SENATE  
Wednesday, October 12, 2005  
The Senate met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS  
[MADAM PRESIDENT in the Chair]

NON-ARRIVAL OF FOLDER  
Madam President: Hon. Senators, will you please sit. Unfortunately, my folder is not here.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE  
Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir, who is out of the country.

SENIOR'S APPOINTMENT  
Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Prof. George Maxwell Richards:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Prof. GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards  
President.

TO: MR. WALTON FRANCIS JAMES

WHEREAS Senator Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2)(c) and section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, WALTON FRANCIS JAMES, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 12th October, 2005 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir.

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 27th day of September, 2005.”
Oath of Allegiance Wednesday, October 12, 2005

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Walton Francis James took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

PAPERS LAID


APPROPRIATION BILL (BUDGET)

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 11, 2005]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.


The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to make my contribution to this testimony of achievement and a worthy call to service that has been laid on this table by the team of public servants comprising the Patrick Manning-led administration.

Every measurement, on every indicator, devised by man to measure effective and efficient conduct of public activities, shows that Trinidad and Tobago is a nation moving forward towards the 2020 goal and calling all its champions to service. Each of my colleagues who spoke was able to demonstrate a quality contribution to the growing improvement of the quality of life now being enjoyed by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

The business of government is making those interventions that improve the quality of life of the governed. The speakers earlier demonstrated that this administration is delivering on that requirement. The people of Trinidad and
Tobago are enjoying a better quality of life than at any previous time and the prospects for our children enjoying an even better quality of life than we could have ever imagined, is even better. Unlike some of what we heard yesterday and what was suggested by some of what we heard yesterday, the wolves at the door know that there is a shepherd to this flock. Hunger and cold is held at the bay. The terrorists, the thieves and the murderers know that the day of reckoning is at hand and the proponents of despair, civil strife and disobedience are losing hope, even as they cannibalize each other in a mad rush for the political brass ring.

**Hon. Senator:** That sounding like Wade Mark, boy!

**Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas:** On our side, Madam President, the Government working with the people as one people, under God, this PNM administration shall continue to strive for an ever improving quality of life for all our citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

This Government is working, and I am pleased to present to this honourable Senate and to the national community, the contribution of the Ministry of Local Government and the municipal corporations for fiscal 2005/2006 discussion. This contribution, I want to stress, is a report of the Ministry's achievements, given its pursuits of the plans, programmes and activities for the past year, as well as our outlook for the year ahead and beyond. I am pleased to have had several consultations with all 14 municipal corporations whose mayors, chairmen, councillors, aldermen and administrative staff have worked assiduously with the Ministry's staff to generate the Ministry's contribution to the quality of life enjoyed in 2004/2005 and, of course, to our expectations for 2005/2006.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Local Government has based its policies, plans and programmes on the national Vision 2020 thrust and especially so on the conceptions and activities that will lead to regional development and the maintenance, sustenance and creation of sustainable communities.

This presentation, we believe, is an endorsement of this administration's commitment to holistic development for all; whether you live in the east, the west, the north, the south or central, or wherever in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, since this Government assumed office in 2002, local government has addressed the concerns of citizens of this country in matters under its remit, in the most equitable and responsible manner. Therefore, I feel it necessary to say that the Ministry of Local Government, under this administration, has made greater strides than those of any previous government
towards achieving the realization of the principles of good governance and accountability at both the local and national levels.

The key priority for the Ministry of Local Government is to improve the lives of the citizens, through nurturing communities into entities in which its residents could gain and retain access to the social and physical infrastructure needs, business opportunities and family enjoyment opportunities, without decreasing the ability of future generations to do the same. In other words, we are seeking to encourage sustainable families in sustainable communities.

**10.15 a.m.**

Madam President, it is against this background that the ministry and the municipal corporations have played a major role in defining, maintaining and developing the social and physical infrastructure of communities and, by so doing, have also contributed significantly to the reduction in unemployment; the increase in community incomes and the overall improvement in community life; and the quality of life of the families therein.

I am therefore pleased to give an account of the matters under the remit of the Ministry of Local Government, as well as provide some perspective on the policies, strategic initiatives, the programmes and projects planned for fiscal 2006.

Madam President, I am going to start by discussing the decentralization programme. The main focus of the programme was the display to the nation of a draft policy paper on local government reform in 2004, as well as the decentralization initiatives consistent with this programme. In the last year, we demonstrated that this administration is serious about reform of local government.

The Local Government Reform Policy and Programme was laid in Parliament as a Draft Policy Paper on Local Government Reform 2004. In taking it through the various stages of policy development, you would recall that we had a series of consultations across the country. In this regard, we were able to produce a report on the consensual issues arising; we were able to establish and operate a Local Government Inter-Ministerial Transitional Task Force; we were able to lay on the table an Inter-Ministerial Task Force Report on the functions and responsibilities to be decentralized; we were able to deal with the recruitment of a decentralization unit that has professional staff; we were able to draft classifications and job specifications for the chief officers of the municipal corporations; we were able to lay for consideration, establishments for municipal corporations that are distinct from the establishment of the Ministry of Local
Government; we were able to start significant activity with respect to property taxation as a measure to be taken over by the regional corporations in which all—except one regional corporation—completed a Preliminary Property Taxation Verification and Field Survey. Some corporations have gone as far as finalizing their house rate books and assessment roll for review by the Valuation Division.

Madam President, this has been a massive undertaking, and the Valuation Division of the Ministry of Finance has been providing tremendous assistance in this endeavour. To cap it all, Madam President, we have produced and are about to bring for further discussion, a Revised Green Paper on Local Government Reform. Madam President, we are quite clear that this is a consultative process that must take into account all that is being said on this matter.

We have looked at this measure and we are quite clear that this Government is in step with the rest of the Caribbean and the rest of the region. We hosted the 20th Annual Convention of the World Conference of Mayors in Tobago from November 17, 2004 to November 21, 2004 and we further hosted a conference of Caricom Ministers entitled: “Deepening Local Governance and Participation in Caricom States”. In these discussions it was quite clear that the drive of this administration to ensuring that participation mechanisms—a participative process—are fully instep with the drive across the world, to bring the capacity for governance closer to the communities, as well as to ensure that these communities can, in fact, deliver on the responsibilities that they are given.

We were able to leave these discussions with a commitment by all the Caricom countries that this matter would be laid at the high level which is the Inter-American Network and Decentralization Local Government and Citizen Participation which has been convened by the host country, Brazil, on October 26, 2005 to October 28, 2005.

Madam President, we can list the various ministers from the various governments who took part in these activities, but we are quite gratified that we were left with a Port of Spain Accord. The Port of Spain Accord points to driving local governance as an issue throughout the rest of the countries of the Caribbean, Latin America and even the rest of the world.

We believe that the key agreements are reflective of our need to ensure that we serve the local communities and, especially, the poor or otherwise disadvantaged.

Madam President, unlike what was said by the leader on the next side, we believe that all our strategies and all our activities contribute to alleviating
poverty, and they are directed to the less advantaged in the community. It is when governments intervene that the population has an opportunity to gain any access to the resources of a country; whether driven by labour-oriented organizations, or driven by private sector organizations, the poor always gets left out. It is only when the Government intervenes that the disadvantaged in the community has a chance of achieving any success. We believe that the budget has mirrored demonstrations of concern and care and has provided for the poor and disadvantaged in our society. We believe that is in line with the local government reform agenda, and we intend to pursue those activities that were placed under the Ministry of Local Government for the benefit of the people assiduously, putting a lie to the argument that we ignore the poor, the disadvantaged, the rural communities or the disadvantaged gender individuals.

As we seek to pursue the ends of satisfying the wants of citizens in their regions and in their communities, one critical area of concern which gives an opportunity for the population to engage in public activity is in the provision of infrastructure.

Madam President, the ministry’s infrastructure programme remains a key priority in enabling communities to enjoy a better quality of life by improving accessibility to rural areas; improving drainage networks; and providing other necessary physical and social infrastructure that would ensure the safety, security and viability of communities, that is, ensuring that we have sustainable communities.

Madam President, for the year 2004/2005, the Ministry of Local Government has undertaken 2,711 infrastructural projects aimed at providing the necessary facilities, amenities and structures for raising the standard of living in the various communities.

Madam President, we claimed that there are 602 communities in the country, and if we have done 2,711 infrastructural projects, it means that there is an average of four infrastructural projects in every single community. In other words, there is no neighbourhood in Trinidad that has escaped the attention and the activity of local government. [Desk thumping]

Madam President, this number is distributed as follows over the various types of works: Under our Public Sector Investment Programme, there were 817 projects; the Road Improvement Fund allowed us to deliver 220 projects; the Infrastructural Renewal Improvement and Development Programme allowed us to do 302 projects; the Unemployment Relief Core Programme provided 950
infrastructural programmes; and the URP Special Projects was able to deliver 422 projects.

Madam President, for fiscal year 2004/2005, $237 million had been allocated, among other things, under the various programmes of the ministry and municipal corporations towards the construction, development and upgrade of 105,540 metres of drains and watercourses; strengthening and paving of 69,852 metres of roads; 7,438 metres of footpaths and sidewalks; 3,246 metres of retaining walls; repairs to nine landslips for a total of 250 metres—an impact over a myriad of secondary roads across the country—and an upgrade of 24 bridges.

Madam President, I must mention that the municipal corporations have provided tremendous support for upgrading and developing these key and needed community infrastructure through the various programmes.

The ministry’s PSIP continues to be the major source of funding for these corporations and would continue to be the major programme responsible for projects relating to drainage and irrigation; local roads and bridges; markets and abattoirs; cemeteries and cremation sites; recreation facilities, as well as those other projects requiring capital funding.

Madam President, for fiscal year 2004/2005, $108 million was released under the Municipal Corporations Development Programme, among other things for the construction of 69,390 metres of drains; 10,430 metres of roads; construction of four bridges; repairs to two landslips; upgrades to 10 markets and abattoirs; 14 cemeteries; 49 recreational facilities; and 19 local government buildings.

Madam President, that only speaks to some of the works. It does not speak to the work that is being done under the recurrent programme and the recurrent expenses, because the local government system has been clear that the efficiency of the workforce—whether it is development work that is being done by a contractor or by in-house staff, what is clear is that the recurrent expenditure with the sitting teams on the staff of the various corporations must improve and the efficiency and productivity levels must rise. We are suggesting that has happened and continues to happen.

Madam President, during fiscal year 2004/2205, the ministry as a partner with the municipal corporations was able to rehabilitate and upgrade some significant bridges that form a cross country access in Trinidad. The ministry, quite concerned with the continued capacity to take the load that crosses our country in places that straddle Trinidad, has acquired a new Bailey Bridge that allows us to respond in times of flood or in times of a collapse of any of our bridges. This year
we intend to add to that the acquisition of another bridge which allows us to put in 200 feet of bridges as required, wherever we have these instances of natural disasters.

Madam President, a little known aspect of the activities of the Ministry of Local Government lies with the markets. In these markets there are thousands of entrepreneurs throughout the country. On an every day basis, we provide access to these markets and we intend to continue to do that and to improve the conditions under which those markets are run. There are two markets that nobody remembers and they are: the Eastside Plaza and the New City Mall. These two organizations are responsible for facilitating a significant number of micro-entrepreneurs and encouraging, to a large extent, small business development. We have been able to upgrade the accommodation and facilities for users of these malls and anyone visiting these malls would notice the improvements to these buildings.

Madam President, this year we lose the Road Improvement Fund by a deliberate decision. You would recall that Cabinet established the Road Improvement Fund in 1993 to provide for the necessary financing of maintenance and improvement of roads throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Forty-seven per cent of the receipts of the road improvement tax went to this activity, and the Ministry of Local Government received $23.7 million. The input of all the municipal corporations were sought to produce the programme of work for 2005. Madam President, unlike my colleagues on the other side, the Ministry of Local Government, under this time, has been able to demonstrate equity and fairness in the distribution of funds for this programme.

Madam President, unlike their time when we had the reality where significant millions of dollars were given to three corporations—all the other corporations were starved for funds—in this instance, the 2004/2005 IRS disbursements to municipal corporations were as follows: Diego Martin Regional Corporation, $1.5 million; Siparia Regional Corporation, $1.5 million; Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, $1.6 million; and Chaguanas Borough Corporation $1.6 million and that is the trend.

Madam President, we want to say that because you see there are some persons who would want to have us believe and who come to town and say some things that are not true. They suggested that the local government system is being used to award political patronage. We are quite clear that the principles of equity, fairness and even distribution of the resources of the country dominate the actions of this Government.
10.30 a.m.

To date $23.5 million representing 220 projects has been disbursed to the municipal corporations and includes a programme targeting the construction of roads and bridges. Of these projects 180 were roads; thousands of metres of drains; upgrade to four bridges; hundreds of metres of box culverts; hundreds of metres of retaining walls, and of course, hundreds of metres of footpaths and pavements. We know that we lose this funding under this head, but certainly other arrangements are going to be made for the management and the maintenance of the roads.

Under the Infrastructure Renewal Improvement and Development Programme, the Ministry launched an attack on infrastructural irritants in various local communities throughout Trinidad, and towards this end the programme was created. The programme was designed to get emerging entrepreneurs involved in taking care of their own locality, through the allocation of community projects on a competitive basis.

Through the issuance of 302 contracts, we were able to utilize the sum of $25 million allocated to the municipal corporations for this programme to undertake among other works, the following—I am going to call the numbers because when I said hundreds and thousands a while ago I noticed some people were quizzical. There was a construction of 17,449 metres of drains under this programme; there was the strengthening and paving of 510 metres of roadways; there were repairs to 217 metres of landslips; there was construction of 285 metres of retaining walls; there was installation of 2,960 metres of footpath and sidewalks, and there was a rehabilitation of eight bridges.

Once our funding arrangements remain intact for this programme, small contractors and the community in general can expect an improvement in the quality of infrastructure and the income levels for fiscal year 2005/2006. We believe that there must be a planned approach to the development and maintenance of infrastructure in our local communities. We believe that this must be led by central policy. It is in that context that the approval of Cabinet was sought for a number of centrally driven programmes, from the policy context.

But in every single case I want to stress that the collaboration was sought of all the corporation leaders sitting together, both at a political and administrative level. We have a monthly meeting of all the CEOs, chairmen and mayors. It is out of this meeting the proposals come and these are what we take to the centre.
In that context, I want to highlight a number of programmes that are relevant to community infrastructure. The first of these is the introduction of a play parks programme in each municipal community, and to assure that this has already received the approval of Cabinet and funding for start up. We notice the streets of Port of Spain and the programme for the rehabilitation of the streets of Port of Spain's central business district has also been approved.

We looked at landslips across the country—I am not a geologist but I am going to venture a bit—in that the way our country is structured geologically—there are a number of shifts and changes in very short distances. So a given one mile of road may in fact cross at least 10 recognizable different geological structures with different characteristics. We noticed therefore that we have a number of landslips over very short distances, and therefore that requires a programme, both for study of what should happen when the landslips occur as well as, how we rehabilitate them when we work. It should also give us some advice as to how to produce our secondary roads.

We also noticed that the roads were not designed, as we would know, in the main, for a lot of central Trinidad. For example, those roads were built for carts and therefore, the structure of those roads and the direction they took were determined not by the geological structure but by other things. I think we would want to stop there and suggest that we recognize that a programme is required for evaluating our road types and systems.

We also want to engage the users of the roads, in that we have a phenomenon in which we repair the roads, then we have a tonnage of trucking over these roads that are not designed to carry this tonnage. We will be asking this year, for the cooperation of the citizenry as we close some of those roads to certain levels of tonnage of traffic. We cannot afford to have people gaining high level profits in the construction programme while they destroy the infrastructure at the secondary roads level. We have to do some reconciliation of that.

We need to upgrade our local bridges. We have hundreds of bridges of all different varieties; some of them with less than adequate capacity and therefore there is a significant programme that we want to treat with to do that. Then we want to respond to what we know are those frequent thunderstorms and drainage that we have, and this is the Bailey Bridges Programme. Yes, the Cabinet has agreed and we have funding for these programmes. The Ministry of Local Government and the Government recognizing the demands and challenges for the timely implementation of these programmes will continue to work with the
municipal bodies and other stakeholders to put in place the necessary plans, technical support, value engineering and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the timely implementation of the these programmes.

We seek to ensure—we think we have done so—but we seek to continue to ensure that there is value for money and citizen satisfaction at the end of this process.

I had the good fortune on Monday to visit Lendore No. 1; that is where a bridge fell and we were able to put the bridge back in three days. I think that is a record. But it lends itself to the type of response we want to be able to give. It also lends itself to the type of efficiency; the type of administrative structure that we want to put forward. You see it was a local problem and it was treated by the municipal corporation with the support of the Ministry, et cetera. But it could not be done, except there was a programme under that activity that was funded. That is why we want to enlist the support of this Senate for the measures put in place by this Government. It is in understanding how you make holistic approach to infrastructure development that you could understand why the budgeting process is this.

In most cities, regions of the world, we have what we call signature buildings. A signature building for Port of Spain is this Red House. The municipal corporations, as we seek to create them as entities; as we seek to have people hold them as entities around which they build their political, administrative and social life; there are no buildings that signify, for example, Chaguanas or Diego Martin, et cetera.

One of the activities that the Government has agreed to undertake is the building of corporation administrative buildings. In that context, the Cabinet has approved and agreed that the corporations can seek to put these buildings in place, with the collaboration, of course, of a special purpose company, the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDeCott). These new administrative buildings are not just for prestige, but they are also to improve the structural worthiness and ergonomics of the offices in which our staff works; the status and pride with which people come to service the local government, as well as to give citizens the experience they should have in a developed country as they seek public services and public goods at the various municipal head offices.

We want to suggest that the buildings can enhance citizen participation; can encourage more people to come to local government as practitioners and can encourage the citizenry to participate in the activities in their municipal corporations, as well as give signature to the various regions and corporations.
Madam President, preliminary designs have been completed for three municipal corporations: the Arima Borough Corporation, the Chaguanas Borough Corporation and the Diego Martin Regional Corporation. The structural designs for these are now being undertaken, but the designs have been shown to these three municipal communities, and I want to report that so far all the corporations and the burgesses from all the corporations are well satisfied with the designs.

We are sure that the municipal corporations which are in various other stages of preparation, for example, Princes Town, Sangre Grande and Siparia, are in the process of appointing an architect. The other corporations that have various difficulties for example, as the land tenure and the land access, et cetera and even in agreeing what they want, because you have some difficulty there sometimes, they would in turn join this programme. We expect that this programme would be done over a period that is not too long.

Continuing the discussion about municipal infrastructure: There has been a suggestion of a development of national systems of heritage parks, and I wish to start with—I always have problems with this word—Chaguaramas. That word always gives me trouble, I am not very good at it; the north west corner of Trinidad—Chaguaramas.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Charlotteville

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Yes, that one is easier. You see Chaguanas and Chaguaramas always give me a little difficulty. The development of a local government policy on this national system of heritage parks is in train and the assurance that this is proceeding can be given because we had consultations with various stakeholders and this discussion goes on. The programme for the development is apace.

The question of recreational facilities. The Government has decided that there shall be four regional recreational facilities in each local government corporation. It has also decided that there shall be sports facilities across the country. This is to be executed again by a special purpose organization and with funding provided through the budgetary process. We expect that this would add to the quality of life enjoyed by the people of these various corporations.

The Tapana Quarry—it is one of the few times I use strong language and say disgraceful—has been left by another administration to fall into ruin; we are rehabilitating that Tapana Quarry, as part of the means of ensuring that there is enough aggregate, at a cost and quality which would support the municipal infrastructure work. The provision of a maintenance programme for municipal
roads and the drainage infrastructure is also one of our issues and our programmes that we must take together.

We want to suggest that all of this has to be taken into context of comprehensive local area and regional planning, and therefore the process that builds this is now in design with the creation of a unit.

Finally, in terms of our markets and slaughter houses—this is where we all shop; where we all eat and the source of most of the food we have. We must bring these up to the highest standards. They have not been attended to. They are now being attended to, and those systems and standards must be put in place. You see, they also are security issues in terms of the food security; in terms of your access and accessibility. As we move on these initiatives, we can say to you that wherever the remit of the Ministry of Local Government touches; the work of local government reaches, there is an attempt to treat with the responsibility.

There is a final programme that I think we must bring to your attention. The fact is that there are modern systems for looking at infrastructure; for placing and identifying where it is; what is its size; what is relevant and whether it should be put in place or not. We are moving the local government system to the use of the geographical information systems. We have acquired the software and we are in the process of doing the training, and we need to be able to map the social and physical infrastructure we have, in terms of putting these projects into context in the wider local area and regional planning context and process. We believe that these activities all contribute to the development of sustainable communities in all corporations.

Oftentimes, we come into emergencies and natural disasters. Every year we have the flooding, but then we have some that are not so predictable, but the disaster preparedness is one area in which the local government corporations lend their assistance under the leadership of the disaster management organization.

10.45 a.m.

I want to make the point, again, in the other place there was suggestion that this administration did not care when certain things happened. I want to take this opportunity to say that every single time there has been an incident of flooding; every single time there has been any instance of disaster, the local government corporations have in fact responded. Sometimes, they have not always responded with the kind of framework that we would like, but sometimes other leadership takes over.
If the local government leadership is left to do what they are supposed to do without the interventions somewhere else—I use that somewhere else, advisedly—I want to suggest that maybe we would have a proper linkage between the Central Government agencies and the local government agencies that will bring relief to people. But sometimes individuals, for whatever other reasons—sometimes political—get into the fray and join the voices to things that, maybe, they should leave alone.

I want to suggest to you that even in the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, when we had an incident there, supplemental funding was provided to the tune of $2.68 million that was additional to the regional corporation's allocation, that funded and made available, and in fact, redress was given. In instances in Tunapuna/Piarco where you have another activist from another party—Kanglal—making a set of allegations, the reality is that the Government did step in and did give the kind of support that would have brought relief. I want to suggest to you that the regional corporations are doing a yeoman job and will continue to do so in terms of disaster preparedness.

Madam President, I now wish to turn to the URP. The URP is a success story. It gave me great gratification to hear yesterday from the Independent Benches, as well as the Opposition Benches, that there is no intention by other people to close the URP. I think a lot of effort has gone into making the URP administratively manageable, responsible and at least accountable. Today, if we can tell you what we are going to tell you next, it is because a whole lot of effort has gone into this. I would suggest to you that in previous times nobody could tell you anything because nobody knew what was happening. Some people gave the programme to a group of people to run it as they liked. You see they turned the curse on us, but we know what washing, what scrubbing and what cleaning we had to do, at great cost, at great effort and with a great use of time and manpower.

I just want to say to you what some of the achievements of the URP are. We consider it useful, we consider it relevant and we consider it productive. Madam President, for the period under review the combined core and woman's programme of the URP, employed 67,288 beneficiaries over 22 fortnights in a system of rotation. And this is in respect of 77,618 registered applicants. In other words, as these 77,618 applicants rolled through the system, we were able to give, as it were, an employment opportunity to 67,288 people. Respectively, the core programme employed 51,388 beneficiaries over 22 fortnights, as at July 29, 2005, in respect of 59,919 registered applicants, while the Women's programme
employed 15,900 beneficiaries over 22 fortights, as at the same date, in respect of 17,699 registered applicants.

Madam President, the 2004/2005 core programme focused on short duration, small-to-medium construction projects. An aggregate of 950 projects comprising mainly box-drains, footpaths and retaining walls were undertaken for which 722 were completed as at August 26, 2005. We have been able to accomplish the construction of 14,550 metres of drains, an upgrade of 2,113 metres of retaining walls, a development of 3,488 metres of footpaths and sidewalks, and rehabilitation of 12 bridges.

The women’s programme targets unemployed women who head family units and their hours of work are between 9.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. This programme, of maintenance and beautification work was carried out in approximately 331 Government institutions—mainly schools—and 76 pilot projects employing approximately 2,500 persons who were trained in the following areas: PVC furniture, tiling, soft furnishings, drapery, grow box, construction and upholstery of chairs. It is also encouraging to know that some of these women formed themselves into groups and sourced loans in a quest to become entrepreneurs. Some of them are in fact running their own business using the training they got out of the women’s programme in the URP.

The special projects component was established to deal with multi-dimensional projects aimed at addressing needs in communities. This component aims to provide projects of greater size and complexity and targets young and emerging entrepreneurs both as individuals and groups. The achievement is impressive, I gave the number already, but just to say that we had an upgrade to seven pan theatres; we had an upgrade on refurbishment to 16 public buildings; we had an upgrade and development of 11 playgrounds, play parks and recreation facilities; we had construction of eight bridges; we had construction of 16 box culverts; a strengthening and paving of 4,100 metres of roadways; a fixing and installation of 2,982 metres of footpaths and sidewalks; the building of 2,594 metres of retaining walls, and the building of 19,175 metres of drains.

Madam President, these projects were all across the country. Even as we say that the programme was a success, we are suggesting that we notice that there are things that require change. But it is said: “You cannot train an animal unless you catch it, and you cannot train it unless you bring it under control.”

We are at the point where we are saying that the URP must be reformed, and therefore, the programme this year will look at the continued provision of
infrastructural projects; the continued and substantial development of emerging young entrepreneurs in the special projects; the significant training of tradesmen assistants thereby contributing to their ability to compete in our newly reconstituted market in terms of the construction environment, and the support for the pilot project training initiatives in the women's programme. It has been argued that we should move URP to training and the creation equation of sustainable employment and some people argue that the URP must move to becoming the pool from which the employment occurs.

I want to make a point, Madam President. We had some conversations with some business organizations and when they were confronted with the task of finding work for 75,000 people, those organizations ran; they bolted.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Hon. Dr. L. Saith]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Comforting. I do not want to be misconstrued. The point I want to make is that you cannot have an economy with a hundred plus billion dollars being turned over in the year and then you have a significant part of your society not being part of the employment and earning stream. Therefore, as we turn to training these people, let us understand that it is not necessarily correct to say that the private sector is ready. It is also not correct to say that the people run from the private sector for no reason. I want to make the point that the private sector has to ask itself: What about their employment practices that may not be finding resonance with a number of people who may be alienated from the present employment systems in the country?

Is it that the private sector is not paying enough? Is it that they do not make any emotional connection to these people? Is it that their labour practices need redress? I am saying that the Government will address the programmes that are under the Government, but the private sector also has to ask itself, what are the connections the private sector is making to some of the communities into which we must recruit these people? I am suggesting, Madam President, that the Government, the private sector and these communities will have to deal with that issue as we go on, because there is no way that we can leave those 76,000 people out of the web of this social compact that we are trying to build.
But, Madam President, as we work, emphasis will be placed on training and retraining on the construction trades of welding, masonry, carpentry, steel bending, plumbing and electrical installation. We believe these skills represent the outcome of talks we have had with representatives of the construction and manufacturing sector and from which we have been able to get a good idea of what is relevant for the country in the short term.

