SENATE
Wednesday, September 05, 2007

The Senate met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS

[Madam President in the Chair]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Ronald Phillip who is out of the country.

SENIOR'S APPOINTMENT

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Professor George Maxwell Richards, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D.:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor 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. ANTHONY SAMMY

WHEREAS Senator Ronald Phillip is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, ANTHONY SAMMY, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Ronald Phillip.

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 4th day of September, 2007.”
OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Anthony Sammy took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)
[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 03, 2007]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.


After six years this PNM Government has spent over $200 billion of taxpayers’ money and we have to ask ourselves the questions: Are our citizens any safer? Is our transport system any better, and are food prices any lower?

Madam President, many businessmen are leaving our shores taking with them their families, their capital and their dreams. We are witnessing an economic brain drain because business people, sons of the soil no longer feel safe to conduct business in Trinidad and Tobago under this PNM Government.

Calls to 999 go unanswered, and if answered they are unable to respond through lack of vehicles; murders go unsolved; witnesses are murdered, and from what I understand, up to yesterday a witness who was supposed to give evidence in the Vindra Naipaul murder/kidnap case has walked out of a safe house, and criminal cases are dismissed. How can any business person feel safe, and how can—

Sen. Jeremie S.C: Senator, would you please give way? You said at the outset that the witness in the Vindra Naipaul case has walked out of protective custody. That is not true. If you check the report, the State went to great lengths to make the child a ward of the court, his mother wanted to take him out of protective custody. He is now a ward of the court and still in protective custody.


**Sen. Dumas:** You are trying to get the witness killed.

**Sen. A. Sammy:** I am simply basing my statement on what was reported in the press.

Madam President, if we want to reduce the cost of—[**Interruption**]

[**Madam President pounds gavel**]

Madam President, if we want to reduce the cost of goods and services, then provide a safer environment for your business people so they would not have to spend thousands of dollars on burglar proofing, security cameras, alarms, armed security guards, security dogs, et cetera. All these additional expenses are obviously passed on to the consumers in the final retail price of goods and services.

If you want to avoid the wanton wastage of productive time spent in traffic jams, then develop new roads, highways, overpasses, et cetera. Do not continue with all these tall buildings that will add to traffic. Here again, the cost of fuel and maintenance of vehicles will finally reach the consumer at the end of the retail price.

Stop blaming business people and everybody else and everything under the sun when it is clearly the Government's fault because of a lack of vision, and lack of proper planning on their part that cause these unnecessary problems.

**Sen. Mark:** Definitely.

**Sen. A. Sammy:** Madam President, this Government has spent billions of dollars in crime-fighting equipment and initiatives by the former Minister of National Security with “Anaconda” to the present Minister, Martin Joseph with “zero tolerance” and still no one is safe.

By the way where is the blimp? How long has it not been working?

**Sen. Ahmed:** “It fall out of de sky.”

**Sen. A. Sammy:** How many hours has it been actually functioning? Is there a warranty on it, and who is paying for it? If it is we, the taxpayers, then when can we see it and what has become of the expensive spy equipment in it?

Madam President, we are in the middle of the biggest crime wave in the history of this country and yet the blimp and all the expensive spy equipment has been grounded for months.
In the Prime Minister’s budget speech, after six years and billions of dollars, he continues to say he is dealing with crime. On page 7, under National Security he said:

“There have been early successes but the full impact of our comprehensive methodical approach will be seen over time.”

Over time, what time? Six years have gone and we are still establishing a plan to fight crime. What are all these early successes? When will we see the full impact, in 2020? By that time, all businessmen would have left our shores.

This Government has done little or nothing about extortion, whether it is outright kidnapping or coward tax. Why have the police not apprehended these perpetrators? This is also causing many business people to leave our country.

**Sen. Ahmed:** “Dey leaving every day. Lock, stock and barrel dey going.”

**Sen. A. Sammy:** Madam President, in the *Trinidad and Tobago Business Forecast Report Q3 2007*, the Business Monitor International Assessment Agency had this to say in an article dated June 05, 2007:

“The major risk factors to the business environment outlook include high levels of crime and inflation.”

Madam President, in another newspaper article, the *Daily Express* dated January 31, 2007 is headed: “Crime wave sparks deep concern in business community”. I will read some excerpts from it.

“National Security Minister, Martin Joseph who last week called a meeting with business leaders, was unavoidably absent, leaving his representatives to deal with the group.”

What a caring Minister! It continues:

“The meeting was fresh on the heels of the massacre of four—WPC Elizabeth Sutherland, her husband, daughter and a family friend.”

Yet he could not find time to come to the meeting he asked for.

“And then it was the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce’s annual dinner, where two of the country’s leading businessmen could not contain their disgust at just how much spiralling crime continues to violently erode some of the positive gains we’ve made as a country.”
The article ends by saying:

“‘The answer cannot be to barricade ourselves behind walls around our homes, releasing ourselves only when we travel or attend parties and fetes,’ Lok Jack said.”

Madam President, there is also supposed to be an aerial surveillance system, a radar system that was completed in the last fiscal year and yet the trade in humans is still occurring. People are freely moving in and out of the country. What are they bringing with them? Who brought them in and how? Clearly, this trade in humans is not done by small players, but rather, there are big players involved.

10.15 a.m.

The 360º radar system that the Prime Minister boasts of, is it really functioning? I quote from an article in the Trinidad Express editorial of Monday, July 16, 2007 and it says:

“Prime Minister Patrick Manning has been speaking almost incessantly at home and abroad in recent months, about the government’s plans to make this country ‘Fortress Trinidad and Tobago’, in the domestic fight against drug trafficking. He has spoken also of plans to have this ‘fortress’ extended as far north as Dominica, with the concurrence of other governments in the Caricom regional network.”

The National Security Minister gave some airy-fairy, flimsy account for the presence of drugs in our country, implying that Trinidad and Tobago is being used as an international transshipment point for drugs and arms and that we should not be too concerned as it is not staying here. But should not the expensive radar system be keeping out these drugs and arms? Is it not working? Do we want to be known as a transshipment point for these activities? What really is the Minister saying? Every unit of drug, arms or ammunition that enters our water must be of national concern.

We were assured by this PNM Government that the security net would not have allowed anything to come in, as well as preventing anything from leaving. So if illegal goods are entering and leaving, it means that the security net is not working. It has failed miserably, like the generator at the Prime Minister's residence. [Desk thumping]

Prostitutes are entering en masse. This also constitutes a serious breach of security. First of all, this is a form of human trafficking. Secondly, these people are entering under the cover of darkness. So what else is coming in, and who else
is leaving unknown to the authorities? These women cannot swim from the South American coast to Trinidad so it means that vessels are coming and going, bringing them in. We have to ask ourselves a question again: So what else is coming aboard these vessels and what else is leaving? This unmonitored activity can lead to kidnapped victims being taken beyond the reach of our security forces, or criminals escaping the long arm of the law, undetected.

In an editorial in the *Sunday Guardian* of August 08, 2004, headlined: “The country’s image worsens”, it was stated, and I quote:

“On the Government’s side, the tendency has been to play down the impact of crime. Prime Minister Patrick Manning has characterized crime as the single dark cloud on an otherwise bright horizon, and has played up the few bogus kidnappings that have taken place.”

I want to remind this country of the kidnapping of Vindra Naipaul. Up to this day the police, or the security forces, no one, has been able to give that family closure because up to now they have not found the body, or the remains, or whatever, of Vindra Naipaul. That is the kind of success that we have had here.

