himself from Kent House and so making a mockery of local Government and embarrassing the people's representatives.

In the San Juan/Laventille area for, perhaps, the whole of last year and this year, they recently got some money for the paving of roads. I do not know, and this confuses me—but this will eat away at my 15 minutes so I would not talk about it, but something is wrong about it. Three pavilions were built in the San Juan/Laventille Corporation and there was absolutely no input from the corporation; no councillor, no alderman, nobody; even the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of that corporation had no say in the matter. Where is the transparency, the unity and all this that the Prime Minister spoke about early in his tenure?

Recently, the sod was turned, the foundation stone laid for the building of a new market in San Juan; it happened on September 7. Even in the planning of that function, the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation had no say in the matter. It would seem to me that the Member of Parliament for that area and the Minister have been handling that by themselves. I am urging, let the local government people do their work and have their status quo and please the community, they are there for that.

All sorts of things are being said and done in a way that is unconventional and, to my mind, they could be illegal. The Minister of Housing and Settlements is on record as saying that who do not like those actions could take them to court. Maybe Alderman Jerry Narace will talk to somebody about that kind of attitude.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Works and Transport put some buses for rural areas, and in the real rural areas we do not see them. The Minister of Works and Transport and myself come from the same Siparia Old Road, and those buses never even pass by mistake on that road. Who is deciding? That is discrimination of an area from which the Minister of Works and Transport comes. I come from there too. [*Laughter*] They are damaging the environment. I understand that they are 12-year old buses from Britain. [*Crosstalk*]

With respect to highways, notwithstanding that there is some provision in the budget—well, the matter could be *sub judice*, I do not know. The highway from a certain point was done by some company which was chased out and so forth, it is getting worse daily, and the Minister of Works and Transport and I have to travel on the same road every day, and the Ministry of Works and Transport has so many highly qualified, efficient highway engineers and structural engineers.

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In the old days the road supervisors in the Ministry of Works and Transport, who were not engineers, undertook the paving. We hear that they have a new minister to see about paving roads who goes by the name of Sen. The Hon. Carlos John. I do not know if he is a civil engineer, but I want to say that the most bogus road paving is taking place right now in East St. Patrick and parts of Victoria. I will tell you what they are doing, Mr. President.

There are large deep holes that can take half a truckload of boulders, levelled off, put fine material, have it rolled and then "barber green", but they are making those roads cost 50 per cent more than the real cost. "Barber green" is only to be put on a flat surface and not in deep holes. Road surfacing material is very expensive. I understand that an eight yard truckload of that costs in the vicinity of \$15,100.

I am suggesting to the Minister of Works and Transport, my information is that the junior ministers work under—I do not want to talk about the hon. Chandresh Sharma, what they have done to him I do not know. Get in the highway engineers, get in the road supervisors, who they call "RS", and let them advise on roads. They are experts. It is a mess being made right now.

Go to Clarke Road and see how many places have now sunken after the roller passes and "barber green" machine moves out. Go to Clarke Road, I am telling you where to go, and you would see what is happening. Also, these bad roads are causing a great deal of difficulty for motorists; safe driving is no longer there. Mr. President, who is responsible? So many strong, big, expensive government buildings are now in a total state of neglect and disrepair, being covered by overgrown bushes all over the country. Is this Government going to say five years was too short to clean up those places, refurbish them and either have them sold or occupied? Let them answer to that.

The flood gates: the type of flood gates that I am talking about are the ones that control water in and out of rivers. A number of those flood gates are not properly monitored in terms of efficient, continuous repair work, and some attention is needed there. Will my honourable friend look into it, please? You cannot send the Junior Minister because he is for paving. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, this is no joke: there are many expensive pieces of government equipment such as road rollers, dump trucks, front-end loaders, backhoes, bulldozers and many others which because of the lack of some part or slight repairs have been pushed in the backyard or bushes around some of the government garages and buildings, and they are deteriorating because they need some little part or slight repairs. A small amount of money could be spent on each

one to make it road worthy. Is that not caring for the taxpayers' dollar? I want to ask the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development about that. Does he care to answer? Later on he might talk about it.

Concerning the question of the public utilities in the country, Mr. President, I spoke about them; the percentages given with respect to pipe borne water is questionable. There are many, many dry taps in all the areas in Trinidad; I am wondering what is causing that. Somebody must say what is causing all of that. In another aspect of the public utilities—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: Sen. Jagmohan, you have two more minutes.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: Thank you, Sir. The telephones are going bad and taking too long to be repaired. Very quickly, I merely wish to state that the conditionalities for the highways' loan have now been removed. Some of the workers are hired and some of them should now be declared permanent. I call on the Minister of Works and Transport to look into that. All those outstanding vacancies that exist should now be filled.

5.20 p.m.

Training programmes for all categories of daily-paid workers should be increased by leaps and bounds. Indeed, before I take my seat, with your kind permission, I have read in the newspapers and I have first-hand information that an outstanding Trinidadian, a trade unionist by the name of Sen. Selwyn John, has chalked up 50 years of active trade union service. There was not a month when his service was broken and he is retiring. He is not accepting nomination this year at the convention to be re-elected. He has done a great job in the country. He worked closely with the PNM administration over the years in the workers' interest. We commend him and we of the People's National Movement wish him a happy retirement. My political leader wishes me to express that and have it on the *Hansard* record.

Thank you, Mr. President

Sen. Rev. Barbara Gray-Burke: Mr. President, I stand very proud to support the 2000/2001 Appropriation Bill. I stand to say, opportunity for all and responsibility from all. This nation can look into the future for human development. Trinidadians and Tobagonians can now look at savings and access building, if they are not locked in hearsay and judging for themselves.