Madam President, the URP will continue to ensure that as long as it survives it remains useful, and relevant and productive by affording short-term unemployment relief to those families experiencing employment distress, while enhancing the skills of individuals in the community as well as developing, maintaining and improving the physical and social infrastructure of these communities.

Madam President, all that we do is geared towards improvement of the quality of life at the regional and community levels. But the Ministry being what it is must be able to connect, capture the data, have the information built in such a way that it is useful for policy-making and for programme-planning and management. In this context the Ministry as a unit has to be restructured. The Ministry as a unit has to go through organizational management change, and that we are well on our way with. Madam President, we are working to the development of a strategic plan for the Ministry, an operational management plan and ensuring that these are linked with the Vision 2020 reports that are relevant to the Ministry.

As we do that, we are looking at some critical issues. One of these has to be the presence of chief officers for the regional corporations. There is a gentleman who likes to boast that the NAR as an organization in government put in place a law, and he forgot that they did not staff the administration, so therefore we are now about the business of staffing those administrations with the chief officers of the regional corporations. We have now created and activated the decentralization unit. We are now putting in the municipal police units; the property assessment and collection units; the information technology units in the various corporations, as well as at the Ministry. We are going to improve and modernize the information technology systems in order to maintain the effective and efficient information system, and we are going to ensure that the communication with the wider population is in place.

Finally, we are going to ensure that the Ministry and the corporations continue to be customer-geared again by ensuring that we put in a capacity for customer compliance and customer satisfaction.
11.00 a.m.

Madam President, the Ministry of Local Government seeks to play its part in what I consider to be an active, performing, delivering Government; one which facilitates an improved quality of life for all citizens; a Government which is ensuring that communities enjoy a sustainable lifestyle where families are able to pursue their interests and their best development prospects in those communities.

We will continue to work towards the transformation and renewal of society at the level of the corporations. We are going to work at the creation of sustainable communities whose residents are able to access their needs for adequate housing, social facilities, physical infrastructure and recreational employment opportunities, either within or in close proximity to their communities. In that sense, we are going to further the agenda of local government reform; develop the strategic plan for 2006—2009; develop a planned approach to the development of physical and social infrastructure and provide for those families who experience employment distress via the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP).

We are going to work at institutional strengthening and capacity building; we are going to develop and streamline the IT capacity of the Ministry and the municipal corporations and, finally, we are going to make arrangements to ensure that the Ministry and the corporations are people-responsive in a people-centred Government.

Thank you, Madam President.

**Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan:** Madam President, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to intervene in this budget debate.

The hon. Minister of Local Government spoke for over 45 minutes, almost an hour. I just have two questions for him. He said that he has been able to do a number of things in the Local Government Ministry. I just want to know if one of the things he has been able to do is stop the killings for turf that take place on a daily basis in this country over URP ghost gangs.

The other thing I would like to ask him is, what is the cost effectiveness of all the projects he has outlined that URP has achieved? A number of projects all over the country, very nice, but he did not give us the cost of these projects.

**Sen. Dumas:** Are you willing to let me answer? Are you willing to give way?
Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: He did not give us their cost effectiveness, so there is no way to judge whether these projects were really cost effective and whether the money spent doing these projects was well spent.

Sen. Dumas: Are you willing to give way?

Madam President: Are you willing to give way?

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: No, Madam President; I need to get on with my contribution; next time.

Sen. Dumas: Then you do not have a question. [Laughter]

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Yesterday we had a contribution by Sen. Danny Montano. His perception is that this budget is perfect; it is unassailable, irrebuttable; there is no answer to this budget. Like the hon. Minister of Local Government, he is also of the opinion that all the measurements, the economic indicators and so on, indicate that we have a perfect quality of life; that we are well on our way to development and developed country status in this country.

I submit that all the PNM budgets of the last few years have been dubbed "people budgets". They presented all the solutions for crime, family life, unemployment and poverty. All the resources, they have alleged, have been given to the police, the communities, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and so on. The problem is that all these perfect budgets with the total expenditure, to date, of over $100 billion, have not been able to stop the downward slide of the society into anarchy. That is the problem I have with these perfect budgets.

The reality is that prominent educationists and intellectuals in this society are concerned that we can now be practically classified as a failed State; that is the sort of dialogue and discourse taking place in our society today. Are we a failed State?

These perfect budgets in which Government expenditure increases every year—expenditure increased by over 33 per cent this year—where we see a plethora of social programmes, have essentially failed to stop the tide of hopelessness and despair and insecurity that our people feel in this country, with every passing day. The insecurity is palpable; you can touch it; you can feel it. The tears are real; the pain is overwhelming; the bodies are real. But according to Sen. Danny Montano's theory of perfect budgets, the whole country is delusional. If these budgets are so perfect, why are people so traumatized? Why are these measures not translated into the everyday reality of this country, where citizens are fleeing for their very lives from this country?
It has become so real that it touches every one of us and it touches me, in particular. The shooting of a pensioner, Mrs. Mullick, that took place at the corner of Park Street recently—that lady lives a few houses from where I lived in Gonzales. That Park Street corner is where I have stood hundreds of times to get a taxi to go to Gonzales; where my children stand up hundreds of times to go to Gonzales. Even now when they have to travel to Gonzales, that is where they have to catch the taxi. The other day I passed on Charlotte Street and there were the ribbons and the blood and it was extremely traumatizing, because it could have been me or one of my children; that is how close it was.

It got even closer that particular day, because when that gunman shot at the young man and shot Mrs. Mullick three or four times and ran up Park Street, my ex-husband was coming down Park Street, because he works in the community and he has a business there. When the gunman saw him, apparently he took him for a policeman or something, and he pointed the gun at him. My ex-husband said that he just froze and the gunman ran off; that is where the story of this gunman pointing the gun at a policeman came from. It was not a policeman; it was my ex-husband; he was passing through that area. So I could have gotten a phone call that my ex-husband was killed on that street.

As the Independent Sen. Balgobin suggested, if that had happened, do you know what people would have said? He was a bandit; he was a criminal; he was running from the police, because there is this tactic, this need to rationalize everything that happens in the society and say, "It cyar happen to me, as long as I am not a bandit, a criminal or a thief, it cannot happen to me," but it can happen to any one of us. That is the reality of these perfect budgets and measures that the PNM has been producing in this country for the last four years.

We have citizens in this country who have been snatched, literally, from their homes and off the streets and have disappeared from off the face of the earth and we have never heard from them again. Eight kidnap victims have never been heard from again; that is hair-raising; that is frightening. I do not know if the other people who sit on that side understand the pain and trauma that this society is going through, with their talk of perfect budgets and unanswerable budgets.

We live in a society where the headline is about kidnap insurance; that is the sort of discourse going on in the society that we are talking about. Should we take out insurance for kidnapping? I also heard radio programmes talking about counselling children who are sisters, brothers or family members of kidnap victims, what to tell them. You have radio programmes now telling you what to
do if you are kidnapped; how to act; how to talk to them; how to avoid being kidnapped. Where are we? What is happening in Trinidad and Tobago? That is the level of discourse and debate going on in our society. It is not about development and schools and children being happy and secure in their homes and families.

We are talking to the children now about how to deal with kidnapping and kidnappers and all that. We are facing the reality, on the ground here, of women and children who are on the front line in this war and this violence that has enveloped the society. In any country in which you have this sort of violence taking place, women and children are always in the front line. A report of the Rape Crisis Society of Trinidad and Tobago has indicated that in 2004 stranger rape recorded the highest figure; an increase of 14 per cent over 2003.

Madam President, 19 per cent of the cases reported in 2004 were gang rapes, which represented an increase of 20 per cent over 2003. This is what is happening in our society. I spoke about this in this honourable Senate, the fact that women are being, literally, dragged off the street and being raped and victimized in the most brutal way. These are the statistics. This is only the tip of the iceberg, because we know that rape is one of those crimes that tend to be very much under-reported.

Let me quote from this 20th Annual General Meeting of the Rape Crisis Society Report:

"The increase in stranger and gang rapes is a result of several factors one of which is the continuing lawlessness of our society and the failure of our legal system to detect and adequately deal with offenders. Accordingly, the public must be sensitized on the traumatic effect of rape, which in the short-term or long-term can sometimes result in suicidal tendencies. This risk is even greater when the survivor is infected with STIs or HIV."

This is what is happening in our society, after four years of perfect budgets.

I want to come to the question of the Draft Gender Policy, which was unceremoniously withdrawn in the budget. I hope that the Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs is going to be very vocal in protesting this abrupt withdrawal, no reason given; maybe because of the pressures exerted by some members of the society. This is an important milestone for the protection and development of institutions to protect women. I hope that I get some time to talk more about the Draft Gender Policy later on in the debate.
Here you have a situation where women and children are in the front line of all this violence and rape. You have situations where, as far as young innocent children are concerned, you have grandfathers lining up in communities to deflower or defile our children and you are going to withdraw from national debate a Draft Gender Policy which is meant to open up the debate, to open up the issues and protect women and children at this critical time in our society? This is another example of the Government being opportunist, because it refuses to face some sort of flack; it wants everything to be hunky-dory and nice and be happy with everybody at this time, because it has enough problems on its hands so it does not want to deal with that. But the women of this society, across political constituencies, are going to get up and deal with that, because it is critical.

I was still on the issue of Sen. Danny Montano and his theory of perfect budgets. I believe that if you come to this honourable Senate and you start off with an assumption that your budget is perfect, then why are we here? Where is the dialogue? What is the debate? It is better that you just send us the budget by email and we will read it and just accept it, if this is the attitude you are going to have. [Crosstalk]

11.15 a.m.

What is really sad and what affects the people of this country is the fact that with every affirmation of perfection, they are actually adding another brick in the wall with which they isolate themselves from the reality of the society. This is what they are doing with all these affirmations of perfection and so on. They are not looking at the realities, but blocking themselves off from them and, therefore, nothing positive, good, or productive is going to happen in the society in spite of all the perfect indicators.

Madam President, Sen. D. Montano, by his own admission said yesterday that for the first time a year or two ago he started to walk among the people and his amazement of seeing certain issues that affect people. You know, for somebody who has made this astonishing admission, he dared to question Sen. Mark’s analysis of the realities of the society.

Sen. Mark is someone who has walked every nook and cranny of this country and is acknowledged as a champion of the people in the society as is evidenced when he was elected, one man, one vote as a deputy political leader of the United National Congress. This is the calibre of the man that he has dared to question with respect to his knowledge of the reality of the society. That is outrageous and unacceptable, Madam President.
We are at a very dismal and critical stage in our history in this country but we
did not get there by guess and it was not a sudden process, it has been coming a
long while and we have to understand the process by which we got to this point.
My grandmother was a strong, Christian disciplinarian who often used a quotation
from the Bible to rebuke any number of sins that she perceived in the behaviour
of her grandchildren and she would offer this one in thundering tones:

Broad is the road, and smooth is the path to perdition, but narrow is the way
and rough is the road to salvation.

This is one of her favourite quotations.

**Sen. Enill:** What chapter, what verse? Which Bible was that taken from?

**Sen. Augustus:** The new age version.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** I think this characterizes the situation in which we
have found ourselves in Trinidad and Tobago today, on the broad, smooth road to
perdition.

Madam President, even the most rabid defenders of the PNM are disappearing
now from the political landscape leaving only the most inveterate and shameless
to position their tattered fig leaves in front of the nakedness and opportunism of the
PNM.

**Hon. Senators:** Ohhh.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** The increasing political isolation of the PNM, this
increasing chorus that we are hearing every day of disapproval, revulsion, and
condemnation which is now emanating from all sectors of civil society attests to
the fact that civil society finally, after four years, is taking note of the fact that we
are on the wrong road.

Madam President, this will be evident on October 22, 2005 when the Keith
Noel 136 Committee intends to stage a massive demonstration in Port of Spain in
order to protest this crime and violence that has overtaken this society under the
eyes and noses of the Minister of National Security and the entire PNM Cabinet.
This Keith Noel 136 Committee has been able to get over 100,000 signatures of
citizens who feel the same way.

Madam President, it is becoming painfully clear to all but the fig leaf
contingent that our country was derailed by treachery in 2001 and by gunpoint in
2002 from the straight and narrow road to national salvation, we just have to
exercise our memories and look at the difference. Each one of us sees it whether
we try to laugh it off, sing it off or divert the conversation. We all feel the difference. There was a tangible difference in the atmosphere of the society between 1995—2001 and subsequently.

The difference is that from 1995—2001, that this country for the first time felt hope. People felt a sense of hope, there was a sense of optimism and there was confidence that we can go forward together. National unity was our watchword and we were going forward together; productivity was high, our work ethic was high and we were moving forward to developed country status by the year 2010. That is the difference.

What is happening now, is obviously there is a sense of hopelessness in the society. Why are young men killing themselves out there? It is because they do not see a future, they do not see themselves being able to buy a house, or support a family. What are they to look forward to? If one looks at any newspaper in the country the cheapest house available on the market starts at $750,000. Where are our children going to live in the next 10 years?

So you have a young man in Laventille, Morvant, or Cocorite and it is impossible to rent. The cheapest rents are $1,500, $2,000 and $3,000. They cannot leave home. They are crammed up in small quarters with mother, father, stepfather, step children, everybody cramped up there and nobody can move. So you have three and four generations going through that. This generation is saying they are not going through that, whatever happen happens, they are doing what they have to do because they have lost hope that they would ever find a place in the society.

Madam President, that is the difference! We offered hope. There was optimism and confidence and now there is hopelessness because of what is happening in our country. And the road signs were there. We did not just talk 2010, we acted 2010, we were on the road to 2010 and the road signs were there.

Madam President, we built over 100 schools; pre-schools, primary schools, and secondary schools in the period we were there. Foreign direct investment was the highest it had been in the number of years. We are not making up anything. Between 1996 and 2001 the unemployment rate dropped from where it was in 1994 to 18.4 per cent; 1993, 19.8 per cent. In 1996, it went down to 16.2 per cent, then it went down to 15 per cent, 14.2 per cent; 13.1 per cent; 12.1 per cent; we brought it down to 10.8 per cent. These are the signs that show you are on the road to developed country status.
Madam President, we had a gross national product increasing from $20 billion to $53 billion over the period. We had foreign direct investment increasing over those years from $1,989 billion to over $5 billion in 2001. These were the road maps that let us know this country was progressing and developing and above all, people were beginning to have hope again.

There were development of roads and bridges and there was a culture of productivity and hard work in the society, the URP was ETP and people knew they had to go to work in the morning and train in the afternoon and they developed skills to be able to become self-sufficient. This was the culture of the country between 1995 and 2001, but we were derailed and hijacked and we are now hurtling at breakneck speed down the smooth, wide path of perdition.

Madam President, there were some among us who saw the dangers and we waved the red flags and said “this is not the way”, but our voices were drowned by the shouts of some among us who lifted their hands to the heaven to rejoice, and they sang and danced in the streets. “We have a leader”, they sang; and look at this road, it is broad and wide and smooth, we can play real mas’ on this road. “We Government in power, we father go take care ah we.” This is what they sang and danced to, and the mas’ started in earnest from that point.

Madam President, one section was named community leaders, by their father and given hundreds of ghost gangs, taking home thousands of dollars every fortnight. With this sort of political and economic power that these community leaders acquired, they became the most feared, respected, and the most powerful institutions in the communities. That is what effectively took place. They were and they are a government within a Government. They controlled every facet of community life.

There is so much tears and pain in the community because they control transport in the communities. A man with a gun will come in your car as a taxi driver and will tell you he wants to go to Cunupia for whatever, and you have to go, because the man has a gun at your head. This is what is going on in the community. There are no police, the communities were given over to these gangsters and community leaders, and I have also been touched by that.

The father of my nieces and nephews who lived in La Horquetta was shot in the back of his head while plying his taxi for hire going about his lawful business. It was suspected that because he refused to obey the bidding of one of these gang members he was shot and left there.
Madam President, the commercial lives are controlled by these people. They have their own systems worked out, their revenues, expenses and the businessmen have to pay their community taxes. The social life is controlled by gangsters.

Did you know that in many communities now with all the programmes they have out there, young girls and boys are not able to go out and do anything because they cannot return home after 6 o’clock because there is no transport? Nobody is taking you into any of these communities after 6 o’clock. If one goes to South Quay and looks at the sort of crowds for taxis to go to certain districts of Morvant, Laventille and so forth after 6 o’clock, people are suffering, they cannot get home because of the control of these bandits and community gang leaders of the communities.

Madam President, those community gang leaders are able to buy out whole families; mother, daughter, toute bagai. There are situations where three and four young girls in the area are pregnant for one community gang leader and these innocent and unsuspecting victims accept rank and status of being the child mother of the “baddest” man in the area. This is what is happening. This is the culture that is being engendered in these communities.

Madam President, “Young brides of Dracula”, that is what is going on in these communities and the young men are commandeered. Who will tell a bad boy you are not going George Street for a pound of coke and bring it back for him? Can you tell him that? Once you step out your house, you are at the mercy of these people in the community.

There are no police to protect you; you have to deal with it. They are commandeered into gang life and to lawlessness and the elders in the community are sidelined, overruled, sidestepped, they have no power or authority because they are not able to control their families. They are not able to tell them to come home at a certain time or do this or that because outside forces are controlling that family. Outside forces are bringing in the URP cheque and telling the young man what to do, outside forces are controlling the mother, daughter, everything. There is no family life anymore, there is no control by elders anymore in these communities and this is what is happening. The elders are at the back of the band and this is one section that we are dealing with.

11.30 a.m.

There is another section in this mas’ which sits on the right hand of the father, a few rungs up the ladder. They also sang and rejoiced when this country was derailed onto this broad and smooth path to perdition, because these are the
citizens whose businesses are blooming now. CEPEP contracts—you open a company today and tomorrow you get a CEPEP contract as long as you know the right people. We have seen it happening in communities. These things cannot hide. What do they feel, that people do not go down and talk to people and understand what is happening in the communities? We talk to the people; we are there every day and we know what is happening.

You have state companies; people playing themselves; construction; advertising; you form any company, anything, you are getting your contracts. Friends, family, favours; they also rejoiced and had a nice time and are playing a real mas’ while the majority of the people stand on the sideline helpless and hungry because they have lost their leader and they are on the wrong road.

There is another section. This is the big mas’ section; the Tuesday mas’. They rejoice and raise their flags because the coast is literally clear and there is this unimpeded movement now, of the white powder and the weapons of mass destruction coming into our society. This is the foundation of untold wealth and power in this society. So they love themselves; they are playing themselves. This is the big money section. Like Smoky Joe, they are playing a big-time mas’

In the ensuing frenzy of power, wealth and lawlessness that has been unfolding in this country under the eyes of the Minister of National Security and of every single member of this PNM Cabinet who have collective responsibility for what is happening in this country, everything is bought and sold: integrity, honour, trust, responsibility, country. It is easy to buy that. If not, how come $50 billion of drug money is laundered through this country and other Caribbean countries every year and nobody picks it up? How is all this money being laundered through the system? In the Review of the Economy there is exactly one line saying they are going to deal with that. What is happening, after four years? Millions of dollars are being laundered through this economy and nobody knows what is happening. It is not that it is a secret. Our country is literally mortgaged and sold to the highest bidder. The future of this country is mortgaged and there is no security in this band because, as the calypsonian King Austin said: “Question for the lards; who are to guard the guards?”

So what is happening here is no secret; I am not making it up. In the Mirror of Friday, September 30, 2005, there is an article at page 7 by A. Anderson Morris which is headlined: “High society drug war will claim more lives”. When we first started to talk about this in 2001 and raised the red flags and we were up and down this country telling people what would be the price of derailment, and so on, in that if you sleep with the devil it is difficult to be able to pay him afterwards,
nobody took us on, but now everybody is coming out: “Yes, it is true”. And everybody knows all the facts.

Let me read a couple of extracts from this article.

Hon. Senator: Who is the author?

Sen. Abdul-Hamid: Turn around the paper and read the other page.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: A. Anderson Morris. I quote:

“The three reasons why crime has not been brought under control in TrnT are the escalating war for control of the multi-billion dollar drug trade between the divided Syrian Connection and the Portuguese/French Creole Bourgeoisie; corruption in the Police Service and the lack of political will on the part of the government to put a stop to the criminal elements who provide financial support to political campaigns.”

Another interesting paragraph reads, and I quote:

“No wonder, one day we hear about a senior policeman who is head of a kidnapping ring and the next day, you hear that there is no such thing.

This was after an elite unit searched his house and, guess what, they allegedly discovered $400,000 in kidnap ransom notes.

The problem is the particular unit has no legal status, one; and, secondly, members did not effect the search with a proper warrant.”

Another interesting paragraph goes on to say that this particular officer is threatening:

“…to bring down the entire top brass if he were taken down.

He also threatened to blow the cover on a covert political operation to plant cocaine and a missile in the water tank of Opposition United National Congress (UNC) Senator Sadiq Baksh.”

It goes on to say:

“Another high-ranking lawman and a relative were caught red-handed depositing marked ransom money into an account at a local commercial bank last year. “

Nothing came of that. It goes on in the same vein. He made an interesting quote at the end of this. He said:
“I believe Alfred Hitchcock, English Film Director (1899—1980), spoke for a lot of us in this quote: ‘I’m not against the police; I’m just afraid of them’.”

This is what is happening in this country. It is no secret anymore and this is why civil society has finally rebelled. I saw an interesting advertisement by the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association where they said: “We are not interested in the Opposition and in the Police Commissioner; we are interested in you, hon. Patrick Manning. What are you doing to deal with the crime situation?” They have pinpointed the problem, The Prime Minister and his Cabinet are responsible for what is happening in this country. Do not try to put the blame on every other citizen.

So what is happening here, actually, is that those who danced, rejoiced and lifted their hands to the heavens in glee in 2001, are now in sackcloth and ashes, lifting their hands to the heavens begging for deliverance from this leader who had been imposed on them. Because as it turns out, this leader was not really a leader but a dealer in death, destruction and devastation. That is what is happening in this country.

So there are frantic cries in the society. Is this the road to developed country status? We are hearing a lot about 2020. Are we on the right road? I mentioned the road sign when we were on the road to developed country status in that narrow track we were going down, with the belt tight and we were making sacrifices and producing and working and going down the road. On this broad, nice, wide road, we are seeing the road signs, you know. Read the road signs. Nobody has to tell you anything. Nobody has to tell me if I am on the road to 2020 status. I can read the road signs.

Listen to what the road signs are telling me. You are going down; hurtling down; you hardly have time to read them because you are going so fast: It is homicides, fratricides, guns, gangs, rapes, beheadings. It was awe inspiring. We have reached the stage where citizens are being buried without their heads in this country. What is this? This is not somewhere in the back of Colombia. I continue with the road signs going down the road: lawlessness, poverty, hunger, kidnapping.

Madam President, the signs are there; we can read them. Policemen are being gunned down in police stations and in the next few hours the Commissioner of Police is able to tell the country that it was an accident. I do not understand how a man could be gunned down under circumstances like that and in four hours you
know it was “an accident”. I would have thought, as an ordinary citizen, that extensive investigation would have to take place before it is determined whether it was an accident or a joke. What is that? And we do not say a word about that and everybody is going down the road.

This young policeman of whom I speak, Mr. Guerra, was a resident of Cumuto. I went to his funeral and I experienced the pain and heartache, because my children are close to his children and nieces and nephews. It was horrendous, because he was the perfect family man. He told his father that he was planning to get out of the police force. Maybe that is the mistake he made. He articulated the fact that he wanted to get out of there, for whatever reason, and he was gunned down “by accident”.

We have cases of young ordinary seamen—this Hodge boy, being gunned down. What is that? This is a road sign. We are not on the road to developed country status. This is madness! [Desk thumping] “This is not ah fete in here; this is madness!” My heart goes out to the mother of that young ordinary seaman, because she had so many plans and hopes for that nice, handsome young 21-year-old son, and today she has to bury him. Is this right? Are we on the right road? If this is the way to developed country status, I do not want it. We do not want developed country status.

This is not the sort of developed country status that we dreamt of when we marched in the 1970s, in 1973, when we took up guns to defend this country. We dreamed of a better way of life where our children would be secure and happy in their families and communities, where they could go and come as they please. Children make up their minds to die now, you know. They do not feel that they would outlive this. My daughter was telling me—you are so afraid to let them go to a little function in the night—“Mummy, if they have to kill me, they have to kill me, you know. If ‘ah’ born to hang ‘ah’ can’t drown. So I am going out there and nobody “ain’t” stopping me from living my life and enjoying myself.”

This is the sort of rebelliousness and attitude that they have, to even live. But I know deep down there must be a fear. And they are frightened for me also, because they told me: “Mummy, if you are coming home in the night after Senate and you see a car without lights, do not blink ‘eh’.” Madam President, you know the story that there is this gang in Trinidad and Tobago—the Crypt—and the initiation ceremony is that they would travel with their lights off and the first car that blinks at them to let them know that their lights are off, they follow that person and kill him or her. True or not, this is the perception and this is the fear with which every driver is driving in the night in Trinidad and Tobago now.
It is scary. And the Minister of National Security has told us that he knows that there are 600 gangs with so many gang members and he knows everything about them. Why are they running loose terrorizing the population? Why can they not do something about pulling in these people and bringing them to justice? This is not where we want to go. This is not the road to developed country status. This is not the path to development in spite of all the indicators; in spite of all this perfect budget.

I spoke about the number of kidnapped victims still missing and I have some crime statistics here that are old and outdated because it is quite September 25. The murder at that point was 290, and now, as I understand, it has passed 300. We cannot keep up with it. Madam President, do you remember long ago when a murder was a big thing? You used to remember it and everybody used to be traumatized. I remember when I was small there was this big headline: “Head in a flower pot”. Murders used to traumatize the whole society. Now we cannot keep up with them. When they tell me: “You remember this one who died”, you are getting confused because it is so much. A lot of it is senseless; a lot of it is revenge. The criminal justice system has broken down.

Do you know that a lot of the deaths and shootings that are taking place in Arima right now—and the police know about it; do not tell me the police do not know; they know everything, because one afternoon I heard that they found the decomposing body of a man under some bridge in Arima and in the same news release they were able to tell me that they believed that he was a victim of the revenge killings for Anisha who was shot in the pan yard. So they know. How could you tell me that right away without any investigation taking place?

Every other youth has a gun and they are bypassing the criminal justice system, and when something happens to your friend or family, they are going for you. It is summary, swift justice. They are not waiting for any police or courthouse and all this set of “tra la la”. It is summary, swift justice on the streets. This is what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago right under the noses of the PNM Cabinet and the Minister of National Security. Seven people have been killed in Arima as reprisals for that Anisha shooting and nobody has been held. So there is no justice for all these youths and all these lives that are being lost.