Border patrol is clearly not up to scratch. Customs, as part of the border control, are short by 50 positions. The Service Commission is still awaiting a request from the Comptroller of Customs to identify vacancies. This issue was previously raised by the Opposition Leader in the other place and the line Minister, the Minister of Trade and Industry refuted these allegations, but up to yesterday we continued to receive new complaints. Is the Comptroller playing a waiting game so that after two years he can choose his own players?

The Prime Minister declared war on crime in 2002 and every year thereafter, yet every year the criminals are winning. The UNC Alliance already has a crime plan—

**Sen. Dumas:** Ahhh.

**Sen. A. Sammy:** If you want a copy of it I can easily pass it on to you, but that, I think, will be a waste of time because you would not even know how to execute it. Our approach to tackling crime is on three levels: one, prevention; two, detection and three, prosecution.

I just want to bring to your attention some of the concerns that I have and some of the concerns that residents have brought to my attention in the Port of Spain area. Over the many years, it seems, Port of Spain and certain sections, like
Sea Lots, John John, Laventille, have been purposely underdeveloped. I have to say purposely, because when you see how those people live; how our citizens live, it must hurt you.

Sen. Manning: You were there for six years.

Sen. A. Sammy: They are saying we were there for six years, but they were there for 40 years and they did nothing! Nothing! [Desk thumping] But let me tell you this time, those people are not going to be fooled anymore; they are going to change. So having your first meeting there is not going to change anything now, believe what I am telling you. They are fed up of it, because this Government has now moved in there with bulldozers and bulldozed the people out of their homes, out of the land that they have helped to build, to construct, and instead of helping them to take it further, they are destroying them. They are moving communities, displacing children, families and small businesses that have developed over the years.

Those people, especially in Sea Lots, when they started to live there, they used to walk bare feet out of the mangrove and when they reached the standpipe at the front of the road, they would wash their feet and then go into Port of Spain, or wherever they had to go; to work or to whatever activity they had to do. These people took their blood, sweat and tears to try to build where they live, and now this uncaring Government bulldozes them out of that.

By the way, it only took nine months for the Prime Minister to build his palace at a cost of $148 million. Could that not have been used better to help these residents who, by the way, have supported them all those former years? I do not know how much longer they are going to support them, though.

Only on Monday, DOMA called for more security. Why? I would like to read from an article dated Monday, September 03, 2007, titled: “Doma calls for more security”. It states:

“Once again the Downtown Owners & Merchants Association (Doma) is calling for help to deal with the crime situation in Port-of-Spain in the wake of an attack on Angela Le Gall last Thursday evening near the Trinity Cathedral parking lot.

Le Gall expressed her concern about the safety of citizens of this country during a press conference on Saturday at Doma’s office, Henry Street, Port-of-Spain.
Appropriation Bill (Budget)  

[SEN. SAMMY]

Madam President, you know, this PNM Government is like a forest riddled with “goners”: Eulalie James—gone; Hedwige Bereaux, Member of Parliament for La Brea—gone; Larry Achong, Point Fortin—gone; Camille Robinson-Regis, Arouca South—gone; Eddie Hart, Tunapuna—gone; John Rahael, Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West—gone; Fitzgerald Hinds, Laventille East/Morvant—gone; Eric Williams, Port of Spain South—gone a long time now; Franklin Khan, Ortoire/Mayaro—gone; Diana Seukeran, San Fernando West—

Hon. Senators: Diane.

Sen. A. Sammy: Diane, sorry—San Fernando West—gone—

Sen. Manning: Anthony Sammy, not there.

Sen. A. Sammy: Madam President, are we aware that in the season of “goners”—

Sen. Dr. Saith: Harry Mungalsingh—gone.

Sen. A. Sammy:—that maybe the parliamentary representative for Diego Martin Central is going? And Dr. Keith Rowley, Diego Martin West is also going? And the architect of the rapid rail, which nobody wants, from Diego
Martin East, going? Do you know that maybe the Member for San Fernando East is also going? All of these are going, going, and the truth is the PNM, as only a matter of time will tell, will be gone. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. Enill:** “Doe get tie up.”

**Sen. Ahmed:** No, no, we do not get mixed up on this side. [Crosstalk]

**Sen. A. Sammy:** May the almighty God have mercy on these forlorn souls. Amen and Amen.

**Sen. Dumas:** Blasphemy, boy; blasphemy.

**Sen. A. Sammy:** Not like the blasphemy I saw when the Minister, Colm Imbert, got up, read from the Bible and then slammed it down. That was blasphemy, so do not come here and tell me that. As a Catholic he should know better.

**Madam President:** Senator, speak to me.

**Sen. A. Sammy:** Sorry, Madam President. I apologize. Really, I could go on and on but my colleagues have already demonstrated and will continue to demonstrate when they speak, the continued squandermania and conmanship that has always been the trademark of this PNM Government.

As I close, I wish to ask the Prime Minister to start acting in a mature manner that befits his office. Give the citizens the right to exercise their franchise by calling the general election date now and finally give our citizens the opportunity to get rid of this uncaring, irresponsible, incompetent, dictatorial, free-spending and corrupt PNM Government and replace them with the only alternative government that has a proven and successful track record, the UNC Alliance.

I thank you, Madam President. [Desk thumping]

**Madam President:** Minister of Government, your speaker has just gone to the bathroom and Sen. Prof. Ramchand is not here either, so what do we do?

10.30 a.m.

**Sen. Angela Cropper:** Madam President, there is a lot to comment on in the budget of 2008—what is in it and what is not in it. A lot of that commentary has already been made.

The 2008 budget statement attempts to present the cumulative effects of Government’s policies and expenditures over the last five years. I found this to be very useful. For me it was a great advantage to have because it helped me to get a
better overview of how we have been progressing over a five-year period, rather than the one-year perspective that we tend to take, if the material is presented from year to year. There are some disadvantages in that style. It leaves the reader to recognize and to say that they have heard this or that proposal many times before. The budget statement, by accumulating the record over a five-year period, is long on claims and somewhat silent on the implementation deficit and performance, some of which we heard last night in the contribution by Sen. Seetahal SC. It opens the performance over that period to critique from a five-year perspective and not a one-year perspective.

I want to start with the advantage that I found in it and to look at the trends in some of the standard macro indicators of progress in the economy. These are very notable. We have had the figures presented in the documents on the way in which GDP has increased over that five-year period, very notable; our GNP has increased, very impressive. We have seen a declining public debt as a ratio of GDP, very impressive. Foreign reserves are growing; money supply management is good, and so on. These are very impressive and laudable indicators at the macro level. I am very, very pleased to see that we have made that progress in those areas over that five-year period. I must say that we expect no less given the revenue stream which the country has enjoyed lately. I am sure that the country expects no less. We are happy to see that in those indicators we are meeting and rising to expectations and the performance there is very good.

While recognizing progress in these areas, I feel that a little humility might be in order for all of us as citizens of this nation and not just for the Government, to acknowledge that this revenue stream derives largely from the monetization of the hydrocarbon resources of the country and is not a reflection of our own effort and productivity over that time. It is also a direct result of foreign direct investment to a large extent and the risk taking and expertise that are made available by multinational corporations. The high and sustained level of prices for energy products over the last five years has also been influenced by global circumstances and politics which are probably the single most important determinant of high energy prices and over which we have no influence. We should have a little humility in recognizing that.