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Mr. President, this budget is about building Trinidad and Tobago for a better future, more jobs, better education and even more caring. For example the pension for senior citizens between 1991 to 1995 was \$350 per month and within that span they had only received a pay rise once, which was \$41.00. So senior citizens now are enjoying a raise of \$100, but you are hearing much criticism. I ask, how much did the Opposition give in the oil boom days? What a relief to some poor families. The people were so happy for a little increase and this is what they said: "The Government is working." [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I am from a poor area, Laventille, so I am speaking of my personal experience . Let each one in this august Chamber sit and listen. Could you imagine a grandmother who has two children to look after because the parents of these children were involved in a vehicular accident and both parents are seriously injured—we know that happens every day—and her only means of help is her pension of \$720.00! Would this grandmother with these two children feel lifted up and happy? Tell me.

Mr. President, sometimes I sit and I wonder. Let us live in the real world, not politicking with people's livelihood and let us be constructive not destructive. We have reached too far to turn back now. That is my argument. I am building a case for the real poor people of my area.

Mr. President, let us turn for a while to single parents. A mother has three, four or even nine children. The father died of cancer, or let us look at a "don't care" father and she is struggling to make ends meet and has no skills. She can now access training to make herself somebody, build self-esteem and be independent. Is this not Government for the poor? What was done before? This is something, and let us face reality. Why do you think many women remained in a domestic violence situation? Do you know why? Because they were not independent; they had no skills and could not have accessed any government assistance. Today it is there. There is a difference. I am sure that Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt can attest to this.

I had a battered home on Piccadilly Street which was gutted by fire and one day a man chopped his common-law wife on her head. She had three children. What could she do? They were running for safety. Do you know that woman returned to that domestic violence home in one week? Why? The big question is why did she return? She went by a cousin, but things were rough, the cousin is in need herself. She has no skills; she is home bound, not for love, just for a shelter and a meal. One week passes and it is licks again.

This budget changes life now for the underprivileged. I say that women in this nation who have suffered from domestic violence can say thanks and many have asked me to convey thanks to the hon. Minister of Finance, Brian Kuei Tung, because they can now stand on their feet. I do not want the Opposition to play with the lives of human beings. I want us to live in the real world. People had nothing, so this is why domestic violence has reached where it is today.

Mr. President, I am addressing the social ills in this society that this Government inherited. Let us turn to single men. Has anybody thought about single men? Here is a classic example. Having a kindergarten from 1987 to 1995, there were 18 to 20 single fathers with children. I want to bring this issue to the Parliament's attention so when the Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs makes provisions for these single men of this nation, the Opposition would support the Minister and the Government in these measures. It is a sound appeal. Do not forget the single men—fathers. I am appealing to your hearts, do not play politics with single fathers. The men too are unskilled. They have a burning issue. They, too, are brethren of the domestic violence, they are being battered also.

Today, single mothers have micro-enterprise training and development programmes and even family grants. I am appealing to this Senate, single men with families must also enjoy some of this micro-training, because some are just labourers and cannot access regular labour. They might work today and not tomorrow. The mother might have died and left these children and the fathers may be afraid of bringing a stepmother to ill-treat their children. I am sure Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh encounters this because he too is a Minister of Religion. I know for a fact that—

Sen. Prof. Spence: I want to say to the Senator that her appeal should really go to the Minister of Finance, because in the Finance Bill we just talk, we have no authority but he has the authority to change it. I agree with the Senator entirely, it is one of the things I intended to raise in my contribution, single men as well.

Sen. Rev. B. Gray-Burke: Thank you. I know the vote will go well when the Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs brings it. I know for a fact that Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt will support this plea. Men are battered too. They are also victims of domestic violence. The wives may have died of cancer, accident or heart attack, leaving children behind with the men to take care of and they are afraid of stepmothers.

Mr. President, I do not want the Opposition to throw a wet blanket to cover the good in this budget, talking about corruption. Let us pick out the good in the

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budget, deal with it and commend it in the highest order. A single mother and a child will now receive \$428 per month. It is a great help. Let us take things step by step. Do not allow wool to be pulled over our eyes. You will say to the nation it is the Government's duty, but if it is the Government's duty, why did the former government not put these things in place? Were they not caring? That is the big question. Do not ask me any questions. They were not caring.

Listen to this well. A three-person household will receive \$625 per month and a four-person household, \$720 per month. This is the real issue here. Is that not great, Mr. President? This country has come too far now to turn back. Let us go forward ever, backward never.

Mr. President, the last government was sending thousands of children into the streets instead of into secondary schools. When I started seeing children in Curepe and Port of Spain begging, my church members and I decided to make an intervention. That is why I am the recipient of 25 street children, sometimes more. We began sending them to school, clothing and feeding them because I believe by giving these children the tools to compete, I think schooling is the best defence against drugs and crime, and if we had homes for these children before, we might have saved thousands.

When a child sits the Common Entrance Examination and is not successful, sometimes he or she gets fed up. There is nowhere to go. The post-primary was a joke in Trinidad; I do not know for Tobago. It was a joke in Trinidad because I tried to get children into post-primary classes and into Moulton Hall School—I could name the schools—and that was a joke. There were no teachers. Sometimes when they passed for some junior secondary, there were no teachers, even in South East Port of Spain school. My big daughter went to that school and many days they had no teachers. Children learned however they could.

To give a child a chance to education is to make his dream a reality. Even though a boy is bad and you ask him what he would like to be, he would say "I would like to be an electrician, a soldier." He tells you something, but he never had the opportunity. It is to make these children's dreams become a reality. Are the children of Trinidad and Tobago literate? No.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. President, standardization of school books so one child could use the other's books is one of the greatest things that ever happened to this country because sometimes children could not have gone to school because their parents

could not afford to purchase books. And this was the real problem we had here. Now a cousin could use a cousin book, a sister could use a brother book. What do you call this? Revolution in education. The Opposition did not; and they would have never—because every term you go to buy books it is climbing up a ladder; it is getting higher and higher and higher, and there is no peace with it.