11.45 a.m.

What is this? This is lie? These are people who have died; sheets and sheets of names of people dying in this country. The number of kidnappings is over 164; children kidnapped and there is the whole statistical analysis. This is our lovely, beloved Trinidad and Tobago.
Madam 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. W. Mark]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Madam President, this is depressing. That is all I can say. I believe that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will make very strong statements about how depressing it is on October 22.

In spite of all this we have all these cynical statements being made in the budget with respect to support for families. I just analyzed how the family is being torn apart; ripped apart; sabotaged and undermined in a number of different ways in this society. The budget said that the family is the basic unit of society; the main building block. If you can fix the family; you can fix society. The budget went on to list all the challenges facing the family.

It is guaranteed that the Government with its perfect budget would fix all this. After four years they are still guaranteeing that they would fix the family when the family is in shambles and young children are being defiled and deflowered before they reach puberty. Families are being torn apart every day in this country. How will you fix that? With money? With programmes where the bureaucracy takes up 90 per cent of the vote? Whom do they think they are fooling? They are not fooling anybody.

In the social and economic policy document they admitted that seven out of 10 of these young people do not know about three quarters of the programmes and the participation rate of these programmes is even less. They know that they are not fooling anybody. It is the “ol’ mas’” band that is going down. Plenty work for plenty people who could collect a dollar when the day comes and go out to campaign afterward. This is a fraud; it is a hoax. Nothing is happening in the community. Families are being mashed up. Young girls in the communities are being left to make more children.

My youngest daughter has this big theory that you have to shut down the factory of criminals in this country. Do you know the factory of the criminals in this country? The young 16-year-old girls who are being left to rot in the communities and the only way out for them is to be befriended by these gunmen. Shut down the factory; get these criminals out of the community; get social services in the communities where the children need them; educate them and let them develop themselves. Do not fool anybody with this 10,000 million
programmes you have here and none is being executed or translated into any social development for young people in this country.

I know many young girls 16 and 17 years old in my community who have passed through secondary schools and have six or seven O’levels. They are stagnant because their parents are poor and unable to send them for tertiary education. Free tertiary education is a myth. I talked about this already. If you pay for tuition that does not mean that those children could reach university or tertiary education. You must have a home and family to see you through tertiary education. Right now, I am fighting to put my two daughters through tertiary education. It is a hard fight and I am not in the poorest bracket. If you are not committed, convinced and rabid about it, they would not go to school. You have to give them transport; money for lunch; clothes and buy their books which are very expensive. Giving them tuition alone would not cut it.

I know about free tertiary education because I lived free tertiary education in Cuba. I know what free tertiary education feels like. Do you know what it feels like? When you reach to Cuba as a foreign student you are housed and the local students who come from outer provinces are housed in dormitories on campus. You get up in the morning and go to the “commodore” or dining room for breakfast. When you are matriculated you go to the office to get a paper for all the books. They give you all the books that you need for the year. You do not have to worry about books.

You go to your classrooms to learn to do what you have to do. Lunchtime you go to the “commodore” where you are given lunch and in the evening, if you live in Havana and have to get back home, buses arrive on campus and they take everybody back home. That is what free tertiary education feels like. You cannot fool me with “you are giving free tertiary education”. Many of those young children are rotting in the villages because they cannot access any of those things. They cannot come out. They cannot raise their heads because of this.

The Minister of Education—yesterday was really horrifying with some of the remarks that were made about early childhood care centres that were built under the UNC. In this year’s budget they talked about building 600; last year, they said that they were going to build 43. I cannot find anywhere in this document where they built one. The Minister of Education told this honourable Senate that she had a long list of complaints about the early childhood centres that were built under the UNC: They have no water tank, walkways, and the design was not good.

According to my hon. friend, Sen. Robin Montano, I will bet you dollars to doughnuts that when those young mothers who have to hustle to go to
work on mornings bring their children to the early childhood care centre and leave them there in the knowledge that they would be taken care of by professionals with love and attention, they would not ask if there is a walkway or if there is no paint. They do not care about that. They want to know that they can leave their children in a reliable and safe environment and go out to earn a dollar. That is what they care about. This is what the UNC gave to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. How many childhood care education centres the PNM government built in 40 years? They are coming to outline every little fault.

You are in power; you have a $34 billion budget, fix it! Anything that needs fixing, fix it! [Desk thumping] If you find it is pure concrete and it wants a little paint, put a little paint! If it wants a walkover, put a little walkover! The reality is that we served Trinidad and Tobago and the young mothers who needed to go out to work to earn a dollar and needed to leave their children in a safe and reliable environment. Do not come with this long old story about all the little faults line by line. It is ridiculous! If you could have told me that you built 60 I would listen to that sort of propaganda. “Yuh eh build none and yuh come to criticize what we build.

The young people in this society are being short changed. There has been much talk about the increase in enrolment in tertiary education. I know for a fact because I have many young people friends on campus who are under pressure. This Government had forecasted that it would introduce free tertiary education in 2008. The big announcement was that they have brought it down to 2005—2006 because they have money. They feel money could solve all the problems in this country. You have to plan; organize and put infrastructure in place. They get excited and because an election might be around the corner they want to impress everybody that they are giving everybody free tertiary education. I am not against free tertiary education for young people. I am happy for them but you have to plan it properly because it would be counterproductive.

The campus is “ram packed”. I went in the Guild Office; there was a whole stack of folders and the name on that folder was Parking on Campus. You have to put a whole document to deal with the issue of parking on campus; where you could park and the hours when you cannot park.

My information tells me that there is no classroom space. For tutorials students are being short changed because they cannot get a class for tutorials. Day classes go on into the night. Professors have to hijack classrooms; there is confusion about “this is my classroom” and “you take my space”. It is madness
going on on campus because of the lack of planning. Everything is a political football, even the future and education of the young people. There is no space on campus. I heard the people in south are calling for a campus.

If you tell me that by 2008 you would expand campus space; have a certain number of entries and a structure to this, I can understand what you are doing. If you said that you were going to do it in 2008, you can never be ready in 2005—2006. “How yuh could be ready? This Government running by vaps.” Nobody is planning. Where are your planners and the people who work out the logistics of this thing? You could jump up one day and say you advance this programme by two years. That is nonsense and they are not fooling anybody. Everybody knows that this Government is just moving on expediency; it moves by vaps and it has no notion of national development and developed country status.

Finally, I would deal with the whole question of the national gender policy. It is scandalous and outrageous that this national gender policy has been derailed. The words I used in my budget contribution were actually used by Miss Hazel Brown of the Coalition of Trinidad and Tobago NGOs in support of the national gender policy. She said that it was unfair that the gender policy was going to be derailed. What is so subversive about this document? Why have they pulled this document and denied that the draft gender policy was a document of Trinidad and Tobago? What are they afraid of? What is the problem?

I do not see any subversive proposals. In any case, let the issues be aired because women and children are in the front line. They are the victims of the most amount of sexual and physical violence. Just the other day a woman was stabbed to death in a gas station. When men are under pressure they bring all the pressure home to the women because we are the most vulnerable ones. This gender policy says that we need gender equity and participation in the labour force. What is so subversive about that? Why do we have to withdraw it?

12.00 noon

Is the Minister against legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace? Is the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs against gender differentials and poverty alleviation? Is she against gender and unwaged economic activity? Women have to get up and fight. She has to fight in the Cabinet to ensure that this draft gender policy is discussed in the society. She has to do it. Because that is the only way she would show the women of this society that she is serious about gender affairs. If she is not serious, move aside, I will go, Madam President. I will take the ministry. [Desk thumping]
Appropriation Bill (Budget)  
Wednesday, October 12, 2005

[SEN. DR. KERNAHAN]

Fostering employment and economic development in the agricultural sector, domestic and family life. Madam President, there is nothing subversive about this; there is nothing unlawful about this. What is subversive and unlawful is the fact that our women, our children, our young girls have been given over lock, stock and barrel to the gang leaders in the communities and the “ol’ mas’” that they are playing in the society, in the communities.

Madam President, we are in a critical stage. We are on the wrong road. This is not the road to developed country status. All the signposts say that. We know what the signpost said in 1995 and 2001 and we know what it is saying now, we are on the wrong road. We have to come off this road and get back on track to carry this country towards developed country status. Thank you.

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Madam President, I think the entire country is looking forward to the role that this Parliament would play in helping to shape this budget in the public’s interest. When I say “in the public’s interest” I mean, among other things, that there is a great amount of distress with respect to poverty, crime, social relations and the general political culture of the country. I, therefore, take this exercise during this debate with that kind of solemnity arising, of course, from the oath that we all took, that is, that we must engage in matters of government putting aside all personal prejudices and trying to see what positive contributions we can make, as the oath has instructed, to the welfare and prosperity of this country.

I should start off even though I did not intend to—the last speaker—in terms of the gender policy. It is refreshing—in fact, whatever the merits on the other side might be—to see on such rare occasions that there is an important issue on which the two parties differ. It is important to know in terms of social issues and even on the issue of public morality, perceived or real, where each party stands. I think it is a good indication that maybe we really have a two-party system at least on this particular issue because as far as the political culture goes and looking at the history especially on the issue of crime and from where I stand, especially on the issue of poverty, on the issue of managing the economy, at least from where I stand, there is very little difference in terms of ideology or in terms of public administration. That is pertinent to the debate because while politics by its very nature is consumed with euphemism and extreme statements on either side, we have a perfect budget. That is really not true, it cannot be perfect. No budget can really be perfect. On the other side not everything is wrong with the budget.
I have tried to measure the vices and virtues of the budget and I have found that there are 15 good things about its programmes. I have found five that are, in my view, not good. I have found ten good but I have reservations and I could explain those given the time. I will come to those later on. But I approach this budget with some solemnity because I think it is helpful but to a limited extent to groan and moan about the problems which we all know about. And the Opposition has a legitimate role to play in articulating those areas of concern. It must also establish itself if I may say so with respect, as a viable alternative because that is in the public’s interest. And having said that and having invited them to be a viable alternative, there are elements in the democratic process and in the parliamentary democracy that we have that they too must fulfil. I think the public awaits such fulfilment with bated breath. There are obstacles which I do not need to get into. [Interruption] That is what I mean, euphemism and extremities.

Madam President: Please allow the Senator to make his contribution.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Because this country is not only about the Government. It is about a responsible, viable alternative called the Opposition, and I would welcome that entry into the politics.

I congratulate Sen. Conrad Enill and his team for putting together the budget documents in the way that they did. There are some officers in his Ministry, Mr. Eric James; if Sen. Enill could convey my personal commendation to his senior staff and to the budget officials, I think that would, perhaps, help Mr. Enill be less disenchanted with some aspects of the systems, if not the personalities in the public service.

But having said that, I remember when Mr. Yetming was the Minister of Finance—I am not here to remove a Government, I am not here to suppress an Opposition. I am here to explain the matter from a professional point of view first and foremost, and it was in that light I suggested to Mr. Yetming during the budget debate, that in view of the problems he was having administering the expenditure side and the need to manage that expenditure from the Ministry of Finance position that he set up a sort of management performance audit unit in his Ministry. I believe he accepted that. I do not know how far it has gone or not, the extent to which it would have duplicated other instruments but he was enamoured with the suggestion and he made deliberate moves to get it instituted. I am saying so because there are limitations to how much a government can do.

Government in a democracy as ours has inherent limitations, if only because of the constitutional safeguards but also because you must leave room for families
and individuals to make choices about their lives. I believe that is a central dilemma in the social sector programmes that this Government has. They have all the expenditures in vast areas and while those expenditures are welcome, Madam President, there is still another aspect of the democratic equation and that is the question: Are our citizens prepared to be responsible enough to use that money profitably and in their own interest? I believe that is one of the thorniest issues facing us because it speaks of incivility and it speaks of abuse of the money and the grants given to the deserving citizens of different kinds. That is why I believe until such issues are changed in this country, changing a government would make little or no difference. Why? Because the political culture in which we live is more powerful than what a government can do even though it is willing to do it. I will speak a bit later about the political culture I am talking about.

I alluded to it just now that the two parties seem to be very similar when you look at the previous budgets as I have examined them and I have them here, and the ones that we have now because the needs in the society are quite similar. But it is a political culture in which we live which reminds me of the statement which, perhaps, was used in the wrong context that “politics does have its own morality.” It was used at the wrong time but when one examines the evidence, how our politicians behave, one realizes that politics has its own culture.

There are some welcome issues that were raised by both sides in the debate so far and I want to take time to allude to some of them. Sen. Dumas who is not here, to me, faces a monumental struggle which, of course, he had nothing to do about. He did not create the URP.

On the human side—and I watched him agonizing in his contribution and in my view doing everything that a minister can humanly do to control and develop that programme. The need for that programme did not develop overnight. All of us know the history of that programme. But more than that, it is an example of the distortions that we have in the social economy of the country meaning in the first instance, the educational system and the private sector. That important point he made is disconnected significantly and the Government has to pick up as much as it can since it started as a parallel example to increase the number of public servants in the 1960s, because they had to accommodate university graduates and there was some artificial build-up in the public service from which we never recovered. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had to come in and so forth.

A government cannot have all these students coming out of school—I am not speaking only about recently, I am speaking about the history of the distortion that
is putting so much pressure on the system. The distortion is in the schooling, feeding into available jobs both in the Government, the public, and the private sectors. Sen. Dumas is right and I am happy he has made the point. I wish the public sector could stand up and take notice and do some of the things that they should do apart from putting pressure on the Government to do this and that overnight. They have a responsibility as well in serving the interest of this country because they do get subsidizes. Much of the expenditure incurred by the Government really redound to the profitability of the business, the private sector, and if I had time I would have enumerated all those.

The private sector must be more grateful to the Government, not politically, but in terms of enhancing its social programmes and accommodating some of those graduates from other institutions, even if it means forming a new partnership that is more specific and precise to the URP programme. The private sector, the Government and the schooling and training institutions more precisely, should get together to see how the jobs that are available in the private sector can be reshaped or vice versa, to help the Government carry this heavy load of 75,000 persons in a URP programme. This is not sustainable and in the reformulation of the URP programme I wish the private sector could take heed of Sen. Dumas’s words and rise to the challenge. That would also help reduce crime, it would help promote social stability and then we can say that the private sector is putting its money where its mouth is. I would come to that a little later.

Jobs—and I am departing from what I wanted to say really, but Sen. Dumas’s point is so vital to today that I have to comment further on it because in discussing the budget, I am not here mainly to complain, groan and moan, we have to do that but I want to see the path forward we can take. What is the way forward to which we can move together, implied by Sen. Sen. Roy Augustus, my good friend, yesterday? I am taking the cue from him.

12.15 p.m.

There was another important point made by the Minister of Education; just one line. She is right. That has a history, too. She said that quantity in education cannot leave out quality. If that message was seriously inserted into the programming in the 1970s and 1980s, many of the problems we have today, apart from academic success—I am talking about family life, teenage pregnancies, drug addiction, school dropouts—might not be so enormous.

Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan is right. Many of us were waving red flags. I was one of those. The documents are there, but I am not here to moan and groan, as I
said, but to see how I can move forward. I am happy that the Minister is taking that policy position to heart, because there is heavy expenditure on the qualitative side—the support staff, the counsellors, the things about getting the students better equipped apart from just the building. I do not need to elaborate.

My colleague, Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie, raised an important point about school dropouts, but I want to tell this honourable Senate that the Ministry is indeed doing something about measuring school dropouts and our Centre for Criminology is happy once again to say that we are trying to help in a national cause. Do not misinterpret this to mean that this is political support of the Government. That kind of ignorance and sometimes hypocrisy worries me. You have to help the country through the constitutional instrument of the present government. There is no alternative. I cannot form a government by myself and I am always distressed when people impute improper motives unnecessarily and unfairly when some of us, especially professionals, are trying to help the country using the constitutional instrument of the Government. Perhaps I should say no more. I hope that in time that project would bring some fruit and calm to Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie’s concern, because it is a valid concern.

We are doing a tracer study. We are studying them from Form 1 to Form 5. We are at the Form 5 stage now. The report will be delivered to the Ministry and we want to look at them afterwards: whether they end up in YTC; whether they get employment; what kind of employment and the role of the private sector in helping this country’s social stability.

The seriousness of this current budget is seen in two figures. The budget moved from $16 billion in 2002 to $34 billion in 2006; this is an increase of over 112 per cent in just four years. That is a tremendous increase in public expenditure, if you can classify the budget as that. The number of pages the Minister of Finance took to deliver such a budget moved from 45 pages to 91 pages in the 2006 budget. [Interruption] That is the role of a legitimate Opposition.

I do not want to be misunderstood. They have their role to play and they know I will support them, but we are not only at a crossroad, but in crisis on a number of social issues. From where I stand, I really have little or no alternative to see how best people of my standing can help. When I am ready to join either side the public will know, but until such time I have a constitutional responsibility to be here like my other colleagues.
The budget, as I said, is making a robust attempt. There are many good things about it, but even though some are good, they lack connectivity and the major one is—and Sen. The Hon. Dumas went halfway into that—the private sector. I want to go into it more fully. We have to look at schooling—the tracer study we are doing: What happens to the secondary school graduates, why they have to go into URP and CEPEP; at what level educational standing and why the academic deficiency? You have to examine that to know what will happen in five years from now. The Ministry of Education is developing its programmes. We hope that the fallout from the education system would be lessened so that the URP and CEPEP, apart from the training being given to the people in the programmes, those numbers would be less and the system more formalized and predictable.

Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano should know what I am talking about. He talked about globalization. I will refer to some of his remarks, but a system needs predictability and it needs a formalized structure so that people would know where they would fit in later on and where they ought not to go.

What is happening to our society is that there are too many informal structures all around the place; some of them legal, some of them illegal. The Jamaica experience with the informal structures, including vending, squatting and so on, is that as this informal system grew, crime, and the murder rate, especially grew. There are explanations for that, but I do not have the time. Even though you want to help the informal sector, there are spin-offs that lead to crime. In other words, those are criminogenic conditions—to put it in one phrase. That is why the Government has to become serious about dealing with these forms of lawlessness which filter from such criminogenic conditions.

The Minister of Finance is right. In one sentence, he said: “Squatting has gone beyond necessity.” Cryptic but accurate. Many con artists exploit social programmes. There are many crooks and schemers, even among the poor, who duplicate their request for housing and who try to steal the Treasury, too. That is a fact of life. We know that. As Sen. Dr. Kernahan said: “We move around and we know.” That leads to further lawlessness of higher types.

Sen. Mark asked the recurring question: “Why so much money and so many problems?” In the last year’s budget, I was able to show statistically that as the GDP went up, crime also went up phenomenally. As the employment rate went down, crime still went up phenomenally, so it is not a matter of using the money. We have to look at the qualitative aspects of the budget and the implications from those qualitative aspects, some of which I have alluded to.
The Prime Minister said so on page 91, if I remember correctly. He said that no budget or sums of money could cure the problems we have and could replace caring, respect, lawfulness and even going to church. He is right. Some people feel that going to church is a ritual. This is not the place to talk about that, but there is more to faith than meets the eye and the more even the poor have faith among themselves, the more they are energized to achieve, to have self-respect and to remain civil.

The question of lawlessness can be dealt with. There is resistance from squatters. There is resistance from vendors, but the Government cannot back down anymore. The time has passed when you should back down from exercising the imperatives of law and order, especially in the cities. There are examples. Look at what you did to the Brian Lara Promenade. You can do it. Look at what you did to the Croisee. You can do it if you have the resilience and the determination. The wider population will back you. Do not get intimidated by some placards with the saying about the poor black man having no place and so on. That might be true to an extent, but, at the same time, you cannot develop a country by lawlessness and a flourish of irregular conduct. You have to formalize a system and make room for those who are entrepreneurs. Those who want to vend, tell them “Not here, but over there is a proper place.” The Government also has a responsibility.

To cut a long story short and to explain again that the GDP does not really tell you about a country’s prosperity, I would like Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill to consider this measure of the GDP. If he puts it alongside the gross national product (GNP), he will see a significant difference. The GDP masks prosperity of the country by including, for example, money made on site and shipped away. The GNP subtracts that money. We want the capital that is here and remains.

What we need are measures of inequities. He would know about the gini coefficient, how it has increased—that is between the “haves” and the “have-nots”—so that the country would know, not only what is its economic status, but also what is the state of the nation beyond economics. Madam President, it would surprise us—it has surprised my good friend, Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph, of course; it has surprised me many years now, but at the Centre for Criminology we have reviewed the documents; all the things that work and do not work and there are several papers now to show that crime does contribute to the GDP.

Sen. The Hon. Enill, the figures that are used in the GDP come from the number of persons hiring security guards, over 40,000 security guards now. That did not happen overnight. They came about through crime. That goes into the GDP figures. Fear is an industry in this country. Fear generates the need to have more
guard dogs, more steel burglar-proof, more security guards; not only as private citizens, but as business houses. All those things go into the GDP and we call it prosperity. These are the degrading statistics that tell you the level of the incivility in a country rather than improving the GDP.

I would like the Minister, when he responds, or one of his Ministers, to tell us how poverty is measured in this country. I have been hearing a range of statements—40 per cent, 35 per cent, 21 per cent, less than $1 a day, less than $2 a day—but from my humble experience, I have a vague knowledge about these things. We need to understand the methodology. It can go up or down depending on whether you take housing, access to water, if you have access to an outhouse or sewerage, apart from the income. Depending on how many criteria you put to get the measure, it will give you a different figure. I am only hearing about dollars and cents. Poverty is not, in the modern sense, only about the income. We are using the Human Development Index, yet we are only talking about income.

The Human Development Index, for example, has three criteria. I will not go into them, but they show that we need an expanding measure for poverty. Perhaps the Minister can explain, so that people can understand whether poverty is really as astronomical—perhaps more or less than what we are hearing—because it is a very volatile political issue just as crime. The crime figures themselves are another problem, which I will not go into now.

We also have to know how we measure unemployment. Is it the last six months you are seeking work? Is it that you are willing to work now? What time span of work do you put as the measure of employment? If the CEPEP and URP figures are in the employment figures, you really have an inflated figure. That is bordering on what you will want to define as unemployment. You may use it or you may not, but we need to know, so that we can know the level of confidence to put in the budget documentation.

Equally so, what does the Cost of Living Index mean? Are prices up or are they going down? What is the basket of goods about? What is in the basket? Is it the same things I eat? Do we all eat the same things? Where are you buying your basket of goods—at Tru Valu; at HiLo? That will determine what the Cost of Living Index is.

Madam President: Hon. Senator, I am sorry to interrupt your contribution at this point, but we need to take the lunch break. You have spoken for 30 minutes, so you will continue.

Hon. Senators, the Senate is now suspended for lunch. We return at 1.30 p.m.

12.30 p.m.: Sitting suspended.
Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I was trying to examine and illustrate the very great importance of qualitative aspects of budgeting and I was speaking about measurement. I now want to make a suggestion, with respect to this honourable Senate and in particular to the Minister of Public Administration and Information. It will be a good exercise, if he can, perhaps, consider what I am saying because I think it will help move us along the way, to get his Ministries to perform to some criteria-driven outcomes. It is no sense telling us how much money you have spent and how many programmes you have implemented. We want to know what is the success rate and some measure, however tentative, not necessarily for debate, but for the Cabinet and the Government themselves to know the direction they should take the next time around.

I want to suggest, that rather than merely using the economic measures of GDP or GNP—whichever one you take, cost of living, inflation and debt ratio—you use economic, but you also have another index, a benchmark, which will set up some criteria for your Ministries and the different agencies in the public service, to match the performance. I am sorry Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill is not here but I would have liked him to join with the Minister of Public Administration and Information to consider this as an option for their own advancement in governance.

In terms of the political index, such matters as transparency and accountability could really be measured. There are instruments that can be used to measure them.

The third index could be a social index, where you look at school achievement, welfare efficiencies, environment, residential stability and what you can call community belongings. They are measures used and we can certainly adapt these to suit the index I am talking about.

The fourth index is public safety and justice, where you can measure such things as crime reduction, public confidence in the police, case backlog reduction and matters of that kind.

The fifth index could be the psychological one, which is very much related to civility, people's trust in government and the public institutions and civic attitudes. This is not a test for government's performance. It is much more than
that. It will tell us where exactly in the country things are not working well and, in a measurable way, how much you need to bring about improvement. It will not only be an economic document, or economic explanation, in addition to the budget, it will be a state-of-the-nation configuration. I could produce an acronym, SONI. I think that this index will include both quantitative and qualitative measures and it will be helpful if the Minister of Public Administration and Information, together with the various Ministries, could set up some internal task force and see the feasibility of this.

If the Government could bring something like this, if not in its full form but something near to this, in its next budget, the country and professionals who know about these things—my colleagues on this Bench I am quite sure—will appreciate the value, the efficacy and the pathway it will create for continuous improvement. It will be showing the benchmarks in a tentative way. We certainly cannot continue in this way. Every year we talk about money, but nothing is tentatively measured. There is no measurement.

I wanted to speak about, for discourse purposes, what I will call the: “Enill Hypothesis” about the public service and the efficiency of the systems, but I prefer to leave that, if I have time, towards the end because I think it is a valuable intervention and I think he should be commended for making it because it gives us an opportunity to discuss it and to see whether we have available instruments to use, to build up the inefficiencies he sees or whether we really, in fact, need alternative instruments for efficiency. I have a view on it and I would like to speak on it, but I would leave it if I have time towards the end.

I want to suggest, in addition to what I have just done, for the Government and in particular again to the Minister of Public Administration and Information. I hope he does not mind my saying that he is a senior Minister and he does have a great understanding of these issues, given his experience both in the private sector and in government and also his seniority in the party to which he belongs. Through you, Mr. Vice-President, I think apart from the Technology and Innovation Fund, which is useful, we really need a fund that could accommodate social science, research in business, even in the humanities. Briefly, I want to propose a $100 million fund for five years to be a research and development fund instead, independent from political influence, but managed by an independent professional board, to which people can apply for research grants, subject to certain screening tests. If this is a country that is developing and we have so many professionals in the country coming back, it will give them a facility to which
Appropriation Bill (Budget) Wednesday, October 12, 2005

[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

they can apply and put their ideas to research, especially with applications, as Sen. Dr. Balgobin did mention. We have an applied science track in research that needs to be accommodated. I believe that too will find great favour with the national community; a research and development fund, managed by an independent professional board to accommodate research requests, with a grant provision for five years. That will also take us along the path to innovation and, perhaps, the accommodation of creative ideas and also with application for crime, justice and community development. It will therefore feed into in the different ministries.