However, our Government is to be complimented in its approach to garner more and more of those proceeds for the national coffers, as a result of its revamping of the components of the petroleum taxation regime. We may not yet have maximized the potential take but we have made very good progress in this direction compared to other periods in the history of our energy industry.
These positive macro indicators resulting from the Government’s management of our revenue-base are recognized, but like Oliver, one can have the temerity to ask for more; and we do. The more that we have been asking for are the other macro considerations that occupy citizens and commentators who are more concerned about the long-term. These concerns revolve around sustainability of our enterprises; well-being into the future; the way in which we apply the lessons from our own experience and that of economies similar to ours. We are concerned about movement towards more equity in the society; the rate of savings; the direction of investment; to see more investment in creativity or the means by which the creativity, innovativeness and entrepreneurship on which the future will depend, will develop. We are concerned about having a benign and healthy physical space around us; a qualitatively different form of governance of the affairs of the State. These issues have been articulated or reflected in, or underpin, the presentation made by Sen. Mary King. We are concerned about the relative priorities within the investment programme as well as the rate of implementation. We are concerned about the need to address some of the root and branch problems while we have surplus financial resources, not just to pick the easy cherries.

I confess that I count myself as one of these citizens and commentators. These matters make up my professional background and I am not motivated by any personal or political advantage from any budget provision of any kind. I share the perspectives about the economy that Sen. King has repeatedly brought to this Chamber.

Yesterday, Sen. Montano in his contribution commented on Sen. King’s contribution by saying that there are many fault finders with the model of development that the Government is pursuing, but that he hears of no alternative models or approaches. Maybe, it is his turn to be asked: Where has he been living? There is an abundance of analytical work about Caribbean economies including that of Trinidad and Tobago. We can refer him and perhaps give him a reading list of the accumulated body of knowledge as well as the many commentaries we have had on successive budgets, and generally on development matters in the country. I have prepared a list for him but since he is not here, I will reserve it for him. That body of work and commentary offers an analysis of how we are doing and how we might do instead. Many of these ideas impel the groups of citizens who call into question some of our development decisions and seek to put alternatives on the agenda. One only has to be willing to listen. But as my mother used to say, you can take a horse to water but you cannot make it drink.

After almost eight days of budget debate a lot of ground has been covered. As usual, I would like to bring some incremental value to the debate and avoid
repeating what has been said. In trying to do so, I intend to comment and focus on the decision in the budget statement about agriculture. If time allows, I will look at some micro indicators of well-being in the country, as well as some other measures that I consider to be very important for civilizing this society which seems not to be priority in the budget. I have said before in this Chamber that at this moment in our history, in our development, and in the life of this nation, our priority is not to industrialize, it is to civilize the society.

Why agriculture? It is because this is where I started my professional career; the recognition long held by many in this society, if not by those who have occupied the office of government, of how vital agriculture is for a nation’s economy. I happened to live in Switzerland for a while and to observe the way in which the agriculture of that country is protected and supported, simply because historically, they have put a very high premium on food security. Now they support agriculture and invest in it as a way of supporting the main line that shores up their economy—its tourism industry—which is based on its landscape.

My interest in agriculture is because of the implication for food availability and the price trend at the global level, as a result of a number of global developments: free trade regime; China becoming a member of the World Trade Organization and having for the last five years an inordinately high level of growth. The implications of these for food availability, prices and scarcity have long been projected. That analysis is available for anyone to take note and make use of it. In this country we have had continuous domestic analysis over the decades of the importance of agriculture for us, and unending counsel from our experts in agriculture about the shortsightedness of letting that go into decadence.

For all these reasons out of the many things one can speak about in the budget, I would like to make my contribution to agriculture. On page 15 the budget statement says:

“The agricultural sector has been earmarked for intensive focus in 2008 and in the coming years.”

I have no quarrel with that statement. The only thing I would do to improve it is to say that “the agricultural sector has been earmarked for intensive focus from here on.” We need to see it in the light that is broader than simply embarking on agriculture as a kind of kneejerk reaction to increase domestic production of food, as a way of contributing to the management of inflation. It is good to see that after decades of advocacy on behalf of the agricultural sector in the country that the
realization has dawned finally that this sector is fundamental to our food security, even if it has historically been undervalued and under-supported for whatever reasons.

As such, I welcome this announcement of the importance of agriculture in the budget statement and the focus intended from here on. As they say, better late than never. I am motivated highly by this announcement. I mentioned that this is where I began my professional career as a youngster working in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management of the University of the West Indies. Having had as part of my duties the organization of its annual West Indian Agriculture Economics conferences and preparation of its proceedings, I have a long-standing exposure and continuing interest over the course of my professional career in this sector.

I want to emphasize, now that we have made this policy decision, the importance of getting it right on this occasion and making sure that this is more than just the usual lip service to agriculture. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of getting this right because I think a new intervention and focus in agriculture has much integrative possibilities with other sectors in the society: tourism; sustainability over time; research; development; entrepreneurship; processing and trade.

10:45 a.m.

I think a new focus on agriculture calls for an examination of many aspects of our approach to policy, planning and management if we are to make those linkages and get more value out of the intervention in agriculture than just an increase in food and a lowering, perhaps, of food prices. It is important for us to put these on the table if we are to ensure that the new thrust bears fruit.

I note with great satisfaction the proposal to establish an Agricultural Development Commission and perhaps we might constitute that body and charge it with terms of reference in a way that helps us to make all those linkages throughout the society.

The first thing I would emphasize is the importance of analyzing our competitive advantage in agriculture. In doing this, I draw on extensive professional discussions over decades with Prof. John Spence, but more particularly his analysis in the Trinidad Express of September 21 and 28, 2006. It is a good, clear and succinct analysis of our competitive advantage in agriculture and one can summarize it under a few points.
First, we now have a good bit of land released from sugar cane production permitting farm sizes that could allow for some degree of mechanization in drainage, irrigation, soil cultivation, weed control, harvesting, transport and other farm operations. Land is basic.

We also have a very detailed knowledge of the soil of the islands of Trinidad and of Tobago. We have sufficient and abundant annual rainfall, even though it is seasonal, which presents some challenges for water management, water harvesting and irrigation. However, we have a sufficient annual rainfall. We are not yet a dry land country. It remains to be seen what would be the ravages of global climate change on that.

We have engineering capability in the country and now we have the financial resources to invest in the infrastructure that would allow us to manage water resources in a better way. We have a legacy of expertise in agricultural research and in training and this could readily be reactivated. We have some notable plant and animal genetic resources that provide the basis for research and development in agriculture. Cocoa, anthuriums, pigeon peas and buffalypso are some of the examples on which we have made considerable progress, waiting there to be supported by the policy, the planning, the institutional framework and the resources to make them commercially viable and to derive far more revenue from agriculture than we have been doing in the past. We also have the heritage of a good proportion of our population who have traditionally been employed in agriculture. Agriculture is not just an occupation or an activity; it is an ethos and we need to recognize that for what it is; recognize where it is and build on those strengths.

Having said that, let me just say that I have always been a little bemused about the way in which we have been trying to convert our sugar workers into instant farmers in Central, while at the same time taking decisions that might lead to farming families and communities in the south western peninsula becoming industrial plant workers.