In 1991 to 1995 not one single secondary school within that period was built. So I want to tell this Chamber that we have come too far now for us to go back to no school, no secondary education. Not at all. Mr. President, people who have money could afford to send their children to school. So they could have attended the best school. What about the parents who cannot afford? But the Opposition politicking? Why try to obstruct the poor people who are getting an opportunity today? We will have hiccups but let us bind together and make it work. Is it that the PNM Opposition is jealous of this Government? Gloom and doom; it is not going to work. It is corrupt. Oh, let us leave the corruption and let us see about the children. Dr. Eric Williams said that the future of the nation is in the children's schoolbags. So let us work towards that and stop this nonsense. Let the poor people of this nation have the opportunity to send their children to a secondary school.

Mr. President, 18 new Early Childhood Care Centres were built by this Government. We have upgraded 22 of those centres. Twenty-seven primary schools and 10 secondary schools were built. We are reducing the class size. I remember when my daughter went to South-East Port of Spain there were 35 children in a class, and we are reducing it to 24. This is revolution in education. I want to say that we have reached too far to turn back.

Pre-school education improves our children. It is a long-term school performance. It will curb anti-social behaviour and delinquency. This is an investment with large returns and not to be forgotten. Where on earth the Shouter Baptists would have gained this under the Opposition? The Shouter Baptists now have three teachers at Government's expense free at the University of the West Indies. Two years free for the Early Childhood Education School. The school is to start by the end of this month, after being discriminated against for years. Although the Baptists supported the former regime, they had no love nor sympathy. You have to "revolute" their brains to educate them all over. No sympathy for them! A people without a school to have access to education would only be able to produce illiterates in the society. That is why they kept them in that state, to produce illiterates in the society. I want to say thank you to the honourable Minister of Education, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. I want to say thanks to the honourable Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday for your

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astute and enlightened leadership that a Shouter Baptist could have some self-esteem in Trinidad and Tobago, although we are not accepted in the IRO as yet. They do not want us, but I think if Mr. Sat Maharaj opens an IRO we will go with him. *[Desk thumping]* It is always that the application is lost. Do you observe in this honourable Senate when Archbishop Anthony Pantin died I did not give condolence? I will tell you why. Every time he promised the Prime Minister he would accept us—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Daly: On a point of order, Mr. President. Is the late Archbishop available to defend himself? I do not have powers to reach him myself. I think perhaps attacking someone who cannot defend himself—

Mr. President: I agree with you, Senator. Please get back to the budget debate.

Sen. Rev. B Gray-Burke: Thank you, Sir. I would be guided by your ruling, Sir. But the Inter-Religious Organization never accepted us. Our application was rejected. Last but not least, I want to talk about school buses. On Friday last, my grandchild received her bus tickets to take her to St. Ursula's School. So we have buses running through Port of Spain. Bus in Toco; bus in Mayaro; bus in Matelot; you name it. Do you know what is that? That is good governance. It is a revolution in education. Surely we are addressing all the social problems in a holistic way.

We have come too far to return to a period of waste, mismanagement, hypocrisy to the highest. I want to say, God bless the UNC and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie: Mr. President, I would like to begin by congratulating Sen. The hon. Carlos John on his maiden speech this morning. I note, Sir, that he claimed to have very good friends on this side but I can tell him, Sir, that they noted his nervousness and they commented on the shaking of his hands but I can assure you, Sir, that all of us went through that type of anxiety at some stage. *[Laughter]* Congratulations to you, Sir.

Mr. President, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak in this debate. I want to begin, Sir, by bringing to the attention of this Senate some resolutions passed by the Calder Hall Village Community Council. They held a special meeting and discussed the implications of the budget for Tobago and they came up with some resolutions which they passed on to Members from Tobago sitting in the Parliament.

5.45 p.m.

I would like to place on record, Sir, that I have taken their concerns into consideration and that I have brought them here. So permit me, Sir, very briefly to enumerate them.

They want the hon. Minister and/or his Cabinet colleagues to provide more specific details in relation to the following: one, the acquisition by purchase, lease or otherwise of the promised new inter-island ferry, particularly with regard to its features, the terms, including cost of its acquisition and the commencement date of its operations. Secondly, Sir, the projected cost to the Government of providing services to Tobago in the 2001 services pertaining to the schedule coming under the Central Government in the Tobago House of Assembly Act. Those are the Judiciary, national security including immigration, civil aviation, foreign affairs, legal affairs, *et cetera*. These are expenses incurred by the Central Government in Tobago and nobody has an idea of what it costs. This community council is asking for that type of quote.

They would like to have clarified whether the Tobago hospital can, in fact, be constructed in the 2000/2001 period. I know that the designs are to be completed very early next year and probably the construction will start, but they want to find out more about this. They want to know, Sir, whether the Minister and/or his colleagues in Cabinet intend to institute any measures and, if so, what. Are they going to take any action to address the lack of accountability by the Tobago House of Assembly for expenditure of public funds and to guarantee full accountability in the future? They want to know, Sir, whether the Minister and his Cabinet colleagues—the Government—whether the Central Government has a vision for Tobago in the context of Trinidad and Tobago and whether the Assembly and the people of Tobago have had any inputs into the formulation of that vision.

They want to find out also, Sir, whether the Central Government is mindful of the impact of the higher cost of living on Tobago than it is on the Trinidad population and what steps would be taken to cushion that impact and to increase the purchasing power of the dollar in Tobago. They also want to know, Sir, whether initiatives are being taken by the Central Government to put infrastructure in place to ensure that Tobago can generate its own revenues in the future according to Act No. 40 of 1996. They want to know whether any sort of consultation will take place pertaining to the construction of the L'Anse Fourmi/Charlotteville Road.

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They have put a very strange resolution forward, too, which is that the proposed increased salaries for parliamentarians appearing in the budget be deleted and in place the words, "Senior Citizens Care Fund" be inserted and 40 per cent of the provision made be allocated to that fund, 50 per cent to a productive industrial job creation fund and 10 per cent to the Consolidated Fund. Finally, Sir, they want to know whether the 60,000 jobs created over the last five years were permanent or otherwise. [*Desk thumping*] These are the concerns of that community council.