I want to speak a little about crime. In fact, it might be a crime if I did not say something about crime. I want to use two levers: one is the Government's invitation to the FBI and Scotland Yard and some reference to the role of the Chamber of Commerce in this. I must admit, I will not object to the Government of the day or any government of the day bringing in any kind of help to assist in this horrible problem of crime. I want to make that very, very clear, because the crisis of the present should not allow the mistakes of the past to aggravate the situation. I think we have to respond to a crisis and in that context, I think if the Government brings in the FBI, Scotland Yard, James Bond, Spiderman, Miss Marple or even Sherlock Holmes, I will have open arms because we are in a crisis. That is not my main point because I did support—Sen. D. Montano is not here—the Anti-terrorism Bill in certain critical parts. I am not happy with the way it affects our fundamental rights and freedoms, but I saw as an impending crisis this matter of terrorism, and I supported those aspects of the Bill, both in the committee and in the open House. I am prepared to appreciate when there is a crisis, but at the same time, I do not think we should repeat the mistakes of the past.

If I speak out against those issues that are, making sure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past, I do not think I am violating the public's trust. I do not think it is false pride at all, as the Chamber of Commerce indicated. They feel that it is false pride that is holding me back from giving support to the FBI and Scotland Yard, not at all. Is it false pride to demand that after 43 years of independence this country should have done better with its police service? Is that false pride? Is it false pride to ask why all the training programmes for the last 15 years—not only since this Minister is here, I will speak about his involvement in a surprising way, because he has made a difference, as far as I know—and the vast expenditures in the police service, which I know about? Where is the accountability? Is it false pride to ask for that? Is it false pride to ask what will happen after the FBI and
Scotland Yard leave us? It will still be left to our own police service to do the groundwork, whether they are here or not, to investigate and prosecute and carry the burden to protect and to serve.

Hon. Senator: Amen!

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: That is not false pride. I think this is what the country expects, that some measure of accountability be delivered and that is what I am asking for. I am not protesting against the entry of the FBI and Scotland Yard. I also want to ask, as a citizen, what has happened and why has it not happened as it should have happened? In fact, this is what is leading people like Stephen Cadiz and his group to have all these marches and signatures. People want accountability. It is not that things are not run properly. Nothing is perfect in this world, but where there is some measure of accountability and the confession of sins, it helps remedy the hurt because we know that there is contrition and the way forward will be better, but there is little or no such accountability. That is why I wanted Sen. The Hon. Enill to be here because I want to address his issue seriously, in terms of the role that Parliament could play. If this is false pride, as the Chamber of Commerce has accused me of, I think then we should throw the National Anthem in the dustbin because I am harkening to the call of the National Anthem both achieving together and aspiring together.

We must look at something else, the FBI and Scotland Yard are crime fighting agencies. The FBI is a federal agency to begin with; it is not a locally-grounded agency. They deal with federal matters in the United States, which means they have different kinds of jurisdictional issues to deal with; it is not local policing. There are police services I have visited, so has Sen. Seetahal. I went to Freeport, Los Angeles and LAPD to see how local policing works, the measures of accountability and the community policing systems. Of course, I suppose the FBI is what it is because it is being supported by something called the National Institute of Justice, which usually has a $1 billion research and policy development programme. The FBI did not just drop from the sky, as something we want to enjoy; they worked up their system and built up their intellectual and research capital. We should do such a thing. That is what we should do. That is what I am asking for. That is why I am asking for a research and development fund as a start. That is why I am asking the Government to put some increased emphasis on research and development in these areas, so that our police service—we could do it—could one day become as the FBI, or even better. The FBI also has its own problems, as the United States Congress enquiry has recently revealed on the 9/11 issue, a lot of deficiencies. It is time we look after our own house.
It is the same thing with Scotland Yard. Scotland Yard is as robust and efficient as it is because of the strength of its House of Commons enquiry system. They are accountable to the House of Commons, but more so, the FBI to the Congress, through the committee system. The FBI and the senior officials have to appear before its Congress in the United States and answer why they have not been working; what they have not done; what they should have done, and in the next week, the head or the deputy head is dismissed. With such transparency, comes accountability. What is keeping us back from developing such systems? That is what I have been asking for, and that is not false pride.

Scotland Yard is supported by its Home Office budget. Last year £300,000 was given to develop an anti-social behaviour programme, which went into legislation, eventually; data-driven public policy. That is the kind of culture I am talking about and that is the kind of infrastructure I am talking about.

1.45 p.m.

I say all this because I believe in what good management experts should believe in, the learning curve. We have to continuously learn. Are we learning or is it that every time a crisis happens in crime we send for somebody outside? Somebody has to answer that question. I am sure the Minister of National Security, like Sen. Dumas, did not create this problem.

When we talk about the Government, Cabinet and the Opposition and so forth, we forget that there are human beings involved in these ministries. I am sure, as I said just now with Sen. Dumas, he must want to know what he did to inherit this situation that he is finding such difficulty dealing with and taking so much, as we say, “licks”. I am quite sure the Minister of National Security would say so every morning. I appreciate that but he is making a little difference. I am going to tell you why later on. I am saying all this not because I love the Minister less, but I love my country more. I say these things with some reluctance, but somebody has to speak about these things in a proper way.

Mr. Vice-President, I am not seeing Sen. D. Montano here, and I want to talk about globalization. I think he has a very simplistic view of globalization which I am going to leave off, since he is not here, for another time.

So the business community should give its ultimatum and put pressure on the Government, but I would encourage the Government not to respond to those public pressures overnight, and come out with sporadic responses like bringing the FBI. If the business sector asks for this, you bring it overnight? These are serious public policy matters that cost the taxpayers a lot of money, so it means...
that you must have a more studied approach. I do not think the Chamber of Commerce at Westmoorings should run the Government in the way that it seems to be doing, with respect to crime, by full-page newspaper advertisements. That is helpful; this is a democracy, but I expect a government to be a bit more studious in its approach.

The Chamber of Commerce has threatened the Government with an ultimatum—I think it was at the end of August. You know, you could do it, it is legitimate and it is a right, but in terms of a matter like this, I think it looks like false advertising, because they had advertised the ultimatum and nothing has so far happened.

There is a team that is down here doing work with the police and they are dealing with three major issues: police complaints, problem-oriented policing and civilianization. To cut a long story short, the police complaint issues have been on the books for a long time.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon Senators, the speaking time of the Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Briefly, it is the first Minister that I know who has taken up these things so systematically and is prepared to put a supporting infrastructure in place to make sure, for example, that civilianization occurs. I think last week the transformation took place, and the policemen really had to leave their civil tasks and go out and do what they should have been doing all the time. [Desk thumping] I really want to commend the Minister for this execution because it should have been done a long time ago.

Mr. Vice-President, it is the same thing with police complaints. It is not just more officers, but the problem with Police Complaints Authority is that the police can no longer investigate themselves. You have to make a legislative change, in terms of the authority given to the Police Complaints Authority to have its own investigative unit. I would not speak about that too much. I think I am coming to the end and there are other things I want to add here.

We have to understand that this crime problem would not go away. The FBI will come and go, but crime will remain here for a long time because crime has sociological roots; meaning that they are grounded in family; they are grounded in
communities and they are grounded in values. As the Prime Minister rightly said, no budget or no sums of money would eradicate crime. So we have to get ready to put our infrastructure in place and go for the long haul. That is why it was refreshing to hear the Opposition stretching out its hand to see whether they can work together, remembering that this Parliament comprises not only the Government and the Opposition. That is another story.

I want to turn to an example of how money really does not work. This is a report on the Vehicle Maintenance Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (VMCOTT). Mr. Vice-President and hon. Minister, this report tells you the wastage and the scandalous abuse of government resources in an area that needs support; crime fighting equipment. It means therefore that no matter how many vehicles and motorcycles the Government provides the infrastructure which is leading to Sen. Enill’s point, does not seem to be supporting the expenditures and the objectives of the Government. The question now must be asked in the Parliament and through the committee system: Why?

Speaking about the committee system, the joint parliamentary select committee already knows my views. It is an instrument to assist. Let the Government Members come and ask the Police Service Commission, the Public Service Commission and the Teaching Service Commission together. That is a bipartisan element that could tackle these problems that Sen. Enill talked about. I think it is an opportunity that the Government should consider in helping us at least in this term to move the agenda forward.

Mr. Vice-President, changing a tyre costs $500 at VMCOTT; washing the car costs $500 at VMCOTT. VMCOTT did not produce evidence of an annual budget since its inception seven years ago. No budget! This thing is running vaille-que-vaille; it is automatic pilot corruption. I think whichever ministry this falls under should take a serious view and fire the board and reconstruct it to bring it into Vision 2020, that is, accountability, efficiency and incremental improvements in the infrastructure that they are dealing with. [Crosstalk]

Some investigations should be carried out on these reports and there are several of them, along with Sen. Enill’s concern, which I think is an important concern and we should not leave it there. I think we should debate it and use the committee system to see in the meantime how we can help. I also asked Sen. The Hon. Dr. Saith to see what he could do to help the committee system live at least throughout this term.

The Public Service Commission is under pressure from different sides, but they have their views too. The committee of which I talked about sent a report
about the Teaching Service Commission and they are yet to reply. The matter should reach Parliament. The Public Service Commission is saying that there are too many officers being appointed to positions for which they do not qualify. This is on page 7 of their newsletter dated August 2005. They also have concerns. They believe that government ministries and agencies are appointing persons who are unqualified for the positions. These are serious matters.

When we do meet with the Public Service Commission, I hope we do, we are going to ask them what they mean by this. Are they not the ones to hire and fire? Why did they allow this? We have to ask them where the trap or where the buck stops. They cannot pass the buck because constitutionally they have powers which we well know about and this comment really tells you that their slip is showing, I would say. So we have to be careful.

As I said, I know the Minister of National Security would give us what is called his side of the story properly. I also believe that I understand his dilemma from a human point of view, and he is under the pressure, but there are ways that we can move out. I think we all have to be very humble in this matter, that is, crime did not begin yesterday.

I think government after government—I do not want to use the figures because it might cause some embarrassment, but I have some statistics here to show you that in terms of serious crimes up to 2004, there is not much difference between the UNC and PNM, especially as Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan made reference to rape. I think rape tells you a story that when a certain government came into power there was a rapid increase in rape, but I am not here to embarrass. I am just going to leave that for a while because we have a motion on this matter coming up just now.

I would like to ask the Minister in his own sober way that we have to be careful that we do not diminish the responsibility of the police service, those who are paid to do the job constitutionally. What do I mean by that? For example, you have Crime Stoppers; they should be paid by private sector contributions, that is how it is being done all over the world. But this Government is so generous it has given them $2 million and $4 million because it realizes that it is a valuable instrument.

The more people go to Crime Stoppers to report, it expresses lower and lower confidence in the police. In the first place, they should be receiving the report properly. We have to understand what is happening. The more you bring in outside agencies to do what the police should do repeatedly—I am not saying that
you are demoralizing the police—you are excusing the police more and more from doing what they should do and, therefore, you have a parallel attack to be made. Make sure that when you are doing these things that the police are held responsible.

The question now is: Who am I to criticize? Well, I believe that everybody has a duty and a role to play. We at the university are trying our best. We have done much work in this area and we are still continuing. The Attorney General’s Office and the Centre for Criminology are collaborating on a conference next February to get best practice from around the world, to see if we could do what Sen. Dr. Balgobin talked about—co-invention—and to use the expertise and adapt it to our own crime fighting agencies. That is in February.

On Saturday we are having a stakeholders’ conference heading towards November 12, 2005. This is a conference to improve legislation and structures for victims’ rights and welfare. We have a number of initiatives.

We have launched a graduate programme in criminology and a lot of police officers, probation officers and prison officers are enrolled for the Master of Science programme; the Master of Philosophy and the Doctor of Philosophy programmes. I am happy to say that I supervised 15 of them. So if I am questioned as to the validity of my criticisms, it is out of concern. I am trying to exemplify the fact that we should all try to play a part in this, our country. I do not think that is an expression of false pride; it is trying to put the National Anthem on wheels.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to close. I have started by commending the position by Sen. The Hon. Dumas. I think he has a difficult job, but I would wish him well. I am happy that he talked about decentralizing the municipal corporations because that is intended to play a key role if only it could insert some policing in a stronger way in the municipal corporations and Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie is right.

With respect to constituency policing, I had given the Ministry a plan some years ago about each police station. It must start from ground up. Each police station should have its own configuration of community policing and law enforcement. You can better network at the ground level come up rather than having a top-down master plan. Such things have been put on the table.

I want to end by saying that I hope that the Minister and his Government fare well in their crime fighting strategies because all of us do need that protection.

Mr. Vice-President, thank you. [Desk thumping]
The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph): Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I am pleased to participate in this debate on the Appropriation Bill 2006, or specifically, an Act to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2006. I propose to respond to—in some way or the other—the comments made by the Members on the other side as they relate to issues relating to crime and security.

Sen. Roy Augustus made some comments which I would address in responding. So too, Sen. Dr. Balgobin also made some comments that I would address. Sen. Dr. McKenzie also made some comments which, in my contribution, I would address, so too Sen. Dr. Kernahan, in some form or the other, I would address.

Let me deal specifically with Sen. Dr. Kernahan, in the sense that last week in another place in responding to the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition, which was about three hours, of which I was told about 80 per cent was spent on crime, where the impression was being given that crime started with the PNM. I had to go extensively to respond to issues that were in his domain, especially as Minister of National Security; where back then, when crime started to escalate—not to the levels that we are at now—he said the Government would deal with crime.

As early as 1999 he started to indicate that the Government could not deal with crime. At that time, Mr. Vice-President, hon. Members, the situation was not as bad as it is now. So I do not want to spend too much time on that because I dealt extensively with it. But to give the impression that it is only around this wicked PNM Government that this escalation of crime—I think Sen. Prof. Deosaran—[Interruption] I will come to him, he is the next one—put it in some kind of a context, and I am not saying thanks for putting it in a context but clearly, the rational thinking that must necessarily be brought to the picture, as a society, we grapple with the situation that currently faces us, is absolutely important. And one of the unfortunate realities that we have to deal with—we, meaning the Government, by extension, the Minister and the Ministry of National Security—is that the impression is being given that in the first instance, this Government does not seem to be concerned about crime and criminal activity. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have recognized—the Prime Minister has said two years ago: “That the dark cloud hanging over this country at this time is the question about crime and criminal activity.” When the Prime Minister presented his budget, he indicated and permit me to quote:
"…the escalation of violent crime and anti-social behaviour constitute the most fundamental threat to the economic and social development of our country and the well-being of our people."

It is understood, as a result, the immediate reduction of the present level of criminal violence is therefore the highest priority of the Government of the day. As Minister of National Security, I share the deep pain and anguish felt by all our law-abiding citizens, as a result of the crime situation in the country. I fully recognize my responsibility and I am totally committed to implementing the measures necessary to deal effectively with the growing challenge to law and order.

Today I want to share with you the steps we intend and are taking, in the short, medium and long term to deal effectively with this threat of criminal violence. Crime is a major challenge in every society today, both developed and developing. You know what is unfortunate? When we say that, I am accused of trying to compare crime statistics in the United Kingdom, Canada and other places. All I am saying is that societies are grappling now with crime and criminal activity in their respective areas. It is not something that is confined to one country. What is happening, and what is clearly recognized—and when I made that point I was accused of saying globalization causing crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Part of the other side of globalization, Mr. Vice-President, hon. Members, is the negative aspect, which is the question of international crime that is taking place. When we met, for example, with our international partners in the United Kingdom just recently, what they were saying is that they were looking and seeing the extent to which the initiatives the United Kingdom Government has entered into with Jamaica—I think the latest one is called Operation King Fish, coming out of a trident arrangement, where they have now been pouring lots of moneys into Jamaica, because of the direct relationship between crime in Jamaica and crime in the United Kingdom—direct relationship. As a result, they have been pouring a lot of money into it.

What they are seeing is that, as they are grappling—and the crime about which they are talking is narcotic trading—is a displacement that is taking place that is coming down south in the Caribbean. As a result, it is necessary for us to now start putting additional measures in place to deal with that.

Just recently, we had meetings with our counterparts in Venezuela. Let me just back up again, because I want to be guided by what my colleague, Sen. Dr.
Eastlyn McKenzie—and I respect her, I mean I take her advice; I do not want to say like motherly, because I do not want to make it seem as if—[ Interruption ] but I take her advice. She said we are caught between a rock and a hard place—she did not put it that way but I am summarizing—because in national security, when do you tell too much; where do you draw the line; where do you strike the balance between what the public needs to know and what you need to keep, because otherwise you are dealing with criminals, and the more you let them know what it is that you are doing, is the more—sometimes they know anyhow. So to publicly come and say—you know what it reminds me of? Last week I was on my way back to Trinidad and had to pause in Miami. There was a big debate taking place with Mayor Bloomberg, because of intelligence information they had, as it related to a likely terrorist threat in the New York subway. The question was, did he overreact; did he provide the information too quickly; did he in doing that avert the possibility of international concerns? And always the question of the balance that must be struck between what do you say and what you do not say.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran and I, in a way—I do not think we are on different pages, because the Professor believes and rightfully so, that there needs to be a certain amount of accountability on the part of law enforcement. Because, yes, they have been provided with lots of resources; yes, a greater amount of performance needs to come from law enforcement, but you have to be careful even as you say that, because you do not want a headline: "Minister of National Security criticizes law enforcement", and this is the reason I keep saying and I would say it over and over, my philosophy is: “To praise in public and criticize in private.”

Yes, yes, we need more and we would talk about what it is that we are doing. Yes, the society demands a whole lot more from law enforcement and our responsibility as the Executive is to make sure that the resources necessary are provided and they are challenged to provide the results necessary, because there is this dichotomy. When I say that, the question is: Who is responsible for crime, because the Minister of National Security passing the buck; the commissioner passing the buck. You know, it is interesting.

**Sen. Mark:** Why did Rowley attack the Commissioner of Police?

**Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:** You know why I am saying it is interesting, Mr. Vice-President, hon. Members? I am looking at an article dated August 11, 2002:

"Chin Lee on wrong turf. Former police chief says Minister should stick to policy."
And this is the former Commissioner of Police, Jules Bernard, and there is a whole article. Interestingly enough, in the article he talks about, and I would hate to think this is where my colleague, Sen. Roy Augustus came from, because strangely enough he was saying things that seem so close; permit me. This is an article in the *Sunday Express*, dated August 11, 2002:

"Speaking to the Sunday Express, Bernard argued that, contrary to public perception, police officers are doing their absolute best with what is available 'and in spite of the disadvantages they are performing quite well'.

He said a number of police are operating only because the CoP is breaking the law by allowing police officers to keep manning stations well beyond the stipulated eight hours of work."

We would come to that just now, because my hon. colleague talked about problem-oriented policing as such an important means of providing the level of law enforcement necessary.

"He traced the origin of today's crime explosion to 30 years ago. 'Governments don't take the police service seriously,' he said.

Eleven years ago, he said, during his term of office in 1991, Bernard said he had assessed the needs of the police service and told two Ministers of National Security—the NAR's Joseph Toney and the PNM's Russell Huggins—that the service needed 7,600 persons and 460-plus vehicles in order to operate at maximum efficiency."

Let me see if I can deal with—yes, five or six years ago he said in 1991 the authorized strength was 7,672 officers; mobility of 400 vehicles; then he went to talk about tools, bullet proof vests, et cetera. Continuing:

"'It is unfortunate that the Commissioner of Police who shoulders such tremendous responsibility is denied some of the main resources necessary for him to efficiently service the public,' moaned Bernard.

Noting Minister Howard Chin Lee's resort to a foreign expert last week, Bernard said that while he is all for bringing in experts for training, due care must be given to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago."

Let me just reach to the part that I thought was interesting:

"As long as it is an operational issue it should be the Commissioner. The Commissioner has the final word, because in the end he is the one to answer the questions. The minister's role is to make policy."
The minister's role is to make policy, and the commissioner is supposed to be responsible for implementation. At the end of the day he is responsible.

I want to use this opportunity to also respond to a comment made by Sen. Roy Augustus, because he claims that—even though I got up and refuted it immediately—this Minister said that he does not want commissioners of police and the police to be responding, and making comments. I have made it clear that persons who are responsible, who occupy positions for which it is they are answerable for the performance of their organizations, they are the ones who ought to be explaining what is taking place, and that has been my policy.

I was reading where somebody was saying that the public service regulations prevent public officers from doing that; I am not aware of that. He is the Commissioner of Police and as a result, is responsible for the operations of his organization, and I have had them step up and explain and answer questions, et cetera, because at the end of the day, it is he who is accountable for that. So, let me just put to rest that comment made.

Crime is a major challenge in every society, as I said, Mr. Vice-President, both developed and developing. Only those who are ignorant of the extent to which crime is now embraced globally as a vocation, can express the idealism that there exists some quick fix for solving it. In Trinidad and Tobago, we cannot afford such an illusion. I intend to be frank with you on this basis, since your support for the sustained effort that will be required to significantly reduce crime and violence is important, as said by Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran.

Mr. Vice-President, the challenge to law and order is led and coordinated by a criminal elite in our country, which is an integral part of an international criminal network. It finances its activities from massive revenues from the illegal trade in cocaine. The illegal wealth is in turn used to recruit ordinary citizens, particularly the urban poor and the unemployed to a life of crime by offering them far more than they could obtain from legal employment.

2.15 p.m.

It is primarily in communities which have developed in close proximity to the major commercial centres which are specifically targeted for recruits. In return for welfare services, the people in these communities provide storage for firearms and ammunition, as well as intelligence, and in some instances on police activities. Many of these communities are unplanned which makes them generally inaccessible, but they are close enough to the commercial centres to provide cover for kidnappers and extortionists.
The criminal elite also finances the acquisition of sophisticated arsenals which in the hands of criminal gangs fuel the murder rate and expand the range of criminal enterprises to include kidnapping and extortion. The illegal fortunes accumulated are used to finance extravagant lifestyles to corrupt public institutions and officials and to compete with legal businesses in acquiring professional services for their criminal enterprises. It is not only people at the bottom of the social ladder who are part of this criminal network, but those at the top of society as well. This emerging broad-base criminal alliance undermines the stability and integrity of the entire society and makes the work of law enforcement much more difficult.

Mr. Vice-President, in discussions with our international partners, it was indicated as I said earlier on, that the southern and eastern Caribbean, including Trinidad and Tobago could expect to see increased levels of drug transshipment. This is due to the effects of PAN-Colombia and a joint UK/Jamaican programme of anti-trafficking in Jamaica which is resulting in increased displacement and redirection of drug trafficking. Trinidad and Tobago’s strategic location between the major producers in the south and consuming nations to the north makes this country particularly vulnerable.

Mr. Vice-President, in July of this year a delegation from the Ministry of National Security visited my counterpart in Venezuela, the Minister of the Interior, Don Jose Chacon and in discussions, because we were concerned with the three neighbouring states that are used as transshipment points—I am not very good at Spanish, so I hope I am pronouncing the three neighbouring states right—Sucre, Delta Amacuro and Guiria, those are the three neighbouring states. And because of the volume of drugs passing through those three neighbouring states, discussions were held with our counterparts, both at Caracas, subsequently with the governors and officials of those states. And during the discussions, Don Jose Chacon had indicated to me that one month earlier 100 tons of cocaine were seized in those areas. Interestingly enough, Mr. Vice-President, just recently, you would recall that three tons were seized on the Donna Matilda; now that was a ship that was in our waters.

Mr. Vice-President, our flagship vessel, the TT Nelson at a speed of 80 knots tried to run down the Matilda—I do not need to tell you what happened—[Interruption] in international waters and as a result was stopped by the French—three tons of cocaine seized. Of course, very recently there was the 1.7 kilos.

Sen. Seetahal: Are you saying 1,700 kilos?
Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: I am saying 1,700 kilos of cocaine seized again on Monos Island.

Mr. Vice-President, just recently the head of SOUTHCOM was here visiting us in Trinidad and he indicated to us that some 120 million tons of cocaine are being transshipped through the southern Caribbean and if we seize 10 per cent of that it is a lot. We are expecting, Mr. Vice-President, hon. Senators that there is an increase. How does that affect us?

Sen. Seetahal: May I ask if it is per year, you just said 100-odd million tons, is that per year, or per day?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: No. Let me explain, the 100 I talked about was what the Venezuelans indicated that they had seized. I am giving you different figures, the 120 million tons is what SOUTHCOM said passes through here per year. The southern Caribbean of which Trinidad [Interruption]—what does that do to us? I will tell you what it does to us.

Mr. Vice-President, most of the drugs that are transshipped through Trinidad continue north. We now understand that some of it stays as payment. Invariably it comes accompanied by guns. The guns do not continue to travel north because they come from north, anyhow. We do not manufacture guns, the guns stay, the bulk of the drugs continue north and it is the guns that are fuelling that unacceptable homicide rate that we are currently facing.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Vice-President, there was an editorial in today’s Guardian where, if I may: "Let’s get rid of the guns":

"Isn't it about time the country is told the status of the Government's war on the illicit drugs trade and its plan to rid the country of illegal guns?"

That is how it starts off, and permit me, I am just picking up:

“The illegal importation of guns is inextricably linked to the trade in illicit narcotics, and the Government is understandably putting much effort into stemming the drugs trade.”

And then the last part, and of course I am criticized.


Sen. Mark: That is a normal.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: It further says:

“If tightening up security at the country's ports of entry would help keep out the drugs as well as the guns, this is what Government must aggressively do.
If arranging a guns amnesty would help reduce the murder rate, this is what the Government must do.

Let's get rid of the guns and save lives."

Mr. Vice-President, the strategy is to provide as much cover for our coast as possible. The strategy of making sure that we have air assets, that we have sea assets, is critical in making sure that we can reduce the inflow of drugs and guns into this country. I have seen that we have been criticized for the expenditure being placed in getting those air assets. We have to get the air assets, we also have to ensure that our radar system which is so important for reducing the inflow of drugs and guns—

It is the radar system, which I see that the editorial of the Guardian says: it is the right direction they are supposed to be—they are going back to start talking about the number of sites, where they are, and we do not need to indicate that. So, it is the air assets, it is the radar and we must put—if we recognize that the vessels are coming in, we must be able to stop them.

Let me just go back a little to indicate one of the discussions that were taking place in Venezuela. As it stands now we have to urge the Venezuelans to see what they can do to stop the drugs from coming across by us. Because as it stands now, like I said, we do not have the capability to stop it ourselves; so, we need a little breathing space. This is the reason we are acquiring the three OPVs; this is the reason we are acquiring the fast boat interceptors; this is the reason we have to spend moneys on purchasing those things. I hear people asking how is that going to help reduce the gang warfare in Laventille/Morvant. It will help because we will reduce the inflow of drugs and we will reduce the inflow of guns coming into the country. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, with respect to the guns that are now on the streets and the fact of the amnesty, as being suggested here by the Guardian’s editorial. We have explored with the professionals and the experts the benefit of a gun amnesty and all indications show that it will not work. It has not worked in other places. It will not work! What we have done and we have come to this Parliament and we have been extremely successful in getting tougher gun laws. I have to be careful because I do not want any arm of the Government, because that is the Government also, to accuse me of accusing them in terms of how it is that we have been implementing some of these laws.
I have sometimes looked and see what kind of penalties are posed with persons who are brought before the court as it relates to gun possession and while we came here and we put some stringent measures—I would not say anything more on that. But as far as the suggestion of an amnesty, I do not on the basis of all the expert advice, believe that an amnesty is the best way to deal with the guns.