I think that the focus on agriculture now should not simply be to increase domestic food production and to contribute to controlling inflation; now that we have the policy decision and the financial wherewithal, we should take the opportunity to transform the agricultural sector and so contribute to the transformation of the economy for the long term; one of the other macro considerations that Sen. Mary King, others and myself in this Chamber and elsewhere have repeatedly spoken about.
Indeed, let me say at this point that I think that planning for such transformation should have preceded the decision to terminate Caroni (1975) Limited. So planning and preparation for realizing the competitive advantage that we have in agriculture require attention to some fundamentals.

Madam President, I would like to suggest that the first of those fundamentals is the importance of land use planning. It is clear that we have not given this enough attention over the decades and even when we have so planned, we have promptly evaded or overridden them, as former Independent Senator, Prof Julian Kenny has frequently pointed out. He has repeatedly pointed out that every administration chants the mantra of upholding the Constitution and rule of law, yet proceeds at variance with the Town and Country Planning Act and the National Physical Development Plan approved by Parliament in 1984. Even if it does need updating and may be regarded as obsolete, the Planning and Development of Land Bill passed in this Senate in 2001 adopted that National Physical Development Plan as the base from which amendments might be made.

This country has an excellent basis for proper long term land use planning for sustainable use of its soil given the accumulated data we have on soil—I will come to that in a moment—but our land use planning has been abysmal. We have used some of our best agricultural lands for housing and industry and we have managed to put agricultural projects on poor agricultural lands. There are numerous examples. They abound all around us and, presumably, now that we are going to make a renewed thrust in agriculture, we are going to re-examine these practices and approaches.

Further, land use planning is of vital importance where everything is so interconnected and where feedback is so rapid in a small village of a place such as this. Quite apart from the trend in contemporary development thinking about the need for breaking down the sectoral barriers in public administration systems and making sure that we approach all these issues on an interdisciplinary basis, it is imperative that we proceed on a more holistic basis in this small and fragile island space we call our home. In a period of economic boom, where there are many initiatives and competing uses for land, that task is inevitably made more difficult, but it is all the more essential, as some decisions about land use are irreversible.

In this context, Madam President, I ask a few questions about some of our existing allocations or plans. When we were debating the Caroni (1975) Bill in 2005, we were told, I believe, that there are 76,000 acres of lands available, which would be allocated in two-acre plots and 8,000 acres allocated for built development. I would very much like to understand what the plans for the rest are.
We were told, in an exchange between Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith and Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand that 89.5 per cent of the Caroni lands would remain in agriculture. Are we to assume that the remaining land not allocated for the two-acre plots and for the built facilities would be the location for the 15, not counting the Tucker Valley site, large farms which are proposed?

Let me ask in passing: Why have we allocated Caroni lands for a new prison facility? Is that the best place to locate a new prison facility? Now that we have a new thrust for agriculture for the year 2008 and beyond, are we going to review that decision?

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Madam President, not all of Caroni lands were under Caroni (1975) Limited or suitable for agriculture and that is why the integrated team of town planners and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources people, even when Caroni was there, a fair portion of the land was not in agriculture. The areas that were not in agriculture are the areas that have been allocated. I may also say that in our discussions with the cane farmers, there were a number who were growing canes on Caroni lands and an arrangement has been made to convert those into agricultural leases so that cane farmers could transition into the production of agriculture. So some of the land is growing cane, but by cane farmers.

**Sen. A. Cropper:** Thank you for that clarification. I wonder if Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith is saying that the acreage allocated for a new prison facility is on the part of the former Caroni lands designated as unsuitable for agriculture?

**[Sen. Dr. Saith nods]**

Madam President, my second question was going to be about the land becoming available from the small sugar cane farmers. He has already answered that question, so I thank Sen. Dr. Saith.

I would like to ask, as an extension of that: What might be the plans and measures the Government has in mind for influencing and supporting the decisions of the small farmers into the agricultural path and for the selected commodities we might decide upon?

I ask these questions because it strikes me as very strange, to put it mildly, that we could simply decide to make use of Tucker Valley for the first of the large scale farms without, it would appear, the benefit of an options analysis that would take into account many considerations. Maybe such an analysis has been done and
it has all been rationalized as to why that is the first location chosen for one of these farms. I would like to contribute some thinking to that in the event it has not been done and perhaps for contributing to the agenda of the proposed Agricultural Development Commission.

Tucker Valley is the last bit of Class I soil left in the Northern Range that is not yet under housing. This has been pointed out in the State of the Environment Report, 2004 of the Environmental Management Authority. It is a valley that already allows for an amenity value that could be of far greater economic benefit to our tourism industry as well as to the recreational benefits for the country as a whole. Is there some trade-off analysis here that has been done between the competing uses and claims to which it is subject?

11.00 a.m.

The second thought that occurred to me is the matter of water in the Tucker Valley. Although there is surface water flow in the Quesa River, the aquifers in the Tucker Valley are the source of potable water for Chaguaramas, Carnage and Diego Martin. Have we considered how a large commercial farm may impact on the quality and productivity of the aquifer through pollution by agricultural chemicals? Have we considered the implications of increased abstraction yields, which might in turn increase the probability of saltwater intrusion? When we add what is projected for sea level rise and storm surge and so forth as a result of global climate change, have we considered those implications in the future?

The risk of the pollution of the aquifer from agro-chemicals should be seriously considered as the aquifer is shallow and recharge is via direct rainfall onto the outcrop, some of which will be under agriculture. Therefore, rain will dissolve and leach the chemicals into the aquifer as there is limited filtering between the surface and the gravels because they are shallow aquifers. The chemicals should therefore be biodegradable or organic, but a commercial farm of this scale will probably not be viable if it is low input from the start.

Further, there is the potential for saltwater intrusion into the gravels that comprise the aquifers of the Tucker Valley. It appears that we have been managing this risk very well so far; making a good balance between recharge and extraction, and this is done through the use of several monitoring wells along the coast, but the wells that are drilled into that aquifer are already deemed to be at their maximum of safe yield or safe level of extraction, and may not be able to support further extraction. So, is the large farm in Tucker Valley going to rely on
the aquifer for its water? Have we considered the implications of that for the rest of the physical environment, as well as for the availability of water, potable water, for the communities that are now served from that source?

The third consideration about Tucker Valley is that it has for a long time supported some agriculture, but of a highly specialized kind. It has mainly been for seed production, and it is important that we reserve pockets of very high quality soil for that function. These pockets need to be isolated from large scale commercial systems, because it is important to guard against invasion and cross-pollination and so forth. It is very well recognized that agriculture for seed production and crop breeding is somewhat incompatible with close proximity commercial agriculture. So, we need to give some consideration to that.

Why not consider Orange Grove Estate as a location for a large scale demonstration farm, which is one of the things implied for the Tucker Valley farm? It is more easily accessible; it is Class II soil and closer to the majority of the soil that will be available in the former Caroni (1975) Limited lands for agriculture and, therefore, the compromise between the breeding and demonstration side on the one hand to the application side would be reduced, making for a higher level of uptake. That is something our decision-makers, planners and our Agricultural Commission may wish to consider.