Now, Sir, to my own contribution. Let me begin by saying that there are some very good things in the budget on which I would like to compliment the hon. Minister of Finance. I look positively on the fact that he has tried to reduce tax on interest, giving encouragement to people to save in the banks and other financial institutions. I note, Sir, his reduction or elimination of VAT on certain items and I ask that he include in that list urinary bags. Simple, ordinary things like that, Mr. President, are used by the older people, the poorer people; they are expensive and they carry VAT. I think we need to look not only at assisting the elderly in terms of giving them more pensions but we can make sure that the \$100 will go a longer way by zero-rating some of these items that they use. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to commend the hon. Minister for the increase in personal allowances. I want to compliment him also on the tax allowance for companies in regard to promoting sports, arts and culture. I think it is great but I was a bit worried when I read how he phrased it in his presentation this morning. He said that the allowance will extend to contributions and sponsorships to groups such as steelbands, *et cetera, et cetera*. I remember making the suggestion in this Senate and I am very pleased to note that the idea has surfaced in the budget. What I would like to do, Sir, is let the hon. Minister know that I thought of it deeper than just sponsorships and contributions to these organizations.

I was not thinking of just giving them a uniform or paying a truck to carry around their pans or whatever have you. I was thinking of intensive training for the people who are in these groups because I think that this is the area where we could have the most effective literacy programme. Many of our young people who are in these sporting groups, the steelband, the whatever, could do well with programmes in literacy and numeracy. I want to throw a ball in the court of my very good friend, Sen. Nizam Baksh.

Sen. Baksh, through the President, I want to implore you to encourage these groups that I know are affiliated to the community development division to have their programmes set out, not only for the technical skills that they would learn

but also a complete package where they would be given an opportunity to become more functionally literate and more numerate in the programmes that would be sponsored by these organizations. Before the tax relief could be given, we should ensure that a comprehensive and beneficial programme to the young people is in operation, not just to say, "I have given 50 uniforms to these people" or "I have provided them with a dozen balls", or whatever have you. That is not good enough. I think that to qualify for this, we need to have more of that.

I want to stress also, Mr. President, that I think we should encourage these corporations, these organizations, these business places, to have a greater input in the culture and the arts. I want to talk about the recording arts, not only the performing arts, not only our dance groups and our literary groups and so forth, but our television production. I think we need to do more of that and it does not have to be in entertainment only, it could be in education.

I remember when Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark was in Public Administration and in Information, he had a programme where they tried to bring out and were honouring the people who did television documentaries, *et cetera*. This went a long way because I remember Trinidad and Tobago, through Mr. Shannon who was in the Ministry of Information, winning an international award for a production on wet sugar that he did in Tobago. This is the type of thing I am talking about, our productions and our television work. So, Mr. President, I hope that we would be able to do this.

I want to again compliment the hon. Minister on the apprenticeship scheme but tell him, we have had this already, years ago, the apprenticeship scheme, and the National Training Board came and they attached people to various organizations and corporations, *et cetera*. The problem was, there was an agreement where the Government paid the company a percentage of the wages that they gave to these apprentices, but what happened was the firms paid the salaries or the little stipend to these people in full and expected the rebate to come from the Government but it took some time, it took so long. So I ask you to put the plan in place from now so that when these organizations spend their money, take these people, train them and then give them the stipend, they would not have to wait eight and nine months to get back their money. It will discourage them from being a part of the scheme.

I congratulate the Government on the Agriculture Disaster Relief Fund. I see that we have it all in place already. The proposal is there in this document we have been given, but we must have quick assessment and pay. It is no use the

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Government waiting nine months after to assess and to pay. Secondly, I want to know how it is going to work. Is there going to be a ratio to say, well, if someone subscribes so much then their rebate or whatever would be so much? This has to be worked out and I want to advise that we avoid disasters as far as we can; so that if we can stop gardens being flooded because drains are blocked, let us clean the drains. It is cheaper. So let us not make this another cow that somebody is going to milk. [*Desk thumping*]. Let us ensure that we have everything in place to avoid the disasters where we possibly can.

Next, Sir, the mortgage loans, the Internet access, the increased old age and Government pensions, the public assistance benefits—thanks to the Government for that. Mr. President, I want to talk a little on the \$100 to single mothers. We had a proposal in this Senate two years ago, I think, of a \$25-million fund for single mothers. It never went into operation. I hope that we can engineer this social good this time. I want to suggest, Sir, from my own experience, that the six months be continuous months. In other words, someone should not come this month, drop out next month, come the following month and drop out the month afterwards.

The Government must state clearly that this must be six continuous months, six consecutive months, that these people must be there in the same programme because they could jump from—someone could have three six-month periods, you know. I could start a six-month programme here this month, February I would go to another programme, March I would go to another one and then I could come back April to this one. So it has to be structured in a way that it is well run. Again, Mr. President, the hon. Minister will have to ensure that when they say six months, the training should be complete because my experience has shown where we have some permanent students. They would go to this one for six months, it is finished, they go to another programme for another six months, that one is finished and then they go to another one for six months. We then have what are called permanent students. So the system should be well computerized to know who is where, for how long and doing what.

More important than that, Mr. President, is what is taught. In this day and age one cannot teach people who one wants to be able to fend for themselves, to work for themselves, to arrange flowers. That is a development aspect. That is not an educational aspect. That is something done to relieve tension, to occupy oneself with and to learn another skill, because in this day and age none of these people could use floral decoration on their own to earn a living.

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So you have to look for marketable skills to teach these people so that when they are finished they could earn.

600 p.m.

Mr. President, let me tell you what is the problem. We need to set up production centres. Many of these young people who are going to access this programme do not have the facilities in their homes to do anything. If you teach them to bake, cook, make pastries, jams, jellies, phoulorie, doubles, aloo pie or whatever that would sell, some of them do not have a stove; some of them cannot afford to buy the gas; and some of them do not have the confidence that they could do it well. You do not want them to be mixing the first set of dough and then when it looks like “laglee” they will have to throw it away. They cannot afford that. They want supervision and the Government has to treat this the same way that it treats a development project under the Unemployment Relief Programme. A supervisor must be paid to supervise them.