Mr. Vice-President, we are still grappling with measures to make sure that the guns are removed from the streets, get the guns off the streets, because it seems as if younger and younger persons are in possession of guns. If I go now and make an international comparison because I can—it is not confined to us alone. In the UK and in the United States they are also finding themselves with that particular situation. What are we trying to do? We have established a Homicide Prevention Working Group and I know that some comments have been made about foreign expertise into Trinidad—Mastrofski and his team. The purpose of the Homicide Prevention Working Group is that they are taking some experiences of Boston and other countries that had a similar problem, because it is recognized—and I know that there are some people in the media who do not like to hear this word about “crime” at all, they say they do not want to hear nobody talk about “holistic approach” again, because holistic approach seems to be some kind of bad word or some excuse.

Hon. Senator: Overused.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: It is overused. The Homicide Prevention Working Group is designed to ensure that, not only do we find ways and means of getting the guns out of the communities, but how do you provide an alternative to gang and gun-related activities that are currently taking place. Because in the other place I indicated, Mr. Vice-President, the situation with homicide is just untenable. What is even worse about it, is that what we have found is that the resources necessary to deal with it must be put in place. Let me tell you why I am doing this, because there are those who say that the Government buries its head in the sand; we do not seem to be aware of what is facing us. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Vice-President, I am sharing with you the detection rates, people say detection rates is arrest rates; detection rates by police station districts where there are 10 or more murders between January 01, 2004 and August 24, 2005—my colleagues say that these statistics might be outdated because they are killing so fast. This is for police station districts where there are 10 or more police stations.

Hon. Senator: What date was that?
Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: January 01, 2004 to August 24, 2005 and let me just take the opportunity one time to inform the hon. Sen. Dr. McKenzie that you are talking about decentralization, the police organization is supposed to be decentralized.

2.30 p.m.

There are nine divisions and then there are police station districts assigned to the nine divisions. In terms of problem-oriented policing, what we are attempting to have is those police divisions—I call them divisional commanders, generic—being responsible for crime in those divisions. As it stands now, that is how we are structured, but it is not a structure—I do not want to say—for performance and reporting. Some three months after I first came on the job, we indicated that there were 18 police station districts responsible for 65 per cent of the crime. We went to Cabinet and said, "Cabinet, this is the situation; when we looked and asked about assets, they said that they had none." We got Cabinet to approve 102 vehicles in the shortest possible time. They wanted a certain level of visibility.

I recall some of my colleagues saying—and I said, “These are for the police stations, because you have too many situations where people call and dey say dey have no vehicles,” so let us provide them. They are for the police; no special unit, no criminal investigation department (CID); “not no anything;” they are for the police stations. So if you call the Belmont police, if Belmont was one of the 18, because we had to start with the 18, they ought not to say, “There is no police vehicle available.”

We did not go through the Vehicle Maintenance Company of Trinidad and Tobago (VMCOTT); we used the local retailers and got the cars. They were painted, et cetera; I remember that there was a nice ceremony for the handing over of those cars. We also made sure that at the back of all the cars, the police station the car was supposed to be assigned to or the division, was written. With that done, I said, "Aha," we were going to get a nice little relief, et cetera. You were still hearing certain things and I asked why. Do you know what I found out? Every police officer is not a driver; so it is possible that a station could have a car—please, I am not criticizing. I want Members of this honourable Senate to know that I am just providing the information. I cannot tell the media how to do its job, but I am just providing the information.

I subsequently found out that you could have the car, but not have a driver. You could volunteer to drive, because driving is a specific thing; that should be a requirement for the job. You would see now that is a requirement for the job.
Driving should not be a specialist thing; that had to change. Granted you must take defensive driving or whatever, but you must be able to do that in order to respond to the challenge facing us.

Coming back to homicides, I am talking now about police station districts with 10 or more homicides: Chaguanas, Central Division, the police station district is Chaguanas, 17 homicides; detected four; 23 per cent. Northeastern, Morvant, number of homicides during that period, 46; detected, nine; 19.6 per cent. Northern, Arima, homicides, 24; detected, 8; 33.3 per cent. Arouca, 13; detected, seven or 53.8 per cent. St. Joseph, 10; detected, three; 30 per cent. Tunapuna, 11; detected, 4; 30 per cent. Port of Spain Division, police station district Belmont, 29; detected, five; 17.2 per cent. Besson Street, 125; detected 12; 9.6 per cent. Western, Carenage, 16; detected, three; 18.8 per cent. St. James 19; detected, 2; 10.5 per cent. West End, 34; detected, one; 2.9 per cent. For that group, where we had a total of 344 homicides; detected, 58; a 16.9 per cent detection rate.

Sen. Mark: What is causing that?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Which means that for the question of our homicides, the number one issue facing this country, we have an unacceptable detection rate.

What is this a reflection of? A high detection rate will lead to—

Sen. Seetahal: Sorry to interrupt while you are in flow, but I think that this is an appropriate point to ask this. Sen. Prof. Deosaran and I have been trying to get those figures and the Commissioner of Police and that department have not bothered to reply. Could you let us know why or if they can be made available to some of us, to the media and the public, and why is there not some kind of publication annually that I asked for about four years ago? Is there a secrecy cult in the police service?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: If there was a secrecy cult, Senator, I would not have provided this information. There are two major areas of concern nationally, right now, one is homicide, the other is kidnapping. This is the result of Mastrofski and team; remember I mentioned the Homicide Prevention Working Group. Clearly, the important thing is the question of statistics. The short answer is that the information can easily be provided; we will find a way of making sure that the information is provided. [Interruption]
Sen. Seetahal: Less than two weeks ago I asked for it.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: We will.

Mr. Vice-President, why low homicide detection rates?

1. Lack of structural and operational clarity;
2. Lack of dedicated resources;
3. Processing delays;
4. Lack of homicide investigator experience and training; and [Interruption]
5. Lack of investigator and managerial accountability.

The lack of investigator experience and training is critical.

Let me just indicate, Members of this honourable Senate, as a result of this report, measures have been put in place immediately to treat with the question of beefing up, the question of homicide. The training and development are absolutely important. I do not want to go into more details, but one of the things that we have observed is this question of experience and training. I do not think I need to go into more details, except to say that it is a major area of weakness that needs to be strengthened and we will be strengthening.

So we have the Homicide Prevention Working Group that would look at the question of improving the Homicide Bureau. There were some specific recommendations made, as it relates to that, and we will address them. I am not going according to plan, Mr. Vice-President. Let me just address another issue raised by Sen. Prof. Deosaran, the question of the Police Complaints Division. I have said it before and I will say, again, why the Police Complaints Division is so important.

As we are organized now, the only entity that exists to investigate police behaviour or misconduct is the Police Complaints Division. I like to say, and I was corrected recently, that it is equivalent to what is referred to as "Internal Affairs" in other jurisdictions. That is the body which ensures that police integrity, police behaviour, et cetera, live up to the standards necessary. For some reason, the Police Complaints Division—I do not want to say denied, because it might be too strong a word—the resources necessary for the effective performance of the Police Complaints Division has been wanting. Let me give you some of the dilemma you might find yourself in. The Police Complaints Division, at some point in time, had about 15 officers. Investigating police
behaviour does not seem to be a priority. As a result, priority is placed in other places. However, when the citizenry starts asking questions about rogue police, how are you going to deal with police indiscipline, et cetera, et cetera? This is the entity that is supposed to do that. We have a Police Complaints Authority, but if a citizen goes to that authority to lodge a complaint, that authority has to send it to the Police Complaints Division to investigate.

I made a commitment to this Parliament, some time ago, because there was a time when a couple of killings occurred and people wondered whether or not they were police killings and whether or not the Minister had a death squad and a mongoose gang; investigate police killings, et cetera. I said, “We are beefing up the Police Complaints Division and doing certain things.” Here is the choice I have: If I want the best investigators in the Police Complaints Division; I have to take them from somewhere. Do I take them from homicide, with homicide performance like this? Do you know what the population would say? Somebody would go to the media and say, "De Minister more concerned with looking after police behaviour than solving homicide; he take the best homicide people and put them in the Police Complaints Division." You see the situation that you find yourself in?

At the end of the day, the improvement in the police organization is paramount. That is what must happen. While you set up all the specialized units, et cetera, that is not the panacea; that is not the answer, because it is police officers on the beat who understand what his or her responsibilities are and discharge it; that is lacking. It is because of that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Scotland Yard are seen as an interim measure. They are not going to be here to take over responsibility of the police organization. We have found out that the transformation of the police is taking much longer than we anticipated. The population cannot wait for the transformation. We cannot tell the criminals, "Wait, wait, wait; the transformation taking longer than we thought; hold up on your crime for me, please, nuh, jus doh do it; give us a little time to improve." [Interruption]

**Sen. Prof. Deosaran:** I must apologize. This is very helpful; I think we are all learning something. With respect to the Police Complaints Authority, does the Government not have a preference for putting an investigative unit more fully into that authority and, if so, would you need a special majority to make that transition?
Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: You are anticipating me, hon. Professor. At the end of the day, the three Police Reform Bills were designed to do certain things, one of which is what you had spoken about. Since I am not so sure how my time is going and I "cyar take nobody hour", it is very likely—[Interruption]

Sen. R. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of— I am not sure it is a point of order, but if it is then I will ask that you accept it. In the light of the importance of this speech, I beg to move that the Standing Orders be suspended to give the Minister of National Security time to finish; that is my Motion, so that he gets full time. I want, we want and I am sure the nation wants that. I do not want the Minister to be constrained. If he needs to talk for three hours, let him talk.

Mr. Vice-President: He certainly has some time.

Sen. R. Montano: I understand that, but I am moving a motion to ask that he be given all the time; in other words, not just his time plus 15 minutes. I know this can be done, I have done it before. [Laughter] I have moved this kind of motion before; what the Minister is saying is too important, so I am moving that the Standing Orders be suspended for the Minister's speech, so he can finish it.

2.45 p.m.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Mr. Vice-President, I am sure the Minister will want to finish and then make his own judgment. What I would plead for is the three minutes Sen. Montano took to be given back to the Minister.

Mr. Vice-President: Certainly, I would like the Minister to finish using his time and then I will discuss that.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Yes, Sen. Prof. Deosaran, the preference is really for an authority that is more independent as part of the reform bill.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Sen. R. Montano: Now I move my motion. Mr. Vice-President, I move the motion that the Minister’s time be extended for such time that he needs, and that the Standing Orders be suspended. I am asking that the Standing Orders be suspended and let him finish, I am not asking for just 15 minutes, but I want him to finish.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes, plus the three minutes Sen. R. Montano has taken. [Hon. Dr. L. Saith]
Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Vice-President: I already said what I would prefer to do.

Sen. R. Montano: What about my motion if the Minister needs more time?

Mr. Vice-President: If the Minister needs more than the 15 minutes, it will be given.

Sen. R. Montano: Minister, if you need more time do not worry; speak, we will give you all the time that you want.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Mr. Vice-President, the challenge that we faced—and we are moving towards improving the Police Complaints Division. I think more important than just improving the division is the need for that division to understand what its role is.

As I said, in other jurisdictions when internal affairs knock on police doors, they quake in their boots because police organizations do not want a small rogue element to be compromising the performance of the organization. But clearly we are coming out of a culture—and I like to use the word “culture” strictly within what I call the organization and the management precepts—and that is how we do what we do.

So clearly, efforts are being made to strengthen the Police Complaints Division and we are working with the Police Service Commission with the question about tribunals, structure, decentralizing and how it could be done, and the proposals for bringing back just retired police officers to be able to deal with complaints about police. But not just complaints that come from the public; you ought to be able, for example, to see whether or not a police officer’s lifestyle can be supported by the basis of his job, et cetera.

Sen. R. Montano: Have you checked Allard?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: That is why you want more time. So you understand the importance of the Police Complaints Division.

Mr. Vice-President, the other area on which we are focusing is the performance management system because while that system has been on the books since 1994 or 1995, the question about making sure that it is properly functional is absolutely essential because in the absence of that, too heavy a weight is placed on seniority and, as a result, you find yourself in a situation
where there are persons who are not as prepared for the leadership role that is required of them.

How are we addressing that? We are doing so with a couple of things, one is with attachments. There have been two sets of attachments of six officers to police organizations in the United Kingdom. Specifically—forgive me if I do not put my hand on the six areas here they are: Hampshire, Nottingham, Chester, Metropolitan, Greater Manchester and West Midlands where two officers for three months were attached to these particular areas so they had hands-on experience with respect to policing. So they are in a better position on return to deal with the problem of orienting policing of which Sen. Prof. Deosaran spoke, and which at the end of the day is necessary.

What are some of the aspects of problem-oriented policing? Basically, we want to start with a divisional commander who has a responsibility for his or her division which comprises so many police stations. We would have targets showing the basic crime statistics for each particular division. They are clearly unacceptable and this is what we want to get them to do.

One of the problems—if I may digress a little—the business communities have with me, when I talk with them, is that they want me to say when I am going to reduce crime and by how much. In other jurisdictions that happens. The Commissioner of Police appears before whatever entity and provides them with his strategic plan with five years or whatever and then he has his yearly plans that say he is going to do this, or that and as a result, he is held accountable.

You can hold him accountable because he also has direct command of all his resources; he can move people and put them where he wants. But in today’s environment, it is unfair to ask the Commissioner of Police, no matter who he is, to say that this is what he is going to do, yet he cannot even promote a corporal to a sergeant without a series of things that must happen.

Interestingly enough, in the Daily Express on Thursday, October 03, 2002, it says:

“The UNC has an effective Crime Reduction Plan and the Right Man
In the first 45 days we will begin implementation of a crime reduction plan that includes these measures:

• Appoint as Minister of National Security a proven leader of acknowledged stature who will command the respect of the protective services and the national community
• Give the Commissioner of Police the genuine authority to manage the force that he leads
• Set up a Crime Reduction Task Force drawn from the widest community of experts, including strategic partners from overseas; with responsibility for formulating a comprehensive Crime Production programme by December 31, 2002
• Increase the penalty for rape, kidnapping and armed robbery to possible life imprisonment
• A Dedicated Highway Patrol Unit with an initial strength of 250 Motorcycle Cops and other mobile officers
• Equip the Police Service with state-of-the-art technology, including closed circuit television systems at peak traffic points and in crime-risk commercial areas.”

This one is interesting.

• “Initiate implementation of the Sir Ellis Clarke report.”

Do you know what is the Sir Ellis Clarke Report?

Hon. Senator: The three bills.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Ahh, the three bills.

• “Enlist the media as allies in the fight against crime
• Establish Police/Citizens partnerships in community alliances to reduce crime
• Toughen gun laws.”

Mr. Vice-President, I have indicated what are some of the things fuelling crime, and I think I must address two other issues.

We must address—and my ministerial colleague handled it nicely earlier today—the question of the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and the involvement of URP people in crime. And I think Sen. Seetahal acknowledged earlier on when we were talking about the history of URP, when Sen. Prof. Deosaran was talking about what URP was designed to do.
There were some persons who found themselves in a situation where they had a life of crime, they approached the Government and said they wanted an alternative to crime, but the only place where that alternative could be provided was through the State organization, nowhere else, the private, nobody would do it and we said fine.

Mr. Vice-President, once we found out that there were some people who tried to play us for— the word I was going to use might not be parliamentary. They tried to play us for fools. In other words, they were still using the programme and then using it to fuel their criminal activities.

Once we found that out, we decided to take action against them and we will continue to do so. [Desk thumping] And I want to make that abundantly clear because there are those who continue to say that we cannot deal with crime because we are in bed with the criminals, and if I had time—there will be another time when I will be able to show where the genesis of this whole URP and the arrangement with some of the persons in the URP began in the previous administration.

**Sen. R. Montano:** Show us now, you have time.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:** Mr. Vice-President, the other area that I need to touch quickly on is the Forensic Science Centre and the fact that right now we are in partnership with the United Kingdom as it relates to providing us with assistance in improving the performance of the Forensic Science Centre.

Mr. Vice-President, clearly there are backlogs in the Forensic Science Centre, there is a deficiency in terms of trained personnel, and competency in that area takes some time and as a short-term measure—I had indicated that before, I can boast now that they are here—we are bringing in persons to deal with DNA, narcotics and the other areas as a short-term measure, while we have already provided scholarships to citizens who are pursuing areas in forensic science, because we recognize that forensic science is a very important tool against crime.

Let me correct one other problem existing because there is a view that says there is DNA legislation sitting to be put in place. Just recently, a former Attorney General said if we were serious about crime all it has to do is—nothing can be further from the truth. But I know Sen. Seetahal, I do not want to say what she is going to talk about—but let me tell you what is the problem that I understand exists with the current DNA legislation. They said there are some substantial flaws.
Sen. Dr. Kernahan accused my colleague of only saying this is wrong, that is wrong. Let me tell you what I understand is wrong with the legislation and why the regulations have not been put in place. There are inadequate definitions of samples to be taken; the procedure for obtaining samples, taking of the samples, application to court for consent or what is called the court order, clear guidelines for DNA matching; and the statute of limitation for the destruction of samples.

3.00 p.m.

My understanding is that the process to finalize the regulations to provide for these documents and forms required by the Act, significant concerns were raised regarding the substantive provisions of the Act. During initial consultations last year with forensic experts from the United Kingdom, it was agreed that aspects of the present legislation mirrored repealed UK law which failed miserably in application. The United Kingdom learnt from its experience and modernized and upgraded its legal framework. It is worthy to note that our DNA Act is a combination of a manifestation of DNA law which was in effect in Australia and New Zealand at the time of drafting.

Sen. Mark: Four years after we are now being told that.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Mr. Vice-President, following consultations with stakeholders it was concluded that the Act will not serve the objective in terms of DNA profiling and is inadequate to effectively and efficiently utilize forensic DNA technology as a crime-fighting measure. And as I indicated, we have people here now who are looking to treat with it.

There is no doubt that we face a crime problem that is insidious, multi-dimensional, pervasive and deeply rooted in the illegal drug trade. Despite this reality, the mistaken and simplistic view of crime as only low-income and unplanned community for which the Government has sole responsibility still persists. As Minister of National Security, I assure the national community of this Government’s responsibility to ensuring that all the law enforcement and protective services have the resources and wherewithal to effectively discharge their mandates. While the overwhelming majority of our citizens are law-abiding and want to see law and order enforced, there is a significant minority drawn from all echelons of the society who are involved in crime. The Government’s strategy for crime reduction has been predicated on four fundamental pillars:

- The leading role of the Ministry of National Security and its agencies;
- The shared responsibility of the State and the citizenry;
The principle of accountability; and

The national mobilization of the law-abiding.

With respect to shared responsibility, the following is relevant: Who is responsible to ensure that teenagers are not allowed to roam the streets at nights, liming at street corners and at questionable places where they are vulnerable to becoming involved in criminal activities? What about parents who turn a blind eye to their children being associated with individuals of questionable character and to their children receiving money and gifts from such individuals? Whose responsibility is it to ensure that illegal firearms, ammunition and drugs are not carried in school bags, stored at home or taken to school? Much has been said about the rogue elements in the police service and we are actively treating with this problem. What is the impact of white collar crime, past and present? What is the impact of the Opposition’s clarion call to make this country ungovernable? What about their call for their members and supporters to engage in civil disobedience? Do they have a moral right to destabilize and destroy this country for short-term political gain?

The transformation initiatives are conducted within the limits of the current legal framework. However, the full benefits will only be achieved with the introduction of the police reform bills, the ultimate requirement for sustaining a high performance police organization. This is the legislative clout that is necessary to ensure the desired results of quality police service delivery and accountability. When this Government was in opposition, as responsible members of that Opposition we indicated to the then government our willingness to support the police reform bills. This has always been our position, for we firmly believe and recognize that the appropriate structures and processes must be in place to allow the police commissioner to exercise authority as that of a CEO in a modern managerial sense. He would be held accountable and hold his officers accountable for performance. Swifter disciplinary outcomes will also be achieved and he would have control over his budget. Our crime strategy involves forming a social pact with all our citizens, which will not only develop an awareness of their social responsibilities, but will hold citizens accountable for their actions.

We urge citizens to continue to contact their local police stations to provide information. We also urge citizens to continue to call the Crime Stoppers. The Ministry of National Security will shortly be launching a partnership programme with the public which will allow them to provide direct information to the police, utilizing a secure and confidential telephone line. Such a programme requires
sustained public education and orientation. This type of partnership with the community is critical in the fight against crime. If all law-abiding citizens work in concert, substantial results will be realized towards eliminating most of the criminal and rogue elements in this country.

The security, safety and well-being of this country are the concern of every citizen and this Government recognizes that it has the responsibility to ensure that it provides the leadership in this regard. We will not shirk that responsibility, but we call on every citizen to join us in this battle against crime. We cannot afford to allow the vast majority of law-abiding citizens to be denied the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of this country's prosperity. We cannot and we will not give in to these forces seeking to create mayhem and disorder. Our resolve must be: No retreat, no surrender. We all need to understand that these criminals cannot succeed against the determination of this Government, supported by all law-abiding citizens. This is a fight we cannot afford to lose and one which we must win.

I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Sadiq Baksh: [Desk thumping] Mr. Vice-President, it is the right of every man, woman, child and visitor in Trinidad and Tobago to expect the Government to provide safety and security for them. Nothing that the hon. Minister said this evening in his one-hour contribution could make any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago feel safer. [Desk thumping] On the May 25, 2005 issue of the Express in a statement by the Minister of Finance, I quote:

“I would like to assure the national community that the Government is quite able to deal with the crime situation that faces us. What faces us now is temporary and as plans that we have put in place and are implementing begin to take effect over time, you will see a reduction of the levels of deviant behaviours to a level that is more acceptable to a society such as ours’…”

The only thing we have seen is a reduction in the credibility of this Government. [Desk thumping] The only thing that is temporary is this Government. [Desk thumping] The Express article goes on to say:

“After almost three and a half years back in office, having changed one Minister of National Security under sustained and intense pressure from all quarters in the society and with a huge question mark on the head of the current incumbent, the abundant evidence before us is that things have got worse.” [Desk thumping]

That was in May, and the situation today is even worse. I continue quoting:
“Way too many assurances have gone unmet, too many pronouncements have fallen flat, too many plans proven ineffective.”

And we just had another hour of pronouncements, plans and promises that cannot be met—simply cannot be met. This inept PNM government cannot perform and cannot guarantee the basics. We demand this Government to act now or pack up and go. [Desk thumping]

Here we are again and the only thing that has really changed is that we are all one year older from the last time we had a contribution like this. Yet another year has gone by and again our Government has wasted the opportunity to deliver. You would recall in one of the budget presentations, all of the things that were promised were delivered. Everything delivered. The safety and security of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have not yet been delivered.

The time has, however, reached upon us when we cannot look back at all the good things that all governments have done in the past. We cannot look back and say that we did so many bridges and so many schools and be comforted by that. The time really is now, for all of us to carve out a niche and to recognize that the safety and security of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago is the most important issue today. In years gone by if you asked the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago what was the most pressing need, they would say, possibly, education and education opportunities. Previous governments and the present Government made good in the improvement in the quality of education available to citizens, but we cannot be comforted by that because we might be well-educated but yet be murdered tomorrow. That is a serious problem. You cannot expect people to feel safe and comforted because we have made some strides in the past. We cannot.

On other occasions people might have said health as the most important issue. Yes, in the health sector we have made some strides and we need a lot more improvement, but it does not make sense to be healthy and you could be kidnapped as you walk out of this Parliament. Ordinary citizens do not feel safe in the comfort of their homes anymore. As I make my contribution I try to compile the feelings of a lot of citizens in Trinidad and Tobago and we would all recognize that everything else must be placed on the back burner: health, education, employment opportunities, no water in our taps even in the rainy season, infrastructure, everything else on the back burner except crime.

I am not crying out here to be comforted by the hon. Minister or the Government; I am really here crying out for action. That is the only thing that will suffice. We cannot wait for the reduction of crime to take place in 2020. We must
begin to feel comforted now that we have a Government in place that would be willing to act now. None of us could truthfully say that crime started yesterday, or the day before, or the last year, or a year before, but what we can say is that we do have a Government in place that is responsible. It is not responsible for all the crimes that took place in the past, or even for the daily occurrences, but they are responsible for preventing them. They cannot prevent what took place yesterday, but they need to prevent what will take place tomorrow, if not today.

We cannot plan for tomorrow anymore, as we are not sure about today because of the problems we face. We are in crisis; we are in definite crisis! To solve the plight of our people, the poor, the downtrodden, the homeless, the forgotten, to address the needs of 24 per cent of our population living under the poverty line, to alleviate the anguish of mothers when they hear their children cry for food, not because of crime—food, hunger, the need for medication, and while they cry out for all those things, there are criminal activities taking place within the community and they are not even spared, where their loved ones could be gunned down in any alley, any street, in the comfort of their homes, while on the bed sleeping.

3.15 p.m.

To solve crime, insecurity and fear, we would need the help of every citizen. However, it is difficult to resist coming to the same conclusion that this budget for 2006, will lead us to the same direction of the 2005 budget, nowhere. That is the only conclusion. It is back to basic billions and rudimentary ideas and devices designed to create a false sense of mitigation and solution to our nation’s needs.

This budget is a total collapse of credibility; a billion here and a billion there and we as a nation going nowhere else but down the slippery slope to dependency, inflation and poverty to crushed dreams, loss of dignity, frustration and uncertainty for the future. The future is always supposed to hold hope. We must always look forward to tomorrow to be better, but to do so we must be comforted today, that we have people who will act and are willing to act and recognize that they need to act.

I worry because sometimes I get the feeling that the Government has not yet recognized that it is in charge. It cannot continue to blame everybody else. I interact with many of the Ministers and individually, I can see them trying and making an effort in their individual ministries to be the best that they can and to deliver and in some ministries they do deliver. In some ministries you find people bringing comfort to some citizens as the Ministry of Community Development,
Culture and Gender Affairs that goes the extra mile on every occasion to help. We heard the Minister of Tourism and nobody could disagree that whereas the economic indicators may not indicate the true figures, things in the tourism sector have improved.