Madam President, the second fundamental thing that I think we need to do in relation to capitalizing on our competitive advantage in agriculture is to look at our soil classification. Now, Trinidad and Tobago is very fortunate in that it has had very detailed land classification exercises over decades, initiated in the colonial period and conducted, extended and complemented over time by the ICTA, then by the Faculty of Agriculture of UWI; by the Department of Agriculture; and then the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

I read a very good article about the evolution of our activity and involvement in investment into soil classification in the *Amcham Magazine* Q2—2005 by Prof. John Spence. As it happens, much of that information had been communicated personally by our eminent soil scientist of UWI, Prof. Ahmed who has spent his whole professional career here at UWI focusing on the soils in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the article, Prof. Spence summarized the evolution of that and pointed out that we now have very detailed accumulated knowledge of our soils that would enable us to revise the anachronistic land classification model that we have been using, that has been based on criteria from the United States of America a long
time ago, but which may not really be suited to our small island context—the very small pockets of localized space that we have, and with the differentiation in the soil that we have that occurs from one of those locations to the other.

So, I think we now need to take the opportunity to revise our soil classification system, and overlay that with a land capability study, taking into account elements of our competitive advantage; taking into account the detailed data that we now have. I would say that this is a fundamental exercise to any new thrust for the development of agriculture in the coming years.

The third fundamental area is the area of demand, market analysis and projection. We have much work to do here to support our agriculture sector, especially as it is no longer going to be dominated by the mono-crop of sugar cane.

I presume that our planning for the range of crops and products that we will produce would be based on very high quality analysis and projections. It is so important for stable prices. Sure, it is necessary to increase our domestic output for domestic consumption, and to keep prices down, but we also need to balance that with economic viability and, therefore, we need to make sure that the prices are stable and sustained; the price to the farmer, that is.

More importantly, we also have the opportunity now for exploring possibilities for a range of niche products for export as well, as is being done in many developing countries; analysis is required that combines land capability with agricultural competitiveness and with external market opportunity. All of that would be necessary to point the way to intelligent crop selection as distinct from ad hoc crop selection.

The fourth area that I think is fundamental is the whole institutional framework within which the agriculture sector has to perform. I have talked about the need for price stabilization, and there are many measures we will need to consider that are compatible with our World Trade Organization obligations to make that possible. Consumer guidance is very important, so that we can make the intelligent choices here as a society and in keeping with the overall policy objectives.

I note that a consumer council is to be set up. I think that is very welcome and very good. The sooner we set it up, the better. I think we also need to influence our taste preferences; influence our buying and purchasing decisions; our consumption decisions and so forth, so that they could all contribute and work in the same direction as the policy objectives now in agriculture.
With respect to research and development, are we going to make a concomitant investment in that to pick up the vestiges of our heritage of research and development here and organize it and accelerate it towards the overall thrust? Are we going to make an investment in training and extension services? Are we going to develop appropriate technology and have the need for that reflected in the programmes that we are offering at eTecK and UTT? Are we going to make sure that the agriculture sector works in harmony with our concern about protecting the environment?

Are we going to consider the need for low external input regulations for groundwater protection and for public health impacts; for soil conservation; for the impacts of agriculture on siltation and flooding of our streams and then our coastal areas? Are we also going to take into account the land-based sources of pollution that affect our coast and the beaches, the same beaches that our Minister of Tourism is busily trying to repair and enhance? We need to make sure that the coastal waters are protected from the agriculture that we do; not only on the hills of the Northern Range, but also in the central areas of the island?

Are we going to consider, given the small space that we have and the need to sustain the physical environment around us, the proximity of those commercial activities to other things of amenity value? Are we going to consider the employment of permaculture principles and so forth? These are the kinds of things that we have to take into account, alongside the policy decision to invest in agriculture, to allocate lands, and to invite people to bid for the leases and for the contracts to operate them.

Madam President, the fifth fundamental area, I think, to support an agriculture thrust is the area of human resource development. It is ironic that agriculture was the first, perhaps the only academic discipline in which Trinidad and Tobago had acquired a reputation as a world centre of excellence. It is no longer the case. We have run all of that into the ground over the years. But while the heritage of the reputation may have been lost, I think there still resides within the population an abundance of expertise; underutilized over time but an abundance which simply needs to be dusted off and reactivated and brought in the service of this new development thrust. So, should not a new focus on agriculture have as a priority making use of that expertise within a comprehensive framework such I have tried to outline?

In this context, I must pause to ask: Why the Cubans for the proposed farm in Tucker Valley? Madam President, let me hasten to say that I have nothing against the Cuban people or society. They are much to be admired for what they have
been able to achieve with the resources at their disposal. I have many colleagues from Cuba with whom I work at the global level on small island developing states issues.

Can we really not do this on our own? Cuba, yes, has solid experience that is relevant to us in some areas. Experience in small dam construction for agriculture such as they have extended to Jamaica; their experience in low external input agriculture; evidence of much more political will, and better management in relation to environmental impacts of their agriculture; and their long experience in dry land agriculture. These are areas of expertise that could be very relevant and useful, but we could draw upon as we need and on an as needed basis.

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. [Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie]

Question put and agreed to.

11.15 a.m.

Sen. A. Cropper: Madam President, thank you and I thank colleagues and Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie. Anyway, those are some of the thoughts that I had on agriculture. It is so ironic, I remember that as a youngster working as a research economist at the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute, one of the first international things that I did, was to organize an international conference on the manufacture of single cell protein from sugarcane and petroleum substrates. And Cuba was a leader in the technology of single cell protein from sugar cane and I invited them to take part in that conference. Was that 1974, Sen. Ali?


Sen. A. Cropper: That was the first time I met Sen. Basharat Ali, in 1974 at the conference. He had come up as a chemical engineer from the petroleum industry to take part in that. Well, good prospects but nothing happened as a result of it; nothing done. But at that time, Cuba was still a pariah for many countries within the Caribbean. I remember the great titillation it caused with the media about having Cubans come to Trinidad and Tobago to take part in an international conference and to advise us on that.
How we come sometimes in full circles. Now we are inviting them back to help us with running perhaps a 100-acre farm, which we consider large, but which in many countries with which I am familiar and in which I work is considered a very small farm. Now that the administration has finally decided to put some significant resources into agriculture, can we not take all of these considerations into account and do it well, once and for all?

Madam President, I do want to speak a bit about areas in which I think we can do more, as I said earlier, to civilize the society, not just to industrialize it and there are many, many things I think are there to be done, which we can accelerate or emphasize or which we can address in a more targeted way.

The first thing is, in this regard, and I have to go through this very quickly, we can be more targeted in our welfare transfers. We are indeed, a very, very small society; our small size permits it. Can we not target single parents as a group; deserted children; physically challenged by identifying them individually? I know we have a whole range of social programmes to which all of the citizens have access. But we could do something far more compelling and far more effective for these very disadvantaged groups and see the way to bring them up in a very rapid way, rather than waiting to have all of the programmes filtered down to them. I think these are the groups in which, from a social welfare point of view, far more impact is required.

Then I want to talk about the Children's Authority. We have been looking at that from budgets since 2002, proposing a Children's Authority—2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, each year. It cannot be so important if it takes five years to redraft legislation that already existed from that time. I note in the Social Sector Investment Programme document that a committee has been set up and that committee has met several times in the year 2007 and they are developing a plan for how we approach this after six years. Do we not have more political will on behalf of the children of the nation?

And I also note that on the same document on page 93, after enumerating a whole lot of areas in the social development division it says: "and we would also do the following, set up a Children's Authority.” It sort of enters the "also ran" category. Meanwhile, the incidence of rape and incest has been increasing. I had the opportunity to look at the statistics in the latest Annual Report of the Rape Crisis Society.