These young people will be coming into the production centre to bake, cook and make whatever they want under supervision. This will give them the confidence to do it. In that very production centre there should be a day care centre where a single mother could bring her child and know that the child is with her and the child is safe. She can get a little break and breastfeed her child and look upon her child whilst she is there learning, even if she has to put a little thing towards the person who takes care of these children. There should be such a programme instead of the Unemployment Relief Programme where people stand up and do nothing because there are no materials to work with. A supervisor should be paid to take care of these children—one or two of them—whilst these young people are there learning and their children are nearby.

Mr. President, so the operation centres will have a supervisor; a tutor who is teaching; the trainees; and facilities. What do you do with what they make? There cafeteria come in. When the Government gives out concessions for the school cafeteria, it should be “built in” that you must take aloo pies from this production centre or you must take meat pies, jam tarts, jellies or whatever it is from them. This is how it should be tied into what the Government is supposed to do so that these people would have a ready market.

Mr. President, I am not telling you something that was not tried before. We have tried it with the Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) and it worked. We had it in the Signal Hill Senior Comprehensive School and the principal, Mr. London, gave us his laundry room and we produced “early”

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in the nutrition centre. We took all our stuff there and the girls sold the products and banked some of their money and it worked.

This is how we have to go, otherwise they will learn the skill and at the end of it they will pick up their babies and go back home. They will not be able to make a pie because they do not have a stove, and they will not be able to cook it on a wood fire, and nobody is going to go to their house to buy it because they do not have electricity or water. The Government must do this otherwise it is not going to work. The Government has to assist them by getting their food badges and letting the doctors examine them for free. The Government has to assist them. Even when this is finished and after they have graduated, the Government should see whether it could find a production centre where they could work and keep the baby-sitting facility and deduct something from their earnings towards the keeping of their children. So here is where I think the Unemployment Relief Programme should come in.

Mr. President, with respect to tourism, I do not want to dwell too much on that because I know that is Sen. Job's area. I just want to make two points. This morning, I came on the first flight from Tobago and when I landed and came off at the Tobago terminal, everybody was holding his or her nose. There was a solid waste bin filled and it was overflowing. I have never smelt anything more pungent for a long time in the airport where people were boarding their taxis. It is the worst thing I have seen. I am saying to whoever is in charge of that "get your act together".

The waving gallery in Tobago has been closed for more than one year, so when one goes to see and greet people—and there is Caledonia coming, and who is coming—there is a gate fence—worse than the cage—where you have to look through with your nose. It is worse than the cage with the naked boys. The only difference is that they are wearing clothes. *[Laughter]* We have to be serious about that situation and do not talk about the report of the foreigners. I have spoken about it and I am not going to talk about it again.

Mr. President, with respect to education, I am certain that you would have heard the news and read the newspaper about chaos in Roxborough and it did not have to be like that. Do you know why? The Government knew two years ago that it was going to put all the children who wrote the Common Entrance Examination in 2000 into secondary schools. The Government did not build any benches, recruit any teachers and establish any posts or do anything so the Government is encroaching now on the existing staff in schools to fill these vacancies. The Government is taking people and giving them a crash course to

teach children who need a special type of facilitation when the Government knew two years ago that this is what it was going to do. Can you see the chaos?

Mr. President, there are so many children going to one school. The principal recognizes that they are accustomed taking in a certain amount of children. The Government has sent a list with an increase, double the amount, so a mistake was made. The principal calls the Ministry and the Ministry says to go ahead and register the children. The parents bought the books and uniform and then they were told that they were in the wrong school. Now, these are poor people. Mr. President, no! Sen. Rev. Barbara Gray-Burke talks about small classes. My daughter is in a class with 41 students and sometimes there are 45 children in a class and the Government wants one teacher to teach them well. This Government could not be serious.

Mr. President, what has happened to the children who had a second chance? I know of children who failed last year and did not get a place. They wrote the examination again and they are now going to top secondary schools in Tobago. What has happened to that and the School Leaving Centres? You saw the chaos on television where children turned up who had a second year in the School Leaving Centre in Bon Accord and they were told to go to school. We do not know what the Government is doing and the place is locked up. The Government could certainly do better than that. There was no planning; no furniture built; and no teachers.

Mr. President through you, I want to tell the Minister of Public Administration that if he is not careful he will have a serious problem on his hands. Let me tell you why. I have read where posts for these new schools have been created. They advertised for teachers to fill these posts and the effective date of assumption of duty is September. There are teachers in the secondary school system in Tobago acting for two and three years. I understand that when they are confirmed it will not be retroactive. So the Government is telling me now that the new recruits will be senior to those people by two and three years. I am telling the Minister this because I like him. He is my friend and I do not want him to get in trouble, but it is going to be serious. So look at the matter and see what could be done about it.

More than that I have the greatest concern for the children who are now in the system and who would have qualified this year to be in the model school. There are children like those who did not have the required level or standard to be in secondary school, but we are treating them all the same way now.

6.10 p.m.

Those are the people who are dropping out, getting to Form III and leaving without any passes. This is it, and it is going to be worse. So, we have to set something in place, Mr. Minister, to take care of those children from Form II right up through the system.

They have to ask for those children whose results just came out, who did not get any passes, try to grab them now and do something about them. They have to have some sort of programme where you could say to these children—they are not taking any repeaters, that is the sign on the schools in Tobago. What happens to them? Check the statistics. They will see how many children did not get any passes. Anything at all. More than 50 per cent of the children.

They have to get the schools to call back these children, get their people to go in and tell them what do we do from now, and probably this is where they will get their organizations, and so forth, to sit and say, “Okay, those who like sports, technical, vocational skills, whatever, set up a programme for them and get them there.” Otherwise, they are throwing the ball in the court of my good friend, the hon. Minister of National Security. He will have to see about the delinquency and the crime. That has nothing to do with him. So, I am appealing to you, Mr. Minister, to please tell the hon. Minister of Education what you have to do now to rescue those who have just come out of school, and you have a good chance. Please, Sir, look at it.