In terms of education, free tertiary education is not something that I can say is not a good thing. It is a good thing and continues to build a foundation that was in place over the years. We aspire to be one day—as my distinguished colleague, Sen. Dr. Kernahan indicated, when you say free secondary education, universal education for all, it would be in the comfort of having everything else. We do not have a problem with that. We must be comforted by the feeling, to know that we have a government as a collective Cabinet with collective responsibilities, that it is responsible—irrespective of how they perform in their individual ministries—for the safety and security of every citizen and visitor in this country.

We are a nation under siege, a people under siege. Nobody could dispute that. We are in crisis and in very difficult times. A billion dollars loses its value and becomes mere worthless if this state of national insecurity in which we live is not solved. It was the hon. Member for San Fernando West in this administration who stated last year:

“We have been in power for the last two-and-a-half years. Millions and millions have been allocated but not a single bit of work is being done.

Does Government work?

It seems it can't.”

Maybe the next time around the hon. Member for San Fernando West will speak of billions instead of millions. That is what we have now. Billions!

Is the Government recognizing this collapse of credibility? I do not think so. My response this year would again attempt to be one of positive, constructive criticism inspired by my love for democracy and civil liberty. When I got the budget documents I weighed them. They weighed 27 pounds. I wish to express my gratitude to those whose responsibility it was to deliver those packages for their efficient, physical effort and to recognize the contribution of the public servants in preparing those documents.

Vision 2020, 2006 is an expensive glossy paper document, a duplication of the budget presentation, but most of all millions of words to justify billions of dollars in irrational and wasteful expenditure. Who is copying who, or is it a case of the blind leading the blind? A popular saying in Trinidad and Tobago applies
perfectly to the PNM’s Vision 2020, “one eye man is king in blind man country.”

As Wendell Philips said, “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” I am here again to do my annual duty in terms of the budget contribution, to express my faith notwithstanding all that has taken place in our beloved motherland of Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure that regardless of creed, race, social circumstances or geographic location, we do our best to improve the quality of life of all citizens. We need to be messengers of hope. We are here to provide hope for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. If we do not see that hope then our citizens would be in serious trouble. We need to be the champion of the poor; the downtrodden; champion the cause of the homeless and forgotten. We need to be the champion of all the women of our nation, our mothers, wives and daughters to help them to occupy their rightful place in society as leaders of our families.

We need to listen and heed the legitimate voice inspired by the love for our mother country. For valid reasons we need to recognize our country as our motherland. From the wombs of our women spring all that is good and positive for our nation and all hope for our future. They are our future. We need to provide safety and security for them. How can we build a better and brighter future without the full cooperation of 53 per cent of our population represented by mothers, wives and daughters?

The Government is right in principle that the family is the foundation stone of a nation, but it does not present alternatives and policies that address the rights of our mothers, wives, daughters and women in general. You cannot recognize the family as the cornerstone which it rightfully is and not put systems in place to provide safety and security for those same families. To put our nation in order we must first put our families in order. We must! If our women are not brought to the forefront of our society to occupy their rightful places, we would never be able to rectify what is wrong and ill. As leaders and without the incorporation of our mothers, we would never be able to heal the tribulation that affects the basic nucleus of our society, the family.

Mr. Vice-President, 60 per cent of our population is under the age of 35 years. With the aid and direction of our nation’s mothers we must address the problems of our youth. If we do not do that then we would never be able to provide safety and security for future generations. We need to ensure that we return the strayed to the fold; the security of mothers’ love and the safety of family life. We must begin to fight crime by ensuring that we put policies and programmes in place to have sound families. Together as a nation we have to create and implement plans and programmes that will return it to its rightful place. The primary authority of
society is the family. That is where we must begin. We need to be the champion of our youth where the true potential of the future is. We will never be whole as a nation as long as one of our citizens is afraid, hungry, marginalized or oppressed.

We need to design programmes to go into the communities, whether you call it a special economic zone or a special zone of need. We need to ensure that we develop plans and programmes, not mere words, but deeds. Convert words into action. We must get programmes that would incorporate the groupings that live within those communities. Help from outside a community enfeebles that community. It is only help from within the community that invigorates and encourages a community spirit and allows people to blossom, grow and reduce crime.

As a people we feel betrayed. Every year our hopes are shattered by the indifference of this heartless and ineffective Government. We see on a regular continuous basis a collapse of credibility. People are concluding that the Government’s credibility has totally collapsed. The time has come when we must wrest from this uncaring and incompetent Government, the control of our lives, rights and destiny. It is time for all to have complete control over the future that we wish for our families and more importantly, for our nation. To do that, we need to come together and confront the challenges that we face. Not the challenges of tomorrow. We should think about tomorrow and we should plan for the future. We have to think about today because when we leave here or our homes we can be in problems. When children leave school they could be in problems. Crime knows no boundary.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, on January 24th 2004, the Ottawa Citizens reported an article by Donna Jacobs which aptly describes what happens in Trinidad and Tobago, and I quote:

“Trinidad and Tobago has a troubling kind of beauty. Ostentatious wealth flourishes in disturbing proximity to severe poverty. Exotic restaurants abound not far from garbage dumps where people fight Corbeaux for scraps of food.

The vibrant Carnival rocks the island with explosions of colour and music while people lose lives and loves in almost daily shootings and kidnappings.

The gorgeous sight of the sky turning blood-red from a flock of Scarlet Ibises, twists the heart. And so will the sight of a baby being bathed at a standpipe on the Priority Bus Route.”

Just in Katanga, right here.
Mr. Vice-President, more than a year has gone by and all that has changed is the crime rate: more robberies, assaults, murders and kidnappings. This was reported in 2004 and it is still a reality today in Trinidad and now extends to Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, I never thought in my lifetime I would have seen thieves, murderers and criminals coming from our sister island. In the days gone by as a child, when I went to Tobago, we were told there was no need to close the doors, no need to shut the windows. I never thought in my lifetime that would become a reality. But that is the reality and we cannot pass the blame to anybody else but ourselves. We all need to accept that as part of our responsibility as leaders in our society. It is not a question of saying who to blame now. It is time for all of us to act but we must also recognize that the people with the authority must carry out its responsibility. You cannot have the authority and shirk the responsibility. If you have the responsibility and not the authority, then it is a different story. This Government must be compelled to perform its role as the guarantor of the rights of its people and for its civil liberties. This Government must be compelled to provide safety and security for every citizen. The hon. Member for Diego Martin West, in his statement said, and I quote:

“Crime has crept up like a thief in the night.”

That is not true. It has taken this Government three years to catch on. The whole country knows what was going on and I am not going to say it started three years ago as I said before. It did not creep up on us like a thief in the night.

My colleague, the Minister of National Security said that we were concerned when crime started to increase since 1999. That is true. In 1999 the murder rate was 92 and that was a figure that we found unacceptable. We did not know how to comfort any mother in any community or, any father, brother, sister or visitor by telling them we have a low murder rate, only 92, but your child died. We did not know how to do that. We did not learn to tell them that it was temporary. We did not know how to do that. We did not see that as collateral damage.

One needs to recognize that crime is the most critical issue in one’s country, and when I started to plan my budget contribution I went through many different documents in looking at infrastructure and then I went through what was promised in the past and I said it does not make sense. We should really deal with the harsh reality of 2005.

Mr. Vice-President, I was prepared to ask the hon. Minister of Finance what happened to all the promises of last year. The maximization of returns in the
energy sector; diversification of the economy; equitable wealth sharing; social
development; public service reform; tax reform—we did see some tax reform this
year and promised last year; transparency; accountability; 16 secondary schools;
so many police stations around the place, but I wanted to ask him for an
explanation as he delivered this budget as to what was accomplished in the last
budget. Then I recognized that there was a total collapse of the credibility of the
administration and as usual, the Government searches high and low for scapegoats
to blame for its own incompetence, lack of good faith but more importantly,
failure to deliver.

I heard the hon. Minister of Finance this year saying that he would have asked
his Members to utilize “Statements by Members” to say all that they have
delivered. No amount of words could deliver to the people of Trinidad and
Tobago. One has to implement projects to talk about delivery, projects that one
can see, feel and touch; safety and security that you can enjoy. One cannot tell me
I am feeling safer if I am looking through the door twice and putting additional
locks and bolts. You cannot tell anybody that. Those are just words. You cannot
be comforted by words in this society. One can only be comforted by action.

Mr. Vice-President, when I listen to the blame, the lack of good faith and the
failure to deliver, I wonder about the collapse and credibility of the Government.
Is it a dance of the billions offered as a proverbial carrot that would lead the
nation to ignore the Government’s incompetence, non-performance and failure to
deliver? Is it just throwing the billions so that you would not figure anything is
going on? Or, is it another conspiracy against our people? What has happened to
our people’s common sense? The national budget for 2005 is the perfect formula
to stimulate inflation which is already beginning to show its ugly head. The PNM
has dominated the public service since independence. The Government, in its
continuous search for someone to blame for its ineptitude, incompetence and
disillusion is now turning against the public service. This public service
understands the system. They are the checks and balance in place to ensure good
governance and prudence.

Mr. Vice-President, I quote and although the junior Minister of Finance is not
here, I know he went through great pain yesterday, and that is why today I made
sure I quoted him. I quote the hon. Minister of Finance:

“’There is nothing wrong with the (Public Service) system as it is... if you are
not interested in delivery’...’no Government should be blamed when policies
are not implemented.’”
He went on to compare the public service to the private sector from where I have come.

“...where people are accountable and can be fired immediately for non-performance.”

Over the past few days, the junior Minister has insistently been censuring the public service as the implementing arm of the Government, blaming the public service for the PNM Government’s ineptitude to perform and deliver. This PNM Government is incapable of delivering the bare basics of security and social justice.

I hasten to remind the hon. Minister, the Government and by extension, the national community that from 1995 to 2001 the UNC worked with the same public service and performed and delivered. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, 65 bridges, 2,000 kilometers of road, 12 secondary schools, 53 Early Childhood Care Centres. [Interruption] I could take it, no problem, no protection needed.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Members, please, we have had a beautiful tone to the debate so far and I would like that to continue.

Sen. S. Baksh: Mr. Vice-President, the truth always hurts. [Interruption]

Mr. Vice President: Sen. D. Montano, please.

Sen. S. Baksh: Mr. Vice-President, I want to tell you something. “Ol’ talk” could really beat performance any time. I understand that. I repeat, for the benefit of the national community, that from 1995 to 2001, the UNC worked with the same effective and efficient public servants and it performed and delivered. [Desk thumping]

I understand the pain of the hon. Minister. I am equally pained for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, because they cannot enjoy safety and security because of this Government. I have always heard people say that the truth hurts and today I am seeing it here. I am sure by extension, the national community.

Mr. Vice-President, the PNM is not assuming its responsibilities. It continues hiding behind promises, new plans and new bureaucratic institutions. [Crosstalk] And they cannot drown me out. I am confident when I tell them that we performed and delivered. I challenge this administration to say that it performed and it would deliver safety and security to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] [Crosstalk]
Mr. Vice-President: You all are going on a little too long, please Sen. Mark. If you did not answer, it could not continue. Sen. D. Montano, please.

Sen. S. Baksh: Mr. Vice-President, I really thought when I was crafting my contribution that a collapse at credibility would have been the real one to offend. I did not realize that it was performance. I now understand the philosophy of the administration. What happened between the period 1995 to 2001 is the PNM crafted a strategy in which every time the UNC delivered they would say corruption, and we thought at that time that performance would have really counted. It did not because “ol’ talk” stopped. They recognized that they were not delivering. We recognize that. They have not been able to deliver the basics. During the rainy season they have not been able to provide water for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

3.45 p.m.

Sen. D. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order, the Senator is misleading the House. [Crosstalk] WASA is producing more water today than ever before. He has been doing that for the last 45 minutes. [Crosstalk] You have to stop that!

Mr. Vice-President: Senators, please! I honestly do not mind a little “picong”, but it is going too far. I do not interpret what Sen. Baksh is saying so much as misleading the Senate as is interpreted by Sen. Montano. I think Sen. Baksh is saying things probably as he sees them. I do not think you should interrupt him when he is doing it. Someone will have the chance to refute what he is saying. [Desk thumping]

Sen. S. Baksh: Mr. Vice-President, this morning I heard Mr. Seecharan call the radio and say that, for the last month, Bon Aventure Road has not had water. On i95.5, this morning, I heard Sharon Farfan talking to a citizen who called in to say that he had not had water for one week and she promised to get in touch with WASA. In Chaguanaus, people burnt tyres because they had not had water for three months. I will undertake to provide a list of all the citizens who have not enjoyed a pipe- or truck-borne supply for the past three months. It cannot be misleading the Senate. That is factual and truthful and the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development should go to the villages and tell the citizens that they have water. In fact, Miss Farfan was asking someone how they made out for three months without water. She had a great interest in knowing how they could survive on the bare basics.
This Government does not take the interest of the ordinary citizen to heart. They feel that when you do not have water, there is no problem. They only open their tap and they have water 24/7. From where they live, they feel that everything is OK in the kingdom of Trinidad and Tobago. I heard someone yesterday laying at the feet of a previous administration, of which I was a part, the reason for having outhouses. I am here today to inform this honourable Senate that pit latrines in Thompson Gardens is a 2005 reality in a Trinidad and Tobago with a 2020 vision. Even worse, there is one pit latrine for 10 families. Put that in your pipe and smoke it! That is not yesterday. That is not misleading the Senate. I will take you there to see it now. That is Thompson Gardens at the end of the Solomon Hochoy Highway. [Interruption]

Now that I understand delivery is his problem, they are dead. Hear this! Down in Thompson Gardens, a Minister within this administration broke down 31 houses. People had to sleep in pavilions and, had it not been for another Minister in the same administration, the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, they would have starved.

The Government improved their living conditions and put them out in Thompson Gardens. They are better today than they were when their houses were broken down, but we have to recognize that they do not have water; they do not even have lines. The hon. Prime Minister told them to watch television instead. They wanted to know where to plug the TV. They do not have electricity.

Let him tell me that I am misleading the Senate now. Let him go down there. There is no electricity and no water. Again, it took a visit from the Prime Minister for them to get a road and electricity. They are grateful and I am grateful that the Prime Minister acted so that those citizens got a road and got electricity.

The point is that we cannot say that everything is good in this kingdom. It is not. For us to begin to improve the kingdom, we have first to recognize that we have problems. We have to call on every citizen to play his or her part and the Government must facilitate it. [Desk thumping]

When Government Ministers want to drown the voice of the people who look after the poor, the downtrodden, the oppressed and the forgotten, then all we can say is that those who have do not care about those who do not have. [Desk thumping] They do not understand the plight of the poor.

Mr. Vice-President, why has it taken the PNM more than 40 years to initiate the journey to a society in which all citizens can aspire? Every citizen is entitled to become the best they can be. Every citizen must feel that they have a right to
acquire anything they can. This is an example of the PNM's modus operandi. That is what the PNM is exemplifying here today. Develop pretty words, develop attractive phrases, put them in the National Anthem and hope that someday, as if by the wave of a magic wand, this would become a reality. That is not possible. You must be prepared to put in hard work to make those words and those dreams a reality. You cannot dream about it, you cannot talk about it, develop pretty phrases and expect it to happen. Pretty words are being shot to pieces by criminal bullets on a daily basis. You cannot talk pretty words and those words are being shot to pieces on a daily basis by criminal bullets. Not possible!

What we saw here this afternoon, as exemplified by the distinguished Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, is PNM intolerance that makes them call some of our citizens true sons and daughters of our blessed nation. They call some of them that. What about the others?

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Mr. Vice-President, some of us still have faith in our country and its future and we will loyally carry out a crusade for inclusion of all sectors of our society. We will continue to be vigilant to ensure that our citizens are kept aware of the dangers that loom ahead. We cannot allow ourselves to become a nation of sheep with a government of wolves.

What we are seeing here today is exemplified well by our Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development. I now understand why poor citizens will have a hard time. I now understand why poor citizens will not have water. I now understand the problem that the Prime Minister will have in this Cabinet because these Ministers do not see the need for improving the quality of life of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. They have their own sectorial interests. They look out for those who do not need anything. They feel that the people who do not need water, roads and basic necessities are not their supporters.

Again, the PNM defers to the future the solution of the immediate issues that affect our people—security, safety, a relevant education system, quality health care services, adequate housing and poverty reduction. I look into the eyes of the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development and I tell him that
the UNC government delivered to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] [Crosstalk]

Mr. Vice-President: Please Senators, we need to hear the Senator's contribution. He is nearly finished. Please allow him to finish so that it could be properly recorded.

Sen. S. Baksh: Again, Mr. Vice-President, I repeat. The PNM defers to the future the solution of the immediate issues that affect our people—security, safety, a relevant education system, quality health care services, adequate housing and poverty reduction. Again, the Government tells us that they would give priority to issues affecting the family as well as our collective concerns. Words, words, words! If we want to enjoy a higher quality of life, the PNM Government puts the onus on the people; that they must be able to do this; they must be prepared to be more productive and then lock them up in traffic jams for hours.

This administration really likes to inconvenience people. They talk about the interchange. They started off by saying that they are sure to build it. They were to start last year. They were to start this year. For the benefit of the Minister, the UNC had designed an interchange that guaranteed free-flowing traffic with no traffic light interruption. The main routes are:

1. Freeways with no crossing traffic;
2. Little or no disruption of the existing traffic during the construction phase;
3. Full advantage to be taken of the local know-how and supply inputs;
4. All traffic manoeuvres are maximized;
5. US standards applied in the design and construction at the cost of $150 million to deliver the entire interchange project.

The interchange project included a number of things that I will point out:

- an aesthetically pleasing design in all aspects in addition to the landmark arches;
- a flexible design that guarantees future enhancement;
- no additional land required for 220 feet reserve off the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway to accommodate all lanes;
- pedestrian drop-offs, taxi and bus stops to accommodate Grand Bazaar and Nestle, Bamboo No. 1 and Bamboo No. 3 and may ensure that they are accessible in a safe manner;
the north-west quadrant is completely available for development.

4.00 p.m.

The interchange was part of a larger plan to solve the traffic problems that plague the area. The construction of smaller interchanges at the intersection of the PBR and the highway would have eliminated all the stop lights and allowed the conversion of the route into a freeway. It continues:

- the construction of a route connecting the Caroni Bird Sanctuary Flyover allowing traffic from the South to link directly to Trincity and Piarco, without going into the interchange, permitting the roundabout at the interchange to deal effectively with the local traffic; in addition,
- the highway that was started from Golconda to Point Fortin, with five alternative routes;
- the establishment of a traffic hub in San Fernando;
- the Waterfront Development Project, all part of improving the quality of life and improving the traffic situation and reducing the loss of man hours that no longer plague only employees coming into Port of Spain but throughout villages and towns throughout the country—an integral part of utilizing the finances within the Government for the improvement of the quality of life of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, providing greater mobility, greater access to markets and modernizing the infrastructure, so that as we make Trinidad and Tobago an intelligent nation, or we make Trinidad and Tobago attain developed status in 2020, or before, we would have seen the benefits of our labour.

We cannot, however, achieve all those goals if we continue to have an administration that is not listening. We need a leadership of consensus. We need a leadership that will listen to the citizens, but more importantly, we need a leadership that will develop the capacity and utilize the existing capacity to deliver to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The public service and police officers continue to be demotivated on a daily basis. There is a special purpose company, VMCOTT, in which we have 16 other companies set up by the Government as special purpose companies. This is an ideal case of a good project gone bad under the PNM. [Desk thumping] No amount of good money thrown at a bad project could make the project good.
I would like to quote from the Auditor General's Report of review of the operations of VMCOTT under the PNM. This was done during the period September 2004—November 15, 2004, when the Auditor General went in. This was a simple task. I quote:

“4.41 Examination of several invoices revealed that the rate was applied to every hour or any part thereof resulting in a simple task as the changing of fuses and other minor tasks costing approximately $1,890.00.”

To change a fuse, under this special purpose company, it cost $1,890.

Do you really expect the police service to be able to respond, when they have 42 different models of vehicles in the police service? This administration added two to that 42, in this incarnation. [Interruption] One.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Ish?

Sen. S. Baksh: In addition to that, I quote from page 35 of the Auditor General's Report on the observation of VMCOTT facility in San Fernando under construction on June 15, 2005:

“5.17 Staff of the Auditor General's Department visited the San Fernando Facility on 2005 June 15 and took photographic evidence of the status of work done at the site as at that date...The Quantity Surveyor's Valuation Report #7 dated 2005 January 11 was used as a reference for the scope of works and the following observations as shown at Table 6, were made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of Quantity Surveyor’s Valuation Report #7</th>
<th>Valuation As per Valuation Report $</th>
<th>Audit Observation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Asphalt to driveway</td>
<td>62,000.00</td>
<td>Evidence of asphalt was not seen on driveway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asphalt to car park</td>
<td>50,000.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation of carpets and vinyl tiles for police</td>
<td>3,000.00</td>
<td>No evidence of vinyl tiles nor carpets was seen”</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In other words, when you have police officers seeing this kind of thing taking place, where the money that was budgeted for fighting crime, used to pay $500 to
wash the police vehicle, $1,890 to change a fuse, the asphalt in the driveway missing and the tiles that were paid for by the Ministry to improve the standard of their station, not there but people are paid for it, then they know that this Government will never be able to deliver.

No quantity of billions of dollars will ever suffice to deal with the problems and crises our nation and our people continue to face. If we do not deal with the basic problems of the human condition, we will never be able to move forward.

As a central feature of this annual exercise, the Government's incapacity to implement still remains the main issue to be addressed; the Government's incapacity to deal with drugs, crime and insecurity.

Mr. Vice-President, our nation urgently needs a new kind of leadership: a leadership of listening, a leadership of consensus, a leadership of inclusion, a leadership of unity, a leadership of integrity and a government that puts people first and guarantees a better quality of life. We will never be whole as a nation, as long as a single one of our citizens is afraid, hungry, marginalized or oppressed.

The PNM's vision for the future of our people reminds me of a Warahoon fable, of the frog and the scorpion. The scorpion wanted to go across the Orinoco River and the frog was afraid to take the scorpion across because of his sting, but the scorpion assured the frog that he would not sting him. Midway, he stung the frog and he died. He said: “Why did you do that to me?” The scorpion said: “It is my nature.”

It is the nature of the PNM not to deliver to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

[Desk thumping]


The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie): Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I must thank my colleague, Sen. Dana Seetahal, for allowing me to speak out of turn, as it were, but Sen. Baksh raised some issues which I felt needed a direct and immediate response from us on this side.

I am not going to get into the fable about the scorpion and the frog. What I want to do is to speak the truth this afternoon. Speaking the truth is not always an easy thing for us to listen to. This is what I propose to do. I proposes to speak on crime, the Judiciary, the criminal justice system and the civil justice system. Those are the things that I propose to speak on.

My colleagues on the other side—it is the truth I am speaking; there is no need for the Senator to be upset—have decided to focus on the issue of crime this
afternoon, and that is a good thing for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, because the people of Trinidad and Tobago must not be fooled into thinking that they are a part of the solution to crime.

**Sen. Mark:** Because you are in bed with the Jamaat.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:** The point about it is that—and I intend to speak the truth this afternoon—if you are part of the problem, you can never be a part of the solution. Never!

Their strategy is quite clear. They point to a time 20 years ago, when life in Trinidad and Tobago was simpler and we were all more comfortable. They point to today's reality and then point to the PNM and say that the PNM is the source of all their difficulties.

**Sen. Mark:** Of course, you are!

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:** What I want you to know is that in the course of the debate in the other place, a certain gentleman—I would not mention his name, who is now before the court and who has colleagues of his before the court, leading members and supporters of my colleagues on the other side, before the criminal courts—stood and made a number of statements. If you cannot be trusted to take any action in respect of the criminal justice system—and in his case, it is obvious why he cannot be trusted—and if you cannot be trusted to be part of the solution, then you are part of the problem.

**Sen. Mark:** Is that Bakr?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:** The only plan that this particular gentleman has is to drag out his case before the court, in the vain hope that an election victory, at some point in time, might allow him to starve the Anti-Corruption Squad—

[Interruption]

**Sen. Mark:** Why not call his name?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:** Because it is not possible. It might allow him to starve the Anti-Corruption Squad of the resources which it was starved of in the years 2000—2001. They received not one cent in the pursuit of white-collar crime. That is a fact. It is borne out in affidavit and it is easy for us to check.

**Sen. Mark:** Go at the Jamaat!

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:** Mr. Vice-President, the courts should not be used to play political games and the Opposition cannot be a part of the solution because they are part of the problem.
I listened to the contribution of that particular gentleman as he launched a scathing attack on the independent Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. I am not holding any brief for the Director of Public Prosecutions. No one in this country is immune from criticism; not from a man, who is now before the courts on several charges, all recommended by the independent Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, based on voluminous evidence, meticulously compiled over years by independent police officers in several jurisdictions around the world; not Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, the United Kingdom, all of them.

4.15 p.m.

**Sen. Mark:** Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. I would like the hon. Attorney General to identify if it is a Member—

**Hon. Senator:** There is no need.

**Sen. Mark:**—of the Parliament then he cannot be dealing with a matter that is before the court. If it is a Member of the House of Representatives that he is referring to, the Attorney General is out of order. He cannot be imputing improper motives to a person who is innocent before proven guilty. Therefore, I would ask him to either withdraw or refrain from this issue. Are you referring to a Member of the House?

**Mr. Vice-President:** Sen. Mark—

**Sen. Mark:** Sir, let him indicate to you. [Laughter]

**Mr. Vice-President:** In terms of whether he was imputing improper motives, he was close to bordering; and in terms of whether he referred to another Member and talking about a matter before the court, he did not talk about a matter before the court. He talked about a person who is before the court. That is what he said.

**Sen. D. Montano:** That is right. He did not say a Member in the other place.

**Mr. Vice-President:** If one says a person who is before the court, the person is not discussing the matter.

**Sen. D. Montano:** That is right. He did not say he was a Member of the other House.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Please, I would ask you to be discreet in what you are saying, please.

**Sen. D. Montano:** He is very discreet.
Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Mr. Vice-President, I am always very discreet. I am trying to be very careful, but I am also trying to talk the truth. I am trying to keep away from fables this afternoon.

Mr. Vice-President, this is a very serious matter. What you have is an attempt by a person to undermine public confidence in the independent office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—

Sen. Mark: Who is this person that you are referring to?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:—at a time when the country is battling a major crime problem. Mr. Vice-President, that can only be described as the height of irresponsibility. Again, I say that if you are not part of the solution, you must be part of the problem.

Sen. Mark: Who is this person that you are referring to? Call the name!

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Mr. Vice-President, do you know that person might have gone as far as to criticize the Director of Public Prosecutions for laying charges against a prominent doctor in this society, who police investigation showed may—I say “may” because I am not a judge—

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: May?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:—have been implicated in the murder of his wife. [Interruption] Police investigations say “may”. [Interruption]

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. As far as I know, this case involving Dr. Naraynsingh has been thrown out. I think it is wrong for the Attorney General, who understands the justice system, to impute that this gentleman should have been charged for murder. I think he is out of order. He is totally out of order and he should withdraw that statement!