The incidence here is increasing; the incidence of violence against children has been increasing and we have some notable cases before the court; the incidence of AIDS is high; children are not protected from that. All of these things
increase the numbers of children at risk and further, I have not been successful in finding anywhere in the Estimates of Expenditure, any provision at all for the bringing into being of the Children's Authority in the next year. I think we have got to do better than that for the children. [Desk thumping] We cannot on the one hand talk about the future of the nation and neglect something that is so simple to bring into effect. Even though it may not be perfect when it is first started, we can learn from experience and develop it as we go along. We have people out there waiting to serve on this and to lend their effort if the Government takes the lead. And I think this is one area in which we really need to see some acceleration.

Then there is the matter of prison reform. I have never been in a prison; I hope never to be; but details were given last evening of some of the conditions in our prisons, by Sen. Seetahal SC and certainly we have been reading about them for a long time. I notice in the document that the Government says the Cabinet is considering parole, but surely, the granting of parole cannot be the first thing the Government gives attention to, given the need for prison reform. The Caribbean Centre for Human Rights sees the condition of our prisons here as a matter of human rights and we need to also locate it in that context.

Administration of justice; Sen. Seetahal SC spoke about that. There are so many things to be done to improve the experience of the ordinary citizen in the processes of administration of justice in the country. Sen. Seetahal SC talked about the reluctance of people to appear as witnesses; I know that and I can understand that. But even where they appear, the system does not work. I can also say from personal experience that over the last two years from January 2006, I, my family, extended family and colleagues have appeared five times, as summoned, by the courts, for a matter to restart and each time we have been sent away; and had to prise an explanation out of our colleagues in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, about why we have simply been called, scores of people including quite a few policemen, sitting there waiting and waiting and waiting, only after hours to be told: "Your matter will not be heard today." That has occurred five times.

We have already gone through that matter on two previous rounds; we are waiting to go through it a third time and for five times it has been postponed without satisfactory explanation. These are the things that we need to attend to. Victims cannot be made victims a second time over, because of the lack of management in our administration of justice. [Desk thumping] It is a human cry that you are hearing here.
Then there is the matter of education. We hear a lot and we know there is a lot being done in the area of education. I want to comment—given the heading under which I am speaking: "Civilizing the Society"—only on one thing here, and it is the decision to have those who obtain less than the 30 per cent mark at the primary level to repeat. Surely, it cannot be to simply repeat. Their limitations and their problems should have been diagnosed at a much earlier stage, because we cannot wait until they are at the end of the primary phase to discover that they have problems and they do not have the potential to get above the 30 per cent mark. And the remedial programmes should be dovetailed to their needs. We are small enough to do that on an individual basis; on an individual child by child basis, we can do that. We simply cannot condemn them to a repeat of the same experience.

Sen. Manning: Madam President, could I? I would like to take this opportunity to advise Sen. Cropper that exactly what she is putting forward is being done. That the new division we have created, the Student Support Services Division, the Psycho-social Support, that division plus curriculum officers and teachers have been working to put a very caring programme in place, individual by individual, because a number of these students who find—in some schools there might only be one student and what we are doing is walking slowly with them. I also want to say that the assessment programme starts from the minute the student enters the school, so that we do not wait for Standard 5; we start at the Standard 1, Standard 3, et cetera. So, exactly what is being asked for is being done.

Madam President: Senator, you have five minutes.

Sen. A. Cropper: Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam President. Well, just one more point under this heading and that relates to the matter of dealing with crime.

[Cellphone rings]

Madam President: Somebody has a cell phone on again.

Sen. A. Cropper: Much has already been said about that but I just wanted to observe that despite the consultation that has been held, but especially despite three rounds of debate here in the Senate over a two-year period on Sen. Prof. Deosaran's motion, from which there is now a whole body of analysis, diagnosis and ideas for all of the fronts on which we need to intervene for dealing with crime, that we see so little of that reflected in the thinking in the budget right now.

We note and welcome the setting up of the Crime and Justice Commission, yes, but this is only one dimension of the problem especially as its terms of
reference as given, are very limited. We need to intervene on the wide variety of fronts that have been analyzed in the context of the debate. We know that lots of things are happening, but we need to be far more comprehensive in this and we need to give equal attention to the preventative side of crime in the country.

So, Madam President, let me say in conclusion then, that we have heard much about stewardship, performance and accomplishments and so on, and yes, there is a lot of that. We have also heard it in the context of what the Government has done for us, as though this is not our right and our expectation to require those things. To discerning members of the electorate, I would hazard to say that given the liquidity we have had in the society, no doubt we would consider that any set of people comprising the government could have done those things that we have done and are claiming, especially where there is so little to distinguish our main contenders for office in terms of ideology or policy or management capability or disposition to accountability or concerns about integrity and so on.

But the tough things to achieve are the areas in which I think the nation awaits results: simple, sheer, personal physical, security, the first obligation of the State; confidence in our capacity to sustain our human well-being, as well as the integrity and aesthetic of the space around us that we call home; quality outcomes in education that might make us more reasoning, more reasonable, more civilized, less manipulable, less prone to violence as the immediate means for conflict resolution; balanced development between offshore and onshore; economic and social; short and long term; male and female; urban and rural. Since I mentioned male and female, it occurs to me to ask, what about the gender policy. Is that not something we should also be fast-tracking in the society, as a matter of equity?

We are seeking and we are waiting to see evidence of a quality of governance that makes the citizens feel valued, included, respected and at the centre of development. We want to see more compassion for those who have transgressed, be they squatters or convicts, and more respect for their fundamental human rights and the rudiments of dignity that they need. We want to see, I would think, more emphasis on nation-building as distinct from buildings for the nation.

These are the things that I believe this nation is crying out for. These are the things that would civilize this nation and these are the things that I think would make a separation between pedestrian politics and politicians on the one hand and statesmen and stateswomen on the other.

Thank you.
The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo): Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise in support of the 2008 budget. Many have referred to this as the poor man's budget and this is certainly because we took such comprehensive care of all our citizens, particularly the vulnerable.

Madam President, what is interesting though, having said this, it is referred to as a poor man's budget, many of those on the other side seem to have come prepared for an election budget. So irrespective of what is contained in the budget, you heard this comment. It is so much so that I refer it to the Pricewaterhouse 2008 Budget Memorandum, and it says and I quote:

"Given that 2008 is an 'election year', most observers had anticipated that the budget would be geared towards placating the major interest groups within the electorate with the proverbial 'basket of goodies' for all. This was not the case albeit that the Government is ideally placed to deliver such 'goodies' with the economy continuing to grow positively; foreign reserves increasing; inflations reportedly on the decline; unemployment at an all time low and the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund now standing at over $10.9 billion." [Desk thumping]

Madam President, this is a responsible Government, we did not run out there in terms of delivering an election budget. I will also say at this time, budgets are accumulative, so it means that measures which have been introduced over the years continue to apply. While I refer to this PW Memorandum, I want to refer to two more items because a lot of people like to quote what the IMF had to say, I think I should also take the opportunity to refer to the IMF statement and two of these I would like to refer to. The IMF said in Article 4:

"Trinidad and Tobago is rightly aiming"—

Madam President, I have to repeat this—

“Trinidad and Tobago is rightly aiming at using energy resources to reach ambitious development goals before energy reserves are exhausted. The key to this goal is to the transformation of the energy wealth into a balanced combination of external financial assets and physical and human capital.”