Mr. President, there is a problem with teachers; getting teachers for certain subjects. I am sorry they took away that portfolio from Sen. Mark, because here is where we can use television, just as they used it in Common Entrance. I know that under that Minister, they used it in Common Entrance, where children at the schools which did not have teachers with the competence to teach certain topics in mathematics were exposed to this on a Saturday morning.

They have to do the same thing for CXC. They have the technology. They cannot find chemistry teachers, biology teachers, physics teachers or maths teachers? What more do they want? They have the technology. Get the people to capture this on television, make the video; this is what they are talking about: distance learning! Distance learning is not any sort of “airy fairy” thing. It is simple things like that. Get the excellent teachers in the subject area and do the things and give every school something. That will help them a long way. Mr. President, I had to make a point on that.

Now, I want to talk very briefly on the Tobago House of Assembly. I am not going to talk about adequacy of funds and shortfall. I am not going to talk about those things. I want to talk, Sir, about the THA Act. I talked about it two years ago and I want to talk about it again. You see, we must be careful that we do not leave room for the type of criticism or the type of wriggling out of a wrong situation. I think that is what we have done when it comes to the Tobago situation.

I am saying that I think the Central Government has to take equal blame for what is happening in Tobago as much as they blame the THA. Let me just tell you, Sir, that we passed this Act in 1996, very hurriedly, but I had said that we will put out the Act and we will treat it as a car coming off an assembly line. If we find when it is in operation there is some defect, we will recall it, mend it and put it back out. We have not done it.

Listen, Sir, to clause 25(2) which says:

“For the better performance of its functions, the Assembly is hereby empowered to do all such acts and take all such steps as may be necessary for, or incidental to the exercise of its powers or for the discharge of its duties and in particular the Assembly may—

(b) enter into such contracts as it deems fit for the efficient discharge of its functions.”

They said this in 1996. The guidelines and all the things for the hiring of people on contract came so late. What does the Assembly do? What should they have done? Sit and wait for three years or more to start to put in effect the duties that they should be carrying out according to this Act? They cannot do that. They have to be brisk and sharp.

Look at how the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development has this Exchequer and Audit Agriculture Disaster Relief Fund, quick, quick! Value Added Tax document there, effective October 1, 2000, and he has just read the budget. This is in place. Why can we not have this in place? So, we give the Assembly a job to do and tie both hands behind their backs. They are going to find a way to do it. They say, “If we wait for two years and they cannot give us the guidelines to do that, we will substitute our own guidelines”.

Secondly, Mr. President, I go to clause 43 which says, again, all the things that must be taken into consideration when we are doing the budget. We have them. I am not going to bore the Parliament with that. Clause 49 (1) to (3) says:

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“Notwithstanding the Exchequer and Audit Act, all revenue collected in Tobago on behalf of the Government and payable thereto...shall be paid into the fund.

Upon the coming into force of this Act, any company, financial institution or a person operating a business in Tobago shall pay in Tobago all taxes, fees...in respect of its operations...”

And they said this must be set off.

To date, so many of these organizations and businesses are not depositing their money in Tobago. They are not depositing their money in Tobago and we stand to lose, because the excess of what one collects over what one is allocated, half of it should stay in Tobago for capital investment. So, we must be concerned that we think that we are being robbed.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, on a procedural motion under Standing Order 9(8), I beg to move that this Senate continue to sit until the conclusion of Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie's contribution in the first instance; finally, Sen. Vincent Cabrera.

Question put and agreed to.

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Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie: Mr. President, as I was saying, these are matters in the THA Act that we have not dealt with and we have left room for all sorts of interpretations and actions. We have to be very careful. The financial rules, I understand, were sent since February, within the time-frame set by the Act. We have not passed them. We have not rejected them. We have not brought them here and we have not said anything. Therefore, the Assembly does what it feels it should do.

We go on to clause 73 which says there must be an administrator. It is in the Act. When they created the posts for administrators in 1998, in 1999, the assembly appointed administrators according to that. Instead of the service commission advertising the posts so that the Assembly could probably get those people who are acting in the post, they wrote some sort of letter to say get rid of the people or else something. By now, the Central Government does not see that when they say “or else”, the Assembly does not listen?

Sen. Mark: Mr. President on a point of order, for clarification, the Public Service Commission does not take direction from the Central Government. It is a

purely independent institution. I do not think the Senator should accuse the Government of being involved in that.

Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie: I did not. I said the service commission instead of advertising the posts. That is what I said. I said the service commission instead of advertising the posts wrote to the THA telling them to terminate the posts. I know you cannot do that. I am saying the service commission. That is the action they took. I am not blaming the Government at all. That is what they should have been doing, advertising the post, the people who are acting in the post and other people could apply and make the appointment, instead of telling them they created the post and would not advertise it. Same service commission. I am not blaming the Government for that at all.

Then they say that employment of people on contract is subject to the guidelines. Same thing. No guidelines? I set my own. Financial rules? Set them, pass them, reject them, call them in.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to appeal to the Government to encourage manufacturing in the non-oil sector in Tobago. Encourage it. Ask investors. When they are selling Tobago as a tourism destination, sell it as an industrial destination too. Ask the investors to come and set up things in Tobago. Not only hotels and guest houses. Ask them to set up manufacturing and so forth. All we have is the private people doing fish export and the little jam and jelly from the Roxborough cultural thing. Encourage investment in Tobago to do those types of things, and then, Mr. President, we can say that we are really developing the island and country totally.

Mr. President, as I said, there were things that I thought the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development and the Government need to be commended for and I have done this. I have shown where we need to look at the THA Act as a matter of urgency. As a matter of urgency, deal with it seriously and in their advertisement of Tobago, please, I am asking that the non-oil sector, because we do not have any oil, they can also advertise us as somewhere one can come and invest and make sure that they build up that type of development in the island.