Sen. D. Montano: He did not call any name.

Sen. Mark: He is referring to Dr. Vijay Naraynsingh.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, I am on my feet.

Sen. Mark: Yes, Sir. He is wrong.

Mr. Vice-President: This is getting a little out of hand. Sen. Jeremie, if that matter was thrown out of the court, I would prefer if you do not talk about it [Desk thumping] because it is going to wreak controversy and I would prefer if we do not have that.
Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Mr. Vice-President, I make one point and one point only that it is not open to any of us to criticize an officer. As a matter of fact, it is forbidden by the Standing Orders to criticize an officer who is involved in the administration of justice in this country, and when this is done by someone who has a vested interest that is a double source of indignity. It is compounded in that instance.

Mr. Vice-President, how can we ever hope to deal with criminals in this country when we tell a nation that only certain crimes should be prosecuted? It is tantamount to saying that if you are accused of shooting someone in Laventille or kidnapping someone from Central then, by all means, you should face the court, but not if you happen to be of a particular standing in the society. That is wrong and a system which has proper respect for the administration of justice will not tolerate that sort of behaviour.

Sen. Mark: Why has the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries not been charged?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: That kind of hypocrisy—

Sen. Mark: Yes, you are a hypocrite.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:—gives comfort to every cold-hearted bandit who is willing to operate and to twist the system with impunity. [Desk thumping]


Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Mr. Vice-President, it came as no surprise to me—


Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:—that the Opposition refused to support and, in the same vein, the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Bill because that Bill sought to protect State witnesses and to ensure speedier trials by empowering the—


Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:—Director of Public Prosecutions.

Sen. Mark: A bunch of thieves

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark and Sen. D. Montano, please.
Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: So it came as no surprise to me that they are attempting to prevent the passage of that Bill because that Bill was consistent with the ends of justice. It sought to have trials conducted in a speedy way so that witnesses would not be eliminated before the trials.

Mr. Vice-President, not only are my friends on the other side undermining the judicial system—

Sen. Mark: We are undermining the judicial system?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie:—from the parliamentary benches.

Sen. Mark: You are using the police against the Opposition. [Interruption]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: What they seek to do is to bring comfort to those who are involved in crime.

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: And they freed the two fishermen.

Sen. Mark: What has happened to the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: We passed the Criminal Procedure (Amndt.) Bill, the Administration of Justice Bill, the Indictable Offences Bill and the Summary Courts Bill over their protest. All these Bills were commented on by the Chief Justice at the opening of the law term. He is an impartial individual. He said that these Bills went some way toward improving the system of criminal justice.

Mr. Vice-President, I turn now to an issue which Sen. Mark is fond of, and that is the relationship between the Judiciary and the Executive.

Sen. Mark: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Again, I want to speak the truth.

Sen. Mark: That matter is before the court.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: There is no matter that I am speaking—

Sen. Mark: You are before the court.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: The issue of the relationship between the Judiciary and the Executive is a matter of importance for all of us, at a time when we are battling with a crime wave. That is the truth.

I want to remind my colleagues that in the other place this is what was said, that the Government is deliberately starving the Judiciary—
Sen. D. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. The Senator, in the crosstalk, is being personally insulting to the Attorney General.

Sen. Mark: I do not understand you. You called us bandits and so forth. You have to apologize.


Sen. Mark: You called us “bandits”.

Sen. D. Montano: He is calling the Attorney General some very insulting words. It is crosstalk, but it has gone much too far. [Interruption] There is a way of doing it. [Interruption] You do not have the intelligence to do it the right way.

Sen. Mark: He has been insulting us the whole evening. He called us bandits and all kinds of things.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, one would imagine that adults in the highest forum of the land would be responsible enough to exercise constraint where it is necessary. When people seem not to be embarrassed by their own irresponsibility it is very disheartening.

I would like the debate to continue and I would like it to continue in the spirit with which it has gone on for the last couple of days. To ensure that it does, I would take the tea break now and we will come back at 5.00 p.m. [Laughter] The Senate is suspended for tea.

4.25 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

5.00 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, we resume with the Attorney General having had 20 minutes into his contribution, so he has another 25 minutes before he could have an extension.

Sen. The Hon J. Jeremie: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. Before we took the break, I was on the issue of the Judiciary. The point I was making is contrary to the submission of Sen. Mark, who referred to an overseas publication—I think it was Liberty House—to suggest that in our scale of development, we were less free today than we were when he was in office. He supported that argument by referring to one test of freedom which is applied by that institution, and that is the test of judicial independence.
Mr. Vice-President, I have to report that in relation to judicial independence and in relation to the state of the relationship between the Executive and the Judiciary, the state of the nation is indeed strong. I am proud of the recent achievements of the Judiciary which only last week actually held a matter through teleconferencing facilities. This is in keeping with the support which the Executive has given to the Judiciary over the recent past and that support extends beyond financial support, to the necessary legislative reforms which are required to ensure that evidence taken by electronic means can be used in court.

Mr. Vice-President, what saddens me—again, I go back to speaking the truth. I am staying away from the fables—is that even with such abundance of evidence before their eyes, a goodly gentleman said that the Government is deliberately starving the Judiciary of resources because it does not get along with some of the senior people and because it feels that too many cases have gone against it.

Mr. Vice-President, this is coming from a man, whose truncated administration unleashed a reign of terror on the Judiciary by denying judges the housing accommodation to which they were entitled; attempting to restrict their travel; interfering with appointments of staff in the department of court administration; and an administration which took the unprecedented step of launching a commission of enquiry to bring pressure on the then Chief Justice. All of this is in stark contrast to the relationship between the Judiciary and the current Executive.

5.05 p.m.

What I wish to do is to quote from the comments of the learned Chief Justice. Hear what he had to say at the opening of the law term just last year. He said this:

"…when I assumed office as Chief Justice, the relationship between the Judiciary and the Executive was not all that it should be."

That was when he assumed office and he assumed office—Mr. Vice-President, I should remind you—at a time when my friends were about to demit office.

"The situation has now improved. The Executive is more receptive to the problems of the Judiciary. This changed position has been brought about, to a large extent, by the Honourable Attorney General and his immediate predecessor. The former has brought to this office, a style which has paved the way for a better professional and personal relationship. Today I wish to thank him publicly for doing everything possible to improve the Judiciary."
Those were the words of the learned Chief Justice last year, and despite the matters on which my learned friend on the other side wishes to raise, this is what he had to say this year, a few weeks ago:

"I wish to inform you that the imbroglio that now exists between the office of the Chief Justice and that of the Honourable Attorney General has not in any way affected the administration of justice. This I submit is professionalism and maturity at its best."

That is the learned Chief Justice. [Desk thumping] Mr. Vice-President, I want you to compare that with the bad old days. This is what Chief Justice Michael de la Bastide, as he then was at the opening of the 1999 Law Term said:

"It will, I think, be clear from what I have said so far that there do exist serious differences between the Honourable Attorney General and myself, as to the scope and application of the principle of judicial independence. The matters in issue are of such importance that I have thought it my duty to disclose publicly the existence and, in broad terms, the nature, of these differences."

And we know what was the result of this opening statement by the Chief Justice. It led to a virtual constitutional impasse; an unprecedented commission of enquiry staffed by foreigners into the affairs of the Judiciary.

Mr. Vice-President, the strides being made in the Judiciary today are a direct result of actions taken by the Chief Justice and the Executive. We understand that this country is ours; that we all have to live here at the end of the day; that our children must be friends, that we are part of the same space; that they must go to the same schools, and that in the end we must all share the common goal that we wish our children well.

I pray that we never lose sight of these objectives: that of ensuring that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are provided with the very best justice system that it can properly have, and that in the midst of a crime wave of unprecedented proportions. The Executive is committed to this principle and we are indeed working well with the Judiciary.

I turn finally to the issue of the criminal justice system, and in treating with this head, I want to turn to the contentious issue of anti-corruption, and I say that issue is contentious because I know that my friends on the other side have particularly thin skins when it comes to a discussion of anti-corruption strategy. [Crosstalk]
Mr. Vice-President, the budget is taking place against a backdrop of the escalation of violent crimes and social indiscipline in this society. My colleague, the Minister of National Security has already declared in the other place that an immediate reduction of the present level of criminal violence is the highest priority of the people and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

We on this side of the Senate are seriously committed to implementing the measures which are necessary to deal effectively with the criminal scourge in this country. We recognize that there is no one cause; no magic bullet; no one solution to this problem. The challenge requires a multifaceted and targeted approach. The Office of the Attorney General is in partnership with the Ministry of National Security in working towards finding effective solutions to the crime wave.

Already, several of the recommendations contained in the report of the committee chaired by Mr. Justice Mark Mohammed on the criminal justice system have been implemented. During the last fiscal year the following pieces of legislation relating to the justice system and national security were passed: The Offences Against the Persons (Amdt.) Bill; the Criminal Procedure Act; the Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, which as you know, was an omnibus piece of legislation, which made changes to the Bail Act; the Dishonoured Cheques Act and the Forgery Act; and also dealt with the chain of evidence at the Forensic Science Centre. We also introduced the Corporal Punishment (Offenders Over Eighteen) Bill; amendments to the Summary Courts Act; the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Act, to provide for speedier access to the court and quick justice. I said enough about that before the break. We also dealt with the question of anti-terrorism.

The effect of these pieces of legislation would be to shorten the length of criminal trials in the courts and to make the criminal justice system more efficient in several areas, including in relation to bail. But much more work needs to be done. Already the archaic system of taking notes of evidence by hand in the courts is being replaced by the more efficient and technologically sound system of recording proceedings in court through the audio digital recording system. That system I can report is already being installed in several courtrooms, both in the Magistracy and in the Supreme Court.

With respect to the construction and refurbishment of court buildings, the Government continues to facilitate the Judiciary by providing resources. In June of 2005, Cabinet agreed to approve expenditure by the Judiciary to undertake customization works to accommodate the Chaguanas Magistrates’ Court in a
building at No. 74 Ramsaran Street, Chaguanas; the San Fernando Magistrates' Court in two buildings at Nos. 1-3 Court Street, San Fernando, and No. 7 Court Street, San Fernando. Additional funding was also made available to the Judiciary's development programme on the refurbishment of the Magistrates' Court after the mid-year review of the PSIP.

In the area of criminal justice we recognize that the police; the prosecuting authority; the Judiciary, and the prisons are all linked. The hon. Chief Justice made mention of that connection among the various agencies in his speech at the opening of the law term a couple weeks ago, and called on the Executive to keep prison reform on the front burner. The Attorney General is actively collaborating with the Ministry of National Security in this regard. Several recommendations of the Report of the Task Force on Prison Reform and Transformation have already been implemented. The prison rules are being revised at the ministry and are being considered by the Ministry of National Security for speedy implementation. In addition, the Law Commission is examining that part of the report which speaks to mediation in criminal matters and the philosophy of restorative justice, in order to recommend the type of legislative changes which are required.

Mr. Vice-President, I turn now to the vexing matter of anti-corruption. In this area, Trinidad and Tobago has made great strides in eradicating the scourge of public sector corruption, which has witnessed the bringing of criminal charges against a former head of the Executive of Trinidad and Tobago. [Crosstalk] Our new energy culture is to be defined by a respect for the processes of transparency and good governance. Over the past year our results have been remarkable by any account. In cooperation with foreign states, premises in other jurisdictions; in the United States; in the United Kingdom; in Lechinstine and in Jersey, which my friend should ask some of his colleagues about, have been searched.

Sen. R. Montano: Are you discussing a case that is before the courts now?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Of course not.

Sen. R. Montano: What are you talking about?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: I am talking about exactly what I am talking about. [Laughter] I can provide no assistance.

Sen. R. Montano: It sounds like you are talking about a case that is before the courts.
Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Mr. Vice-President, criminal charges have been brought against a host of persons formerly in public life. Our funds under management, pending the outcome of the relevant court proceedings in various parts of the world, have grown from $0—I am sure my colleagues would be happy to hear this—to $27 million at this point in time. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Mark: Why do you not get the $40 million from Abu Bakr?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Those are funds under management. So if we have persons in relation to those projects, where we hear performance is a cry; if we hear that these people disappear after performing; we have $27 million under management at the present time and counting. [Desk thumping] [Laughter]

The change in approach which allowed us to focus on assets was the direct consequence of a philosophical change in attitude and policy—

Sen. Mark: What happened to the Dansam Dhansook matter and Franklin Khan?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: —which is now premised on the principle—Mr. Vice-President can I continue? I am not hearing my good friend.

Hon. Senator: AG, just keep going.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, please.

Sen. Mark: What about Franklin Khan? [Crosstalk]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: The money under management, that changed from $0 to $27 million, is as a direct consequence of a change in philosophy which has us focusing on the proceeds of crime and freezing them, pending the court proceedings which, as we know, are likely to be protracted, for the very reason which I advanced before the break.

Hon. Senator: Are you anticipating the court?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Mr. Vice-President, I end on this note. [Crosstalk] I have said before that you cannot be a part of the solution if you are a part of the problem. [Desk thumping from the Opposition Bench] And I would say it again.

Hon. Senator: You are part of the problem [Crosstalk]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: If you are part of the problem, you cannot be part of the solution. It is the height of hypocrisy for you to come here this afternoon
and stand on performance, when your performance is bedevilled at every step of the way by public sector corruption. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, I end in this way. I implore my colleagues on the other side to stop the politics and to put this country first. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Vice-President: Please, Members, allow the AG to wrap up his contribution. Allow him to finish his contribution, please.

Sen. R. Montano: “We not asking you for nothing.”

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Thank you so much, Mr. Vice-President. I ask them to be true “patriots”; [Desk thumping] [Laughter] to understand that the liberty of this country and its great interest will never be secure if public men become slaves to the past. It is not too late for them to be true patriots; to be true representatives of the people, looking to lasting prosperity and future interest of the country as a whole.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

5.20 p.m.

Sen. Dana Seetahal: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. After the contributions of Minister Joseph and the Attorney General, not to mention Sen. Baksh, I fear that I might not be as exciting as the gentlemen before me. However, I must still press on and attempt to make a few points, and if I should cough in the middle of my contribution, bear in mind that it is not by design; it is because I have a problem with the virus.

Mr. Vice-President, there are so many things to talk about emanating from the budget presentation and all the documents that we have been given, that it is difficult to choose what one should speak about, and you have seen many Speakers before me engaged in discussions of a variety of things, but I will choose to focus on a very few things.

Let me at the outset say, Mr. Vice-President, that we have a budget statement and a budget and we must bear in mind that the budget in particular, is made in a context where we are not living hand to mouth. These are not the difficult economic times as say, in 1991 or 1996. Money is said to be available, if not, no problem. There is a lot of money for handouts, we are talking about giving away cards with money, old age pension is about $1 billion and we have a lot of different things, [Interruption] $1 billion. I believe nearly $1 billion.
[Interruption] Whatever! The point is, I could do without these interruptions. [Laughter]

We have a lot of money to spend on welfare, so what should we really look at when we look at this budget? We should look to see whether the Government of the day is doing things—not whether they are building roads, schools and anything like that—that is what they are here for, if they were not doing that then we would have to wonder, because they are not putting their hands in their own pockets and spending their own money and should be congratulated for doing things that they are supposed to do. What we have to look at, is to see whether they are doing what they are supposed to be doing well enough. Are they doing it well first, or well enough?

After nearly four years in office or three years in elective office, it is my view, Mr. Vice-President, that things could be done better. If one just looks at the schools alone—I heard the hon. Minister talk about the plan, the designs and a lot of things that we have in place and what we are going to get would be better buildings, I take it, and we would not have all these problems as with some of the buildings during the previous government, she said.

My point is that if we keep on putting off a lot of these things, we will reach a stage where we will have nothing. Right now driving to Port of Spain is a nightmare, not just because of the traffic, but in Port of Spain. Mr. Vice-President, I have a new vehicle and I am afraid to go over some of those humps on Wrightson Road to come into the centre of the city. It is almost, I hate to say this, but it is like Guyana, when you are driving there you have potholes everywhere. We are talking about looking towards a First World status, and frankly, I am ashamed to come into the city. About a few months ago we had to wade through that flood. I had to drive my vehicle and pray that I would not go further down into the water, and that was not an odd event; it was not a rare event.

Too often we are coming into the city and there is a little rain and everything is under mud. Everything looks like some kind of Bangladesh area, it is terrible. [Interruption] It is a lagoon as my friend said, those kinds of situations. The schools are not being built for three years; the roads are not being improved. I know there are plans, but these plans are taking forever to fructify and right now, in St. Augustine, at least every week we have electrical outages, at least four times. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: Thank you.
Sen. D. Seetahal: Water is a problem, so when we are assessing how we are doing, Mr. Vice-President, we must bear these things in mind. It is not as if you are sitting down and you want to be critical—“ah, let me look at all the things I can criticize”—but if we are going somewhere we have to have a measurement system. We need to have yardsticks. We need to have something that we can measure it against. And while we are all nice and friendly and everything; that is fine, but let us look to see how we can make this a better place. How do we assess a country, Mr. Vice-President? It is by the quality of life that you enjoy.

In the United States it is assessed from a ranking of one to 50 in the quality of life, water, amenities, recreation and all of these things. Do we have the quality of life that we should have, given what we have—the resources that we have? We have more resources than anyone else, I would venture to say, in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Do we have that quality of life that they have, like Barbados, for instance? We do not. These students come from Barbados to the Law School. Barbados is a small country with no resources, just tourism and they have an attitude, their attitude is that we are so much better than you all; things work, our public service, our water and other things. So we really have to back up and see what is not happening here.

Moving from the general to the particular, Mr. Vice-President, I just want to focus on a couple of things really connected to crime. Crime is, according to the NACTA poll—I think I have the survey here—the number one concern of citizens. The second concern is traffic, strangely enough; one would have thought that would be way down, but number one is crime and it is specifically kidnapping and murder. The second serious issue is traffic. So, it is important that when we are planning for the quality of life we look at crime and how we are dealing with it.

Mr. Vice-President, the United States has had the lowest crime rate in 30 years, they say. New York City with eight million people, for the last two years has had under 1,000 murders. You have eight million people and you are coming from a situation where you were having, less than 10 years ago, 2,500 murders plus; it is eight million and we are 1.25 million. We are going to be 385 at the end of this year. So, if you multiply ours by six or seven, it means that our crime rate would be—if we were New York City—about 2,500 murders for a year. It means that we are enjoying a crime rate about three times, if you count violent crime, that of New York City which was considered one of the most dangerous cities in the world.
Mr. Vice-President, you know what is tragic, yesterday I heard on the news and I was saying to one of my colleagues that you just had three murders in the last six hours, check it out, one was a domestic murder, one was some kind of gang connection and the other one some reprisal, which is the usual—two out of three by stranger killing. But I was listening and it was passing through my mind and I said: “They said 299.” The first thing that crossed my mind, and I am not a cold-hearted person, is 299, when are they going to round it off to make it 300? You know, you just ask the automatic thing. And I say that, of course it is now 300, it happened overnight. We all know now, 300 we have hit the big times. We have never ever had 300.

The point is, Mr. Vice-President, like one of the secretaries in the office said, when you say: “Who was killed now? How many murders? Who killed who?” Now you know nobody takes it on because it is happening all the time. That would affect the quality of our life. People become desensitized to it, but it is not just the average person who cannot tell one murder from the other. It is the children out there. My colleagues and other people have been saying, these gangs that you have in Petit Valley, in the Sawmill Avenue area, certain parts of Laventille, certain parts of central and La Horquetta—I am calling the known areas—people say: let them shoot it out. If in Besson Street, in about 18 months you have 100-something murders there and if there is a detection rate of less than 10 per cent, which is about eight to nine, I heard the Minister say, it means a lot of these are organized crime killings—gang killings. So, they say: “Let them shoot it out, they would not bother us”, but it does not happen like that.

Jamaica saw that, the United States too, in all of these killings in the Inner Cities, you create a breed of individuals who are callous, they do not care and they think the society does not care about them. And as a result, like what is happening in Jamaica, they spread outside and they have very brutal killings and kidnappings as well as happens in Jamaica and now in Guyana, England and elsewhere. So to say that we are safe here, we are living outside “the crime-prone areas” are really being ostriches, burying your heads in the sand. We have to look at what we can do.

The two matters that were isolated in New York City and the two problems we have here rear their heads. One is the question of detection. In New York City in the last 10 years the detection rate has risen so tremendously high that the crimes of course have gone down; if it is much more profitable to do something else you would not engage in crime if you know that you are going to get caught, and tied in with that, of course, is successful prosecution.
Mr. Vice-President, in Trinidad and Tobago at present the detection rate is low. That has a lot to do with the resources and we have heard that that is being dealt with. But it is low not just because you do not have the equipment; it is not just because we do not have any police vehicles, the facility to communicate and find out a car number and whose car this is. We do not have that, but people can go to a police station and give a number. I did that on July 04, 2003 when someone touched my vehicle and up to now I have not heard anything.

The point is, you need to have not just an energized police service, but you need to have people being willing to, not just give evidence, not just police following up, you need to have, Mr. Vice-President, a kind of pressure from the community to do something about inaction. So you need to have a lot of things that we do not have. First of all, we are talking about people claiming that nothing is being done about crime. Then you say, come and give the evidence, or come and attend an identification parade and the police charge and then in the Magistrate's Court—this is before you reach anywhere in any jury—the murder accused walks free as is reported a couple days ago, he has walked free because two main witnesses were unavailable. Dexter K of East Dry River was before the Port of Spain Second Criminal Court for the murder of Alicia Thomas.

The point is, witnesses are either afraid, they get paid-off, they are afraid of the persons or they are afraid of their friends. This is an example, Mr. Vice-President, of criminal elements chasing witnesses. You are picked-up by the police for an offence and you have a choice to pick someone to attend your ID parade. You pick your friend, a knowncriminal and the known criminal stands up there, behind the ID parade one-way mirror for the witness to identify you, the person. It never happens. The witness seeing a known criminal there will not identify the person. What can we do about that? What can we do about witnesses failing to identify at the early stage? What can we do about witnesses not showing up in court? That is one kind of thing—fear.

The other one is the detection and the other one is noninvolvement connected to that of police officers; they do not want to get involved because they have to go to court. A lot of things there and to say do something about crime is not going to cut it; it is not going to help. That is not the solution. We hear about witness protection, fine, we have witness protection of sorts but of course a lot of the witnesses we know will not go into protection because they do not want to interfere with their lifestyle.
My point in all of this, Mr. Vice-President, it is fine, it is well and good to talk about bringing the FBI, bringing Scotland Yard, which by the way is short-staffed right now, I saw in the international news; but any case we bring some Scotland Yard and some FBI and we would have them here and we have the same problems. They will be met with the same difficulties, you will have a problem with the Forensic Science Centre where right now the freezers are not working. That is small, you would think, but it becomes a big thing when you have bodies preserved and you have to identify the body.

5.35 p.m.

You are talking about general conditions so bad, that in matters before the court, you go through a whole Preliminary Enquiry and at the end of it, you do not have the exhibits to put in. It happened in a case where, fortunately, I was appearing for the defence. They never put in the guns; they never put in the knives or the reports, because they had not been available at the end of six months, so you have delays. You talk about training people, that is all well and good, but you need to do things in the immediate, some time there. You need to go there and attack, to deal with things right now; even if it is cleaning up the place.

It would be easy to check the *Hansard* for this one; in 2002, the then Minister of National Security said that they were going to make a new Forensic Science Centre; of course, that never happened. In the 2003 Budget, it was said that we were going to renovate the Forensic Science Centre. These things are two or three years old; that is a lot of years; it is taking too long to get things going. It is taking too long to bring the DNA Act.

I know the problems; I have heard them from the experts only recently. In December of 2003 I raised it; I know some things too may have been put in place, but 22 months ago it was on the Order Paper. That is something which is a valuable tool for investigations. We really need to get cracking to deal with the problem of lack of detection and the lack of successful prosecutions. Until we get that together, Scotland Yard and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will come here and we would look a bit foolish, to put it mildly, because you still would have all those problems.

Even in Houston, which is not such a developed city, I went on a ride-along there; I think I mentioned it before. You sit with police officers in a little town and they are going back and forth. If something happens, for example, if an officer sees a green bicycle, he calls in and says, "Green bicycle, what is the
number?" so, so; so you get the information right there and you can pick up a green bicycle and you can take the person down. You do these things.

The Prime Minister talked about radar and a whole heap of things that I see here, about three quarters of those things, no one knows about. I do not know what they mean: forward looking infrared camera; an aerial surveillance system outfitted with radar and imaging systems; sky watch units—we know what that means; three offshore patrol vessels; a 360-degree radar system; an incident coordinating centre. What are these going to do? Do we have them as yet? If you have them there, tell us about them.

They are not going to give us any comfort if we do not know what they mean; it is just like words with no meaning, as it stands in this budget. Therefore, unless we can be assured that there is some move to serious detection and this means something and that blimp is not just going to sit there in the sky, once in a blue moon, so we say, "Look a blimp," then I cannot have any comfort that there really is anything improving detection. I appreciate that we have more cars and more this and so on, but we really need to get that going.

The question of fear—the witnesses themselves would not give evidence we are talking about and also the jurors. In a very high profile matter, it was said—you hear these things, because it is a contempt to ask jurors what they think—that the reason one-third of the jurors did not convict, even though they accepted that the accused was guilty, was because they did not know what would happen to them afterwards; they were afraid of the consequences. So you have the fear of witnesses and the fear of jurors. The problem is not going to be solved by bringing in foreign jurors; that, to my mind, if I may say so, is the most ridiculous idea I have ever heard.

When we talk about jury trial anywhere in the world, we talk about trial by your peers, not trial by foreigners. We are talking about doing things locally and we are talking about jurors, who are supposed to be your peers, here. It was a suggestion made in the other place by a lawyer and I have heard it repeated by others. I do not think that is a reasonable suggestion. The point is, if we have some solutions, get cracking; two, three years is too long.

Mr. Vice-President, the talk about fear brings me to the next issue I have here. I forgot to mention one thing before I go on. In terms of witness fear, I have this story headlined:

"Live by the gun, die by the bullet"
It is a story about a person called Glenroy Charles who was shot down by some criminal element, apparently. He was dubbed a crime boss and was said to be a lieutenant of the well-known or notorious Mark Guerra. Throughout police and other circles, it was said that this person was the killer of Conrad Aleong. We all know who Conrad Aleong is. [Crosstalk] It was said that he could not be charged since not one witness was willing to come forward and identify him as the brain behind the crime.

Hon. Senators: Not Conrad Aleong.