Madam President, I could not have said it better.
I would just go to the budget statement and refer to a few of the fiscal measures which I think albeit it was mentioned, needs some further clarification. The first item referred to, was in terms of the increase in pensions. The first one I refer to is the increase in National Insurance Board Pensions to a minimum of $2,000 and I refer to a minimum because we are all stuck on the bandwagon of it being $2,000, but there are a host of other benefit provisions. Right now, it is going to increase a minimum retirement grant from $200 to $2,000.

We are going to set the minimum widows and widowers pension at $400 monthly; increase maternity grants from $2,200 to $2,500; and an interesting one, is the award of a maternity grant on the basis of a father's contribution where a mother does not qualify. It also includes increasing of the funeral grant; it also includes discontinuing disablement pension and pay a retirement pension. Most importantly, is the indexing of all benefit rates, those I have just mentioned, every five years to take into account inflation. Madam President, you could not get better than that. [Desk thumping]

Madam President, when Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie made her contribution, which I think I interrupted and I made my comment, in terms of the host of fiscal measures introduced, starting with the Senior Citizens Grant, we did not just increase it to $1,650, what we also increased is the qualifying income to $2,500. When I say this, what this does, it does not only increase the quantum of the Senior Citizens Grant, what it now introduces, is an increase in a large number of individuals who qualify.

In all the other arrangements, be it increase in the minimum disability grants for handicapped persons, public assistance grant which I will not go into detail, the point I am making in all of these, in addition to increasing the quantum, we have also increased the qualifying ceiling. And you are absolutely correct again, Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie, what we will in fact be doing, in terms of putting a notice in the newspapers, so those individuals who now qualify will in fact be able to apply, and therefore, what you find bringing into the threshold will be a substantial number of persons into the net. [Desk thumping] I will refer in a while to Sen. Cropper. I think we are quite humble most times, this is not our money, this is the people's money, I am just enunciating how in fact the funds from the budget have been allocated to help those who are most vulnerable.

Madam President, another area which I would just like to point out again, is in terms that mention was made regarding the 15 per cent wage increase to the CEPEP workers and URP workers. And I want to assure all those on the other side,
we want nobody to stand on a platform and say you must do it. We have already put measures in place to ensure that it is transparent and they in fact get their 15 per cent increase. What is most important is the fact that as we had made the commitment the CEPEP worker gets the 15 per cent because right now under that programme, the moneys are paid directly into their bank account, in order to ensure we did not have the issue of what people talk about "ghost gangs". So again I want to say, this 15 per cent certainly will be paid very shortly.

I did not hear much discussion at all in terms of the fiscal measures regarding arrangements for childcare facilities and homework centres. [Interruption] There was mention but I did not hear—probably because it is one measure that is focusing so much on the family unit—when we hear good measures, be it we sit on this side or the other side, I would have thought this would have been applauded much more. The reason for that, is that this measure will allow private sector enterprises to expend up to $500,000 per location where they can write it off against profits, and therefore it is a taxable deduction. I can see this in fact influencing, improving family life.

As a mother myself, and fathers, it means you can now take your children—after office hours or after school, their children can join them at the workplace, they are much more comfortable therefore and I am sure we will see higher productivity yields. A lot of us complain about the public sector, private sector and we recognize that there are other issues; but while we get traffic problems going, while we deal with other issues, I see this measure in terms of the $500,000 taxable deduction as really quite innovative and one in terms, I think we can see a lot of positives emerging.

Madam President, later I will go into the incentives for the manufacturing sector because that requires quite a bit of doing. Before I get into my Ministry and what we have done, I think I should respond to some of the issues which were raised by former Senators. I think Sen. Mary King and Sen. Mark also indicated and had some concerns and rightly so, regarding the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives.

Madam President, as soon as I took office, in fact I visited both Paris and the UK, I met with various committees there. We have not reneged on then EITI, let me say so very clearly, what in fact we have done is proceeded cautiously and carefully. I will let you know right now, the Norwegian Government with regard to the formal implementation of EITI, they are currently now considering whether to implement the procedural aspects of the EITI, in order to become a fully EITI compliant country. Bolivia right now is considering it.
There are two issues here before us. The first, as I just indicated, was the procedural aspects under the EITI, and the second, was one of concern regarding the negativity that could be associated with Trinidad and Tobago being associated with other countries which became involved with the EITI. I like to give good news, and let me say that the Government has in fact recently approved the implementation of the EITI programme. This involves the verification, reconciliation, publication, by an independent aggregating body, data outlining the payments received by Government from the various energy companies. We will also be setting up a technical committee and the data will be published on an annual basis.

But Madam President, while I say that, in the same breath let me say at this point in time, the information on the extractive industries is available and published annually in our budget documents. In fact, in the Draft Estimates of Revenue—I want to read it through because it is important and I am hoping they will take notes so they could find it:

Under Head 01 — Taxes on income and profits;
Under item 01 — Revenue from oil companies;
Under 06 — National recovery impost; and
Under 07 — Business levy.

Madam President, in fact the information is available, but I would be the first to agree, we need to be more transparent. In other words, the general public can have it available. And again, rest assured in this Parliament, that this Government is committed to accountability and transparency. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Wade Mark made mention of rampant mismanagement and corruption at the SMCL and the transition team at Caroni. I really cannot understand why we abuse parliamentary privileges. I said in this august Chamber not long ago, there were concerns, we got feedback, we did audits and I said right here, that we commissioned a forensic audit on SMCL, so it is not news. But you know, on top of it, spurious statements were made, where did $498 million go to, which was paid to Caroni? So of course, my technocrats who worked long hours; they took long to prepare the budget. I said go and look again because it is my responsibility to present the information to this Chamber.

Madam President, I will present in detail. The moneys were used in bridging loans at Caroni to Republic Bank Limited. There are two loans, repayments of $98,044, another for $155,576, another to repay commercial paper loan and interest, Republic Bank, another $39 million, total of $253 million in repayment
of loans. Another $63 million was used to pay NGC for gas consumed; $26.9 million for wages; utilities, another $3 million; local and foreign creditors, $55 million; bank interest, $2.8 million; cane farmers, $37 million; contractors, $9 million; and imported sugar payment $40.6 million.

Madam President, it adds up to $489 million. I can also give the hon. Senator a copy of this, because again, I want to assure this august Chamber that certainly those companies under my watch, we make sure we do our checks and balances and certainly the governance—

Sen. Mark: [Inaudible]

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: No, I do not have to answer him, but out of courtesy the report is right now being prepared. So when the Senator—

Madam President: Please, let the Minister speak, you will have your turn.

Sen. Mark: Okay.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: As if enough was not said, he said through you, Madam President, “We waiting for her in Tunapuna”. Through you, Madam President, I want to say very clearly—“You know, I almost take bait and say that I will throw my hat in the ring”, but through you, I will let him know whatever I do, I do it well, so let him take that. [Desk thumping]

11.45 a.m.

Let his heart not be troubled, Madam President. [Crosstalk]

Sen. Mark: Did you see a report?

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Sen. King made a very sterling contribution, but I will respond to two areas. [Crosstalk] Regarding the issue of devaluation of the dollar, as you know, we have a floating currency. I know the Senator really wanted to say will it depreciate. I know that is what she really wanted, it is a floating dollar. With such a strong currency as we have now, all our macro economics are really very good; on top of that the Central Bank holds substantial reserves in excess of $8 billion, over 11 months import cover.