I thank you very much, Sir. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Vincent Cabrera: Mr. President, I rise, of course, to support the passage of the Appropriation Bill before us. I want to put my stamp of approval on the budget statement and to congratulate Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung for presenting this budget statement which made such an impact amongst the masses of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, it is never an easy exercise to put down a budget when there are so many competing institutions and competing claims. One has to satisfy Tobago, one has to satisfy education, one has to satisfy health. There are a number of areas which one has to satisfy. I want to say that despite the detractors, despite the utopians—because I will come back to those people in a while—this budget statement will go down in the history of budgets in Trinidad and Tobago as one of the budgets of which we will be proud in terms of our national development.

As I sat and listened throughout the debate today, and I heard the statements made by a number of Senators—in particular, the hon. Sen. Danny Montano—I quickly came to the conclusion that coming events cast their heavy shadows on the Chamber of the Senate today, because it would seem that no explanation whatsoever would satisfy some Members on the other side. Even some of those who may admire us.

Though to some people the perception—and that is just what it is, a perception—people are not stupid. In the final analysis, people are not stupid. Despite all the editorials, all the arguments by the economists, all the views by the utopians, in the final analysis, the people in the society, the people who really matter, are not stupid.

I was very unhappy to hear the hon. Senator directly say that this Government, by virtue of the budget, is looking down on the people. Mr. President, a most unpardonable statement! I would not repeat what has been said in terms of the social safety basket. I do not like the term “social safety net” because I have always said that the only place I see a net is in a circus. That is the term the economists use, but I prefer a “safety ladder” because if, for some reason, people fall through the cracks, they could climb out again.

This Government has deliberately said—in every one of its major statements, the Medium Term Policy Framework and its statements in consecutive budgets—that those people who are most vulnerable, the Government would have to take action to defend their interests and to protect them.

6.25 p.m.

Mr. President, for an hon. Senator to come here today and talk about underclasses feeling that there was no hope, I ask the question: Who created those underclasses? Was it we of the UNC who met a state of affairs where people were alienated? I say quite clearly that as far as I am concerned, those underclasses, by virtue of the government that was in power for so long, were created by no one else but the failed PNM socio-economic policies in this country. I say very quickly

that the statement of the hon. Senator can only be described as scurrilous, unsubstantiated and should be dismissed for that reason.

The hon. Senator also said there were no measures in place to attract investment in Trinidad and Tobago. Apparently, he is living in a different society from us; he is living in a different society from Trinidad and Tobago, because whenever one takes up any of the international magazines—*The Economist*, the *New York Times*—one can hardly go through any of them without seeing some reference to Trinidad and Tobago and the fact that the state has been successful in attracting investment.

As a trade unionist, I would not stand here and say that is the only requirement for national development because one could attract as much investment as one wants. If one cannot provide jobs, one also has the problem of having some social dislocation, but the fact is, if the Government has been successful in an area, it should be complimented for it. I am hearing too many people simply criticizing the Government and the Opposition has not been able, up to now, to congratulate the Government on one measure; not one. I put that down to political biasness. That is how I will classify that.

Mr. President, I know the hon. Minister of Works and Transport would speak about that, but that hon. Senator to whom I referred before, also said that the UNC built no new roads. Because of my job, I have to be up and down the country. In fact, there are roads that I did not even know the Government had built but I have seen them. Apparently, he is not living in the same country in which we are living because I have seen several new roads, particularly in south Trinidad, come on stream. I advise the Senator to get down from the ivory towers a bit and travel around Trinidad and Tobago.

He spoke at length on this credibility gap, but it is clear from the statement made that if there is any gap for any credibility, it does not lie on this side, it lies on the other side and they should be big about it and say that they, in fact, should involve themselves in some self-criticism and that they have established this credibility gap.

Therefore, I would like to formally accuse the PNM of negativity and a total lack of vision in terms of its policies. I am particularly happy to see that the Minister has, in fact, established the Agricultural Disaster Fund because in my contribution on the last budget, I did, in fact, make a plea to the Minister to look at the question of farmers. I took some time to explain what happens to a society

when the farmers go through. It was not that I was seeking the interest of the farmers; I was seeking the national interest. I want to compliment Minister Kuei Tung for finding it possible to put this measure in the budget.

I refer to the education question and Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie, in her inimitable fashion, did outline the problems occurring in Tobago. There are problems. We know there are problems. We would be crazy to say that the revolution in education is a perfect article. We would be wrong to say that. There are hiccups. In fact, in particular, being a trade unionist and seeing that the trade union involved in education has been very critical of the Government in terms of its handling of the education area, I have deliberately not made certain statements.

I say, especially to the people involved in education, that whenever a trade union is critical, there is some question that should be looked at, but even so, I want to throw out a challenge to the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association to hold on to the opportunity it is getting to make the system work. I ask that of TTUTA today, because if the union that represents the professionals in the education system does not behave in a most responsible fashion, I fear that in time to come, some of those very teachers may not even be able to enter the schools because of the chaos and the blackboard jungle that will develop in those schools, if they have not yet developed.

I am speaking of those utopians talking about this thing is going to create more people dropping out. Mr. President, since I was doing O and A' levels, there were people dropping out. It is not a new phenomenon. I am of the view that you do not achieve immediate success in life. You have to keep trying so if, in fact, after a certain period, one reviews and sees that there are certain problems, then one has to deal with those problems but I will tell you one thing, it will go down to the eternal glory of the supreme being and the UNC that the UNC took this action on education. I say that without any fear of contradiction whatsoever.

Very quickly, I ask, through you, Mr. President, of Sen. Mahadeo Jagmohan: Is he, or is the PNM, a faction of the PNM, or a constituency of the PNM proposing to reintroduce subsidies? I am not one of those who blindly agrees with the views of the international economists of the financial institutions for that matter, but I know there are certain areas that are described as no-noes in terms of economic development, but the hon. Senator did make reference to not seeing any subsidies in the budget. That is why I asked that question.