Sen. Dr. Saith: They did not kill Conrad. [Laughter]

Sen. D. Seetahal: I beg your pardon, Christopher Aleong. His brother is Conrad Aleong. I apologize to him, but I am sure that in making my point he would not mind that I made a little blooper. I am glad Senators are listening so attentively.

Sen. Dr. Saith: We always listen to you.

Sen. D. Seetahal: Glenroy Charles' life changed after he joined the Jamaat al Muslimeen, according to his mother, Keisha Charles. He was the master—I would not use that word—but the brain behind the crime and apparently a mastermind behind several other kidnappings; a lot of interesting issues. He was supposed to be a former Trinity College student as well so, obviously, he had a brain, but he used it for gang crimes and matters of that kind, which would suggest that people sometimes go for illegitimate means of success, when it is much more fruitful, you get more benefits if you do that rather than going into the public service or elsewhere and earning $3,000 a month. Apparently he left, at the age of 28, some several million dollar-estate, money some of us will never see.

I come now to the question of the lack of enforcement. It is different from detection. We talk about detection when we talk about equipment and not having that, a lack of enforcement. There is a problem with that. It was said by about two speakers that there are forces in this country, or words to that effect, intent on creating havoc. It may have been said by Sen. Baksh and also about the need to curb the criminal element.

In any case, I now read from the Sunday Guardian of April 24, 2005. The Prime Minister, at that time, was warning criminals:

"Who can't hear will feel!" [Member shows newspaper]
This was a probable allusion to corporal punishment, but it was in respect of the crime escalating and the young "fellas", in particular, who were doing it. He also said that the Government was buying boats and so on. There was this general idea that the Government was doing something and you were going to feel it and new criminals should watch out. It suggested that we were getting somewhere.

Mr. Vice-President, of course, that was not to be and especially in relation to that organization called the Jamaat al Muslimeen. I quote from the Sunday Express of June 26, 2005. This is a reported story, but one that was the next day, more or less confirmed.

It was reported by Camini Marajh, who is, to my mind, a very courageous reporter:

“Nine months after a Government show of force and a lot of tough talk about clamping down on rampant lawlessness by the Jamaat al Muslimeen on State-owned quarrying lands, the situation has gotten dangerously out of control with fresh reports of extortion, kidnapping and now murder.”

In September of 2004, the same reporter uncovered a situation where there was illegal quarrying in Valencia to the tune of millions of dollars and there were several reports made by her. Then there was a question as to whether there was a licence by some defunct Muslim organization and the State purported to respond. Then there were allegations about an expanding crime ring and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries was on the Sunday Express of September 2004.

Following that series, the Minister responded by saying that there had been interim one-year licences and that Yasin Abu Bakr's Dar Ul Islam organization would be granted one of those interim licences and that was consequent upon some expired previous Muslim group's licence. I do not know that there is any authority where you have a defunct organization that another one just takes it up and carries on with it; I mean, I have not seen the lease myself. There was a resumption of operations by the Bakr mining operations in Valencia. He pointed to a one-year lease which he had in late 1978, which had expired, and he continued to quarry.

No royalties have been paid in respect of that lease. If I give you a lease to mine for my lands, then, presumably, just like the people who get oil here or gas, you pay royalties. But let us assume, by some miracle, this Jamaat lease is valid, then they should be paying royalties, but they are not paying anything; nothing of the sort has been paid. My understanding is that it is some $26-odd million that has been quarried.
Following those revelations, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, in a full-page newspaper ad, announced its decision to issue licences and backdate them to July 01, 2004. For what? God alone knows. If people are saying that illegal things are going on there, enforce the law. [Desk thumping] That is an example of lack of enforcement. What you are saying is, "You are doing something illegal; you are taking state resources; I am going to give you something and I am going to backdate it," so everything is find and dandy. What kind of message is that sending to anybody out there?

I teach a course on corrections and punishment in the Master of Science programme that Sen. Prof. Deosaran talked about. We talk about punishment; one of the reasons behind it is deterrence of that individual and of potential lawbreakers out there. Another reason is for simple punishment, retribution; but if you break the law bluntly and there is no punishment, are you not going to do it again? That means there is no deterrent for you.

All those little potential criminals out there, what are they going to do? They would join the organization that is so bold and is getting away with it. So when the Minister talks about so many gangs, it is true and a lot of them want to belong to that massive big gang and become a Muslim; not a real Muslim and the people who are getting to celebrate Eid, but to be able to say, “I am a bad John.” That is the reality, because all these “bad Johns” are getting away with it and the Jamaat organization or whatever, is down there in Valencia running off people.

5.50 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, it was reported that people from the Environmental Management Authority went there and they were run off the land, and this is State land you know, and following that advertisement by the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, on Friday, June 24 the Director of Minerals was interviewed by the Sunday Express and admitted that no interim licences were ever issued, not to the former coup leader, or to anyone.

So Mr. Vice-President, this is a big thing. Yes, we know they have this illegal quarry. We are going to have licences, we will sanction and regularize them, which is all wrong morally and otherwise, but to back that up, this year nothing is done. Somebody is afraid of somebody and I do not know why.

I do not know why a bunch of mercenaries—and a mercenary is a good word—are being allowed to get away with this with impunity. It is going on all
now and according to this article, somebody who was a caretaker of that quarry was killed, and two weeks ago, a 42-year-old watchman was murdered. He was supposed to be watching over the quarry. Why would he be murdered? Obviously, they do not want anybody protecting any interest.

How can you have people, as is alleged—and not disputed, mind you—with firearms presumably or illegal firearms, and there are strong laws against this guarding of a quarry that does not belong to them, taking away stuff from that quarry? And it is my understanding that it is being sold to state companies. [Desk thumping]

Of course, it is very difficult for me to produce any documents. Who is going to give them to me? I cannot even get police figures from a legitimate police commissioner, so how could I get who is selling. This is my understanding, and it has been reported elsewhere and nobody has denied it. So that is a big problem with the upsurge of crime.

I make that point in terms of lack of enforcement and I suspect that many on the Government side know what I am talking about and agree with me. They would not say it, and many would not even look up when I am saying it because they know very well that I am right, and they want to distance themselves from that kind of permissiveness. I dare say the Minister of National Security is not so inclined because he is actually looking. To break the law and behave in this way is what is happening with this organization. It is going on for too long.

I do not claim that any one government is involved; I think the nature of that organization is such that it infiltrates and once you let one thing go then it becomes worse and worse. It is time to stop.

On Monday, June 27, 2005, The Trinidad Guardian carried a report:

“Govt investigates illegal mining in Valencia

Disturbing trend worries Manning

In the face of reports of extortion, kidnapping and murder over illegal mining in Valencia, Government sources yesterday suggested that the Jamaat al Muslimeen’s days are numbered.

The warning came in the wake of a newspaper report…”

That is the report I just quoted to you.

“However, sources close to Prime Minister Patrick Manning said the Government was working on stamping out the lawlessness and the group reportedly behind it.”
And it was quoted:

“‘Jamaat days are numbered,’ the source said.”

Mr. Vice-President, that was June 27, 2005; July, August, September, October, it is nearly four months and this is not a court matter of the sort that you need to check things if you have to take enforcement action. This is a clear breach of the law, there are police officers, you know that there is no lease, if you are concerned about that, hire some Senior Counsel and let him/her do the research, get the information and proceed, but it is a deliberate refusal not to do anything and it is not good enough for the Prime Minister to say he is worried. I am worried too. All of us are worried, Mr. Vice-President. We are worried because people are so bold to come out and say if they were behind those bombings that it would not be a bombing in a dustbin. That is what was said.

Mr. Vice-President, there was a subsequent interview of a member of the organization—I cannot remember his name, the second in command—and he was alluding to some people who are against the Jamaat al Muslimeen as confederates.

Hon. Senator: Bilaal.

Sen. D. Seetahal: It was not Bilaal, it was a less intelligent person and he was talking about confederates and those who were not, and he said if their organization was behind those bombings he would drop out. Do you know what that suggests? That they are not behind any stupid little bombings in any garbage bin, they are behind big things and that kind of boldfacedness. These people think they can get away with anything and it is time to stop it. It is time for the State to do something about the quarrying in Valencia.

I heard a Senator talking about moving in one place. It is another thing you know, that land was never owned, it was leased and there is this whole action at Mucurapo. Now we are talking about just going and sticking yourself in Valencia and it becomes yours? Until the State moves in and does something about that, eventually people would start setting up mosques and all sorts of things and claim it is a religious thing.

Mr. Vice-President, I move on to my third point which is drugs. The Minister of National Security talked about over 1,000,000 tons or so—I do not know the actual figure—of cocaine passing through the Caribbean Sea. He talked about a lot of that cocaine that pass through Trinidad stay here and it is reasonable. There is a market, people use it. There are so many cocaine addicts, everyone here probably has somebody in their family who is an addict whether they want to admit it or not. I certainly do in my family, Mr. Vice-President, we have that.
This is a reality in Trinidad and Tobago right now and until we do something about what is happening in terms of not just the movement—I know we have the interceptor boats and things—but I am talking about the treatment of drug addiction, then the country is just going to hell. Sorry to use that word, I would say hell if I could say hell. It is going to the dogs.

Mr. Vice-President, I have said over and over again that out of the 3,900 prisoners we have, including the Remand, 1,000 of them are for drug offences. The Minister knows this, the Commissioner of Prisons certainly does. In that prison system, there is not a drug treatment programme. There is anger management, people who are convicted of rape and so on, there is treatment for them, but none for drugs. I asked why not and I was told it might be too expensive. Well, excuse me? It is not too expensive for anger management and so forth, but it is too expensive when you have 1,000 prisoners?

Outside in the real world, many of these things are self-supporting. There are Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous and it would seem to me there should not be a problem in the prison. People have to wait until they are out of prison to join a programme. It should be known that there is trafficking in prison. People are frustrated naturally, they are stressed out, even some of them who may not have been addicts before they went in prison become addicts, and many, once they can afford it, continue using the drug.

Cigarette is king in prison, Mr. Vice-President, because many of the poorer people cannot afford the drugs like marijuana and cocaine so they use cigarettes. One pack of cigarette retails for hundreds of dollars, Mr. Vice-President. So it is moving along if you can afford it, but if you are a big shot in the prison, it is cocaine and marijuana and there are cases now—and this is very good that prison officers are actually being brought to the book for trafficking in the prisons. My suggestion is to have treatment in the prisons. It is difficult to do that, and something has to be done about the laws too. Right now magistrates have limited power to send accused persons for treatment.

In the United States, I worked in Minnesota where there were drug treatment courses. When I returned to Trinidad sometime in late 1999—2000, I heard the then Attorney General, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, saying that we are going to have drug courts. So I said that would be a good thing, what he meant by that is putting all the drug cases in one court. That was drug court for him. That is not what drug treatment courts are. Drug treatment courts are courts where you treat the users as users, as distinct from the traffickers and programmes are put in place.
and if they successfully complete the programme the conviction does not go on their record. So there is a vast movement to get treatment.

Right now people come crying to the courts asking to be sent to St. Ann’s and Piparo. They all want to go there and you cannot do that. The court cannot do it, because in order to go there, one has to take all the medicals which means that somebody has to pay for the HIV/AIDS test and other tests. One has to meet a certain standard, and wait a while before one can go. How many persons can go to Piparo? It is the best place to go and we need other Piparos.

I looked through this budget and maybe the funding is hidden somewhere, I do not see it. I see $2.6 billion for the Ministry of Health, but I do not see the money for the drug. Everything is little bits of money, little “freecos” given to voluntary organizations. The State needs to step in. It needs to step in because when we leave all these drug addicts and their families—we are mashing up families by allowing this to happen you know—then we will not be able to save ourselves. We are not going into any First World country status if there is no treatment of the drug addicts.

Mr. Vice-President, on the question of crime, let me say there is some reference to the blame the Commissioner of Police, this one, and that one, and I saw an indication about deportees. In Jamaica a study was done as to the impact deportees have on crime and there is no significance, no relationship. In Trinidad and Tobago, there have been no studies done, but from my experience, in the last four years I have bent back prostrating and defending, it is only one case where I know a deportee was charged for murder and he was eventually freed by the Court of Appeal because four men attacked him because they did not like his accent and they thought he was putting it on.

In another case, there was one deportee who was the victim because he was running some group in Laventille and another Muslim organization—quote the newspapers—did not like what was happening and killed him. That case is before the courts, but there is no correlation between deportees and increase in crime. I am loathe when people say this without any kind of scientific backing.

Mr. Vice-President, finally, SAUTT, I mentioned them before and I mention them again. In October 2003, the Prime Minister announced the creation of this unit and according to the Newsday of Sunday, October 12, 2003. It says:
“…Manning assured that the unit could be established under one of either two laws. He said these were the laws governing Special Reserve Police Services and the Joint Operational Command Centre.”

I do not know that the Joint Operational Command Centre is any law, the Special Reserve Police Service has nothing to do with the SAUTT which comprises police officers, members of the coast guard, members of the regiment and some civilians.

Mr. Vice-President, to have a unit of that type requires legislation. It is not good enough to say that we have a police officer to whom the police officer reports and the head, who is Brigadier Joseph—because legally he is not supposed to give any instructions to police officers—and if you are talking about a team and a unit, how can the head not give instructions to members? What kind of team is that? So that needs to be put in place. If you are talking about fighting crime and you are supposed to have a unit, which by designation is not legal, then what message are you sending and what kind of impact this will have on the police officers when they see this happening?

Mr. President, I mentioned as part of the fight against crime the National Youth Service (NYS), Military-Led Programme of Apprenticeship and Reorientation Training (MYPART) and Military-Led Academic Training Programme (MILAT). Three years ago in the 2003 Budget, it was announced that MYPART would be a military-led group and there would be something in national service and it sounded very good and still sounds good.

You get some youths who want to parade around with a gun, into military life and give them some discipline. The point is, according to this social programme stuff, the National Youth Service has not yet started. Two years now, preparatory work has been done and they are now going to take in 60 inmates, last year the same thing was said, Mr. Vice-President.

**Sen. Joseph:** Not inmates, intakes.

**Sen. D. Seetahal:** Okay, intakes not inmates. In 2003, it was supposed to start and did not, 2004, 2005, you see that is the point, these things are such—

6.05 p.m.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.
Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. D. Seetahal: Mr. Vice-President, the point I am making here is, again, all of these delays. The Military-Led Youth Programme of Apprenticeships and Reorientation (MYPART) was supposed to start. I see here it says 206 persons benefited, but I do not know how. Did they actually get military training? What about the Military-Led Academic Training Programme (MILAT)? There is no proper reporting, and these were actually held out to be the programmes. I remember Sen. Chin Lee mentioning that these are programmes that are going to help with the youth.

There is a final point on that. At page 154 of the Draft Estimates, the figures given are $2.22 million for the National Youth Service (NYS) for 2004; $17 million of which only $3 million was used in 2005. In the other document at page 67, that is the Social Sector Investment Programme, it is said that there was an allocation of $11 million which was spent. I do not know how that came about, but either some $8 million has gone missing or something is happening there. In relation to MYPART, the Draft Estimates here at page 154 says that $17 million was allocated in 2005 and $1.08 million was spent. Now, $1,084,804 spent indicates how little it was utilized. However, in the Social Sector Investment Programme at page 67 you get an entirely different report. It says that $10.9 million was spent. So I do not know what is going on here. This programme received a budgetary allocation of $10 million and expenditure for the 2005 period was $10 million. But if you look at page 154 you would see revised estimates was $1,084,804. That is MYPART.

What is happening? These are just instances of—one could imagine that there is something worse than an error in that. I hope not, but I also want to say that those programmes are commendable and it is one way to go. Why do we have this delay? Why do we have this wrong information given about what is happening with it? Somebody has to account and it has to be some Member of the Government. Account for what is happening with SAUTT, which has now been allocated $99.65 million in 2006; in 2005 it was $79.3 million; 2004, $71 million, and that is more money, in many cases, than the whole police service got for some vehicles. Compare that to the Police Complaints Authority that got $2 million and which is supposed to investigate police officers. This shows something about our priorities and where we are going and we really need to get cracking.
In summary, what I said at the outset is, the question here is whether or not the Government is doing, with all of the resources, a good job and could it have been done better. I do not know that I think they are doing a good job, in my view, based on everything that I have said. I think there is an attempt somewhere there, but it is not manifesting itself into actual reality.

Take this book—this guide—I remember at least two years ago being told that this guide would be ready. We received it only today. Over time I had asked the then Minister of Social Development—who is not here—and he had said that there were some corrections. But to take two years to make this, is that symptomatic of how long things are going to take? This is just a guide, which is just to tell you what programmes there are. So if we are going to have schools and we are going to have things, then you may have to multiply that by two years. I hope not, and I hope that we really get some action this year. But I will wait until I see that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Althea Rocke: [Desk thumping] Mr. Vice-President, I thank you and my Senate colleagues for this opportunity to finally make a small contribution to the 2005/2006 budget debate. I should like to offer my congratulations to Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill, Minister in the Ministry of Finance, and his team for a well-written and articulated document. I also commend those technocrats who crafted the budget statement and accompanying documents, and those public servants throughout the various ministries and government agencies who worked hard and long hours in contributing to the final product. I know from personal experience that this annual exercise is not an easy task.

With a background in economics and finance, I could seek to impress my colleagues with my technical know-how and skills by presenting an analytical discourse on the policies and numbers contained in the 2006 budget statement, and possibly that is what is expected of me. I could talk about the fact that the policy initiatives and measures contained in these documents are really a wish list of what the Government would like to do in the coming year and the medium term. However, without a clearly defined action plan containing stated milestones, measurable targets and realistic time lines, much of what is contained in these documents will not be fully realized, as history has shown. After all, a plan is only as good as its implementation.
As it relates to the figures contained in the budget document and its accompanying documents, we all know numbers can be made to speak any language and say anything that we want them to say. I could speak about the apparent stagnation of the non-oil sector and, in particular, the decline in agriculture in real growth terms, even as the oil sector continues its long historical trend of being the main contributor to the growth of our economy.

I could also speak about the issue of a non-oil deficit of approximately $18 billion and the possible repercussions on our economic development in the event of any major and unforeseen disruptions in the flow of petro dollars during the next year and even in the medium term. It would be worthwhile at this time to highlight the fact that the Interim Revenue Stabilization Fund, soon to be reinvented as the Heritage and Stabilization Fund, stood at just about $4 billion at mid-September, 2005, and if I were to project an addition of another $2 million, it would still only amount to about one-third of this non-oil deficit.

I could go on and on discussing the number of pertinent economic issues, initiatives and recommendations presented in this year’s budget debate, but I would not. I should prefer to leave these analyses to my more learned and experienced colleagues who have done quite a good job so far, and I am sure will continue to do so. Do you know what is interesting, as I was told quite succinctly by one of my family members who is out there living in the real world of Trinidad and Tobago? He said to me: “Budgets come and budgets go and people live and people continue to survive.” Then a few days later as I was taking my 11-year-old daughter to school—she is in the first year at high school—and we were talking, she turned to me and said: “Mummy, I really hope that by the time I am big enough to go out on my own that all this kidnapping and crime would be finished so you would not be afraid to allow me to go out with my friends. Do you know something, Mummy? I cannot remember the last time you allowed me to go out in the yard to play.” To me, those words from family members were very significant.

Therefore, what I should like to do instead is address this honourable Senate as an ordinary citizen of this country; a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend, one who sees and shares the grief and disappointment etched on the faces of so many of our citizens, for one reason or another. Apart from the scourge of a daily diet of crime, many citizens remain starved of a quality of life that could sustain us through these challenging times. To date, this country’s oil wealth is not being reflected in the basic quality of life which should be enjoyed by us all. At the
foundation of this quality of life is the family, as stated in the Social and Economic Policy Framework, 2006—2008, and I quote:

“The bedrock of the society, the family, is seen as contributing significantly to the growth, development and stability of the national community through its role as the primary agent of socialization, providing physical and emotive care to its members and as a distributor and producer of goods and services.”

I think it is important that we understand that the Government of the day has recognized the importance of the family and has placed particular emphasis on this unit of production and of necessity in our country at this time.

The effective family unit is founded on a couple of things: Love of God; love for each other; respect for each other and each other's property; kindness; compassion and a simple thing, good manners. There was a time when these values were considered the norm. On your way to school—if you throw your mind back—you may remember you were expected to greet every neighbour you met with: “Good morning, Aunty; good morning, Uncle; good morning Miss Theresa.” And if you did not, by the time you arrived home in the afternoon, your mother or “granny” was waiting with the whip to give you a good “licking” for forgetting your manners and not saying “good morning” to Miss Theresa. I am sure if many of us throw our minds back we would remember those times. A simple thing as saying “good morning”, of just acknowledging the presence of another human being and showing that respect, that has gone out the window.

6.20 p.m.

Presently, circumstances have necessitated that both parents work in order to maintain a certain standard of living within the context of the rising cost of living. While we have gained materially there has been a reduction in family time spent together.

Mr. Vice-President: Do you want to say something?

Sen. Dr. Saith: We will stop at 6.30 p.m. There is no need to move a procedural motion.

Sen. A. Rocke: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

Certainly, in the case of one-parent families there is usually very little choice. The care and nurturing of successive generations of our children are being left in the hands of child-minders who are often ill-equipped to do so. Sometimes we look for the cheapest options but it is not always the best thing. Remember these
people are in contact with our children for very long periods and do we know what they are imparting to them? Children are also left to their devices unsupervised for long periods of time. Children are left in the care of grandparents or other family members who may be too tired or have their personal problems to deal with and therefore are unable to provide the quality of care and attention required by these children. Then, there are those parents who live abroad in order to earn the wherewithal to provide a better standard of living for their children, with this translating into the best of designer clothes, shoes and money for their children, but otherwise little caring and nurturing contact is maintained. They regularly ship these perceived necessities in barrels to materially expectant, but emotionally neglected children giving rise to the term “barrel children” as these children are sometimes called.

The result is major tearing of the social fabric of our society. This in turn has given rise to a number of social ills at the core of which is crime and an increase in gang activity both in our schools and within our communities, as our youths struggle for a sense of belonging. Very often, it is in this search for emotional bonding and acceptance that our sons and daughters fall prey to bad influences. Too many of them are now well set on the path to self-destruction through a life of crime, lawlessness and devoid of the capacity to respect and care for others. If we as a people and a Government are not vigilant, proactive and action-driven, we will continue to lose many more of our children whom we consider the future of our nation.

In the not-too-distant past, what may have been lacking at home in love, care and nurturing would have often been provided by teachers at school. Today, our teachers are frustrated by a number of issues and rightly so. The calibre of student attending school leaves much to be desired. The expectation of some parents is that the teacher should be the one to discipline the child. Inadequate remuneration and benefits, poor facilities and working conditions are just some of these issues.

Many students even at a tender age have no respect for adults. I was privy once to a child five years old who was using obscene language to another child, in the presence of an adult and that child was not corrected. The whole idea of respect, good manners and concern for each other is not being perpetuated, even from the youngest child. There is a lack of any sense of discipline. These children accept mediocre academic performance as the norm or final objective with no one to guide them. The least they do the better for them. I believe that this is as a direct result of the breakdown of family and home life in our society.
The Government of the day must be congratulated for recognizing the importance of family in contributing to our social and economic development and the need to improve the quality of life of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. In seeking to strengthen these areas Government has outlined a number of pertinent initiatives and measures that would impact on the provision of the basic necessities; that is food, shelter, clothing, improved health care; to expand access to tertiary opportunities and to seek to ensure the safety of every person and property. The Government must be congratulated for these initiatives and measures.

As we welcome these initiatives and the bigger picture emerges, we must ask ourselves: Is more money in the hands of the individual going to translate into more family time and a better quality of life, or is it going to translate into more conspicuous consumption, cars, furniture and clothes? Trinidadians, more so than Tobagonians do not display a high propensity to save for a rainy day. The most prevalent attitude is to spend now and the future will take care of itself.

In respect of the introduction of the Smart Card we ask: Is a dependency syndrome being promoted and if so, how can we correct it? This budget measure provides for 60,000 families, but what about the other 60,000 needy families; an immediate relief from hunger for the 250-plus homeless and mentally ill persons in and around Port of Spain alone? There is also the need to return a sense of dignity to those who are less fortunate in our society and to tie in the principle of work within one’s character. A fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work.

The provision of free tertiary education is laudable and welcome. In this context, is it possible to include a component that breeds a sense of responsibility and accountability in our prospective graduates? That is, you are given this free tertiary education, but how do you account for it? When someone is given something free, that person may go in and may take to it or may not take to it. The Government has no recourse to regain the expenditure that it has to pay for this tertiary education. It is something that we need to consider.

I will now propose a few recommendations that the Government may wish to consider in its drive to preserve family life and provide each citizen with a better quality of life. If we agree that an important cornerstone in the preservation of family life is the presence of mother in the home, I suggest the establishment of a professional motherhood fund. The aim of this fund would be to enable working mothers to stay at home beyond the normal three-month maternity leave, thereby
empowering them to provide the care and nurturing attention children need during these formative years. The mother will be paid a salary during the period of her stay at home. Of course, to make this proposal workable a number of issues would have to be considered and decided upon. For instance, the maximum period of time allowed; how the fund would be financed; which agency would be responsible and the employment, training and financing of temporary replacements. This can be an opportunity for very innovative and creative support of our family structure.

Government may wish to consider the introduction of an incentive that facilitates the establishment of parent/child/support systems within organizations. This system should include an after school pickup of employees children and a homework monitoring centre at the parents’ office manned by a professional. As a parent and a professional if such a system is being made available to me, I will not consider it unfair to make a financial contribution to the organization’s effort. If I am relieved of picking up my child at 3.00 p.m.; dealing with the traffic situation and knowing that the homework is being supervised by a very capable adult, I can concentrate fully on providing my best for my employer. The time it takes me to arrive home; have dinner with her; enjoy the ritual of bathing her and putting her to bed, I can bond fully with my child without the frustrations of the day spilling over into our family time.

It is abundantly clear that we need to return dignity to our less fortunate and at the same time to reinvigorate the work ethic of a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay. In this regard, the provision of the Smart Card can be tied to a certain number of hours of community and social service, rather than giving someone access to cash with no sort of responsibility and accountability. Why can we not make it work for us where they would have the responsibility to provide some sort of social or community service? For instance, monthly visits to incarcerated persons with a view to providing emotional and moral support to persons who may in many instances have no family, friends or support systems of their own, letting them know that somebody cares.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Will you be very long?

**Sen. A. Rocke:** No. About five minutes.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** We will have to come back and let you start.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon.**
Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Thursday, October 13, 2005 at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President: Before I put the question on the adjournment, I compliment Sen. Rocke. It is her first speech in the Senate. [Desk thumping] Like everyone else I was really enjoying hearing you. Tomorrow, I look forward to hearing the rest.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.32 p.m.