As a matter of fact, the Governor responded that the challenge is not devaluation, but to avoid appreciation. I think that is very, very important. In addition to that, even appreciation has an impact on a country's competitiveness. When you look at a country's currency, there are always a lot of factors to take into consideration. My concluding statement here is that when we look at all our indicators, it certainly does not support that argument. [Interruption]
Sen. King: I wanted to clarify the point that when I discussed a devaluation it was within the concept of if we were going towards a wealth-driven economy between now and 2020, the savings we would have to put in place would probably bring about a devaluation if current demand remained.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Madam President, to counteract that, we are looking at a very diversified economy, which I will deal with later. We are looking in terms of the economy doubling its gross domestic product (GDP) over the last five years. The concerns are valid; I want to make that clear. I am not discounting the concern; I am only indicating to this House the measures this Government is, in fact, implementing to ensure we stay above board.

The other issue that needed clarification, which I think the hon. Senator indicated, was that the proposed expenditure on the budget is $42 billion out of a total of $55 billion. The budget statement says very clearly that the total revenue is $40,381.2 billion; total expenditure is $40.2 billion, a surplus of $89 million and capital repayments on sinking fund, $1968.9 million. Actually, the total expenditure is $42.2 billion.

What is referred to, and correctly so, is payments under the Supplementary Public Sector Investment Programme. This Government took the decision in 2004 to bring this information to the public, because we thought it was important that we share the information on the infrastructure programmes. We were not hiding it. That is what you call transparency. [Desk thumping]

The Senator is correct; $8 billion in terms of it, but it is not part of the budget; it is funded by the various state enterprise sectors. It is funded either by internal funds or, in fact, borrowings. I just thought I should clarify that. Our budget remains $42 billion. I thought it was very, very critical that we corrected that.

A lot of issues were raised by other Senators. This included, for example, what was causing the increase in prices. Twice I think mention was made about inefficiencies at the port. We, in fact, have had two boards, both at Plipdeco and the Port Authority, spearheaded by chairmen and executives who have given yeoman service. We have seen quite a lot of transformation there. As a matter of fact, the Port Authority is spearheaded by Mr. Derek Hudson, who is an energy executive. He certainly brings a lot of his training to bear here with a very competent board; similarly with Plipdeco. I think the public should be aware of some of the improvements at the port.
They have had vessel turnaround being improved and enhanced. A vessel cost is very important. The longer it stays in port the more it would cost that vessel and the operations. That has been reduced by over 25 per cent; that is a substantial gain.

There were efficiencies of technology regarding container movements. Again this has resulted in a WITASS surcharge of US $44 per TU or US $88 per 40-foot container being removed. When I hear from the private sector these issues, I think they are talking historically; therefore, when we repeat it here it is a misnomer and not quite fair.

A lot was said by Sen. Seetahal SC about when this Government made a decision it should follow through. I thought it was a good statement and I intend to follow up on it. So when we decide that we are going to take policy initiatives in agriculture, we are following through. Then I heard what we should and should not do. We always talk about paralysis by analysis. I would be the first one to say we must make sure that we plan before we proceed.

We had a public consultation on food prices. We invited the public and had the viewing on television to facilitate those individuals who while at work or otherwise could, in fact, participate or view the proceedings. It was so because of how we view agriculture. The world is now recognizing that food security cannot be taken for granted. Those countries we imported from before all have their own agendas, therefore, all countries are recognizing that food security is important.

Let me compliment Sen. Cropper on a very well organized contribution, [Desk thumping] which I thoroughly enjoyed and listened to attentively. I am not the shadow Minister of Agriculture by any means, but I think it is incumbent on me to respond in terms of that.

I am so happy to hear in this Parliament some compliments of the Government having a policy for agriculture. There is a policy for agriculture. The question is: How do we move forward? This year we increased the allocation to agriculture to $1.2 billion. Some will say that we are putting our money where our mouth is, and we need to do that literally and figuratively. Regarding agriculture, we are now looking at the policy initiatives in terms of land development, technology and training, but the most important aspect of agriculture has been the approach in terms of agri business.

For too long we have looked at primary agriculture, and I believe we have just never got off the ground as we should have. With our new impetus in terms of agri business, I am sure Sen. Cropper would agree that it is certainly the right way
to move forward, in terms of value added, looking at demand and supply and how you can take this industry forward.

Very often we make comments in this honourable Chamber. Some of us may have expert information or we may be experts in a given area. A lot of effort has been put into the agriculture sector in terms of planning and moving forward. I know because it all started in the last two years. We were asking how we could move forward and there were certain stumbling blocks along the way. I have to bring into consideration here, how we get the public sector, in terms of agriculture and other sectors, to make that quantum leap. This has not been easy.

The Government, therefore, introduced several special purpose state enterprises. There was a lot of grumbling and mumbling around here about why we were establishing these special purpose state enterprises. I am so proud today to stand here and say how much has been delivered because of these special purpose state enterprises in terms of moving forward.

For example, with all the commercial farms right now, we have all these RFPs in the Rural Development Company Limited. Madam President, RuDeCoTT is also putting in place the infrastructure for all these commercial farms. What you find happening now is that the Government is in a delivery mode. The only reason we are in that mode is because we have had to use the support of the special purpose state enterprises. [Desk thumping]

I will get back to agriculture, but I just wanted to talk in general about the performance of the state enterprise sector, because I know there is still the demand: When are we going to divest? How are they performing? Let me indicate that the assets under the state enterprise sector were just about $61.5 billion at the end of December 2006. What is interesting is that we continue to see the state enterprise sector now contributing to the national coffers where they generated profits in 2006 of just over $5.2 billion. They contributed to corporation tax, $2.9 billion; petroleum taxes, $4.7 billion; paid dividends of $907 million; retained earnings of $11.8 billion; employed 17,000 persons and provided foreign exchange of $30.5 billion.

This is all in the Supplementary Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). Those gift bags which everyone got with documents inside, let me urge you to please take a look at them.

Irrespective of which side you sit on, we must congratulate these individuals: the CEOs, managers and employees. They have done a good job. In the public sector and state enterprises we have certainly seen substantial improvement in performance.
Much has been said about procurement. A White Paper on procurement was laid in Parliament. When you have a White Paper it really details the Government policy, but let me add to this. When you have a White Paper laid, it is very important. In fact, we had substantial feedback and comments on it. At this time we are reviewing the White Paper to incorporate some of these comments in terms of how we move forward.

While we are working on the White Paper on procurement let me say very categorically, procurement procedures for all state enterprises are approved by the Ministry of Finance and must therefore conform to stipulated agreements and arrangements. On top of which, more recently in the wider world we have resorted to e-auction which is one of the most efficient methods of procurement.

As you would know, Madam President, being so up-to-date with computers, it is really using Internet technology to enable companies to arrive at a much more competitive purchasing arrangement. Right now we have the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) that has already begun; Petrotrin has already joined on; MTS; National Gas Company and the Vehicle Maintenance Company of Trinidad and Tobago (VMCOTT). They are now in the process and we should again see substantial benefits arising from the e-auction.

So we do not just sit and wait on one area of procurement. As I indicated, the White Paper is being fine tuned while all our measures of procurement remain intact; let me again reassure the national public in terms of our procurement policy.

12.00 noon

I must touch a bit in terms of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund because they continue to ask, are we saving enough? Are we putting aside enough? I think we can say very clearly this Government has demonstrated commitment. In addition to passing legislation earlier this year, on top of it we have just not stuck to the 60 per cent surplus, but have contributed 