Mr. President, we of the UNC have ploughed and drained the land. We have planted the seed. They doubted the seed would have germinated, but the young

trees have sprung up and they are being pelted and abused by those who do not want us to succeed. Let me say at this point in time that it may seem strange to the Members of this Senate that at a period of political factioning and competition in the society that I would make this statement, but personally I feel that it is time that both major parties in this society sit and look at the way forward and understand that there is need to put the best minds in both parties together for the interest of the nation. I say that and, in saying that, I remember the view of the hon. Prime Minister when this regime came into power. In fact, he opened his arms and made a suggestion that there be a government of national unity.

Sen. Mc Kenzie: Where is the NAR?

Sen. V. Cabrera: Mr. President, do you see the evidence of the pettiness and the low levels of people's intellect on this matter? As I said before, coming events cast their heavy shadow. I continue by saying that when you look around at the political landscape of the world today, especially in the Third World countries, especially in small countries, you are seeing more and more, coalition governments, if you want to call them that; national unity governments have to come up because the kinds of problems that we as workers, as people and as politicians, are facing in these countries, we need the best minds of the nation to come forward to carry the country forward. I simply leave that where it is.

I go on further by simply moving to the question of the socio—

Sen. Prof. Spence: Just for our edification, I wonder if the hon. Senator could name those countries in which there are coalition governments because I cannot think of any, but for our educational edification.

Sen. V. Cabrera: If the question is correct, is the Senator talking about coalition governments?

Sen. Prof. Spence: Yes.

Sen. V. Cabrera: Well, I did not walk with a list of them but we read the newspapers every day. Look at all the developmental conferences taking place.

I am saying if even that did not exist, we in Trinidad and Tobago have to understand what is going on, on the ground. You go into some societies; they are totally divided and people do not want to sit and look at what is called the common interest. That is the point I am making.

Sen. Mc Kenzie: Mr. President, may I ask: Why is he not saying UNC/NAR coalition?

Sen. V. Cabrera: Maybe a Freudian slip. I say that we are all big people here and perhaps we should stop nit-picking and look at the issue with which I am dealing.

I want to deal with one final issue. [*Interruption*] I stand more pressure than that already in life. I refer to the golden contribution of Sen. Philip Marshall. In fact, coming so quickly after another contribution, you could have compared and contrasted both and then decide what was chalk and what was cheese. To many people in the society, Sen. Marshall, the tripartite compact is still a mystery, still something of which they are not really aware.

One of the innovative developments that took place under this regime was seeking to call the social partners together to discuss affairs. In fact, even the notion of social partners had been alien to people in this society so that labour developed its own agenda; the employers their own agenda and the government its own agenda, but again, many countries in the world, including Ireland in particular, have understood the need to bring the economic partners together to discuss what is going on in their countries and the way forward. In fact, the question of tripartism has been also recognized by international development organizations as a necessary tool, particularly for developing countries. It was a very painful process.

I remember Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark and the hon. Minister of Labour and Co-operatives, many times sitting in meetings and becoming frustrated because there was labour on one side demanding certain things, the employers having a different view and the Government in the middle, also wanting to bring the thing together. After many, many months of discussion, of going through drafts, of correcting drafts and so forth, a final draft was arrived at and the hon. Senator made certain remarks about the compact and so forth.

6.40 p.m.

In fact, at a certain point in time, we were not sure whether we would call it a social compact, an economic compact, or a social and economic compact. Where we have reached so far is a declaration. The intention being, if it is signed—I cannot speak of the entire trade union movement, but as far as I am concerned and as far as I know, the most senior trade unionist in Trinidad is concerned, and with whom I have the opportunity to sit—that compact has to come into being. Maybe some of the larger unions will be able to ride out the storm that is coming, but the smaller groups need it.

I am making the point that, even in Barbados they have been able to sign a series of protocols, where commonality is established so that the pie could be bigger and the workers' section of the pie could also be bigger and improved. Just at the time when we were about signing it, the problems that took place in labour had arisen. But as far as we are concerned—what we consider to be the progressive and forward-looking section of labour—it is a prerequisite of national development that we have an economic compact. It is not going to be an easy thing. It does not mean to say all of a sudden the problems are going to evaporate. There is still going to be the need for trade unions, grievance handling, industrial courts, and ministries of labour, but you will have a framework within which to operate.

Labour will understand the imperatives of development. The employer will understand more about the trade union movement and the Government, the sort of overriding authority; will understand that they have to take into consideration the views of the social partners in social and economic development.

Mr. President, the concept goes so far that theoretically both social partners would have a seat in Cabinet as part of the decision-making. All this is very advanced and we, in Trinidad and Tobago have developed a very cynical attitude to anything new. I am sorry to say, but one can see it even in the Senate at times, that there is a cynical approach to anything. There are many people who will start throwing cold water on it even before it blooms, even before it comes to bear fruit. But as far as we are concerned, what we have had, in terms of experience in other countries, is that we have had people fighting savagely against it. But in the end, they see that there is a need to establish it, negotiate it, put it down and have a series of protocols, so that we may be able to go forward, understanding the imperatives of national development and making sure that this beautiful country that we have: Trinidad and Tobago, succeeds in the new and aggressive world.

I would like to say that I tried to be as brief as possible. Let me follow the protocol and also congratulate Sen. The Hon. Carlos John, Junior Minister in the Ministry of Works and Transport. I felt his statement was very well put. I look forward to hearing him speak again on behalf of the service of the nation.

Let me say in conclusion, Mr. President, I wish to support the Budget Statement that has been put on the table. I speak on behalf of the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2001. I am pleading with my good friends on the opposite side—though personally they may not like my style—let us try to take the scales off our eyes and look at the reality of a good budget and support the views expressed in this budget.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. V. CABRERA]

Monday, September 11, 2000

I thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Motion made and question proposed, That the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, September 12, 2000 at 10.00 a.m. [*Sen. The Hon W. Mark*]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.45 p.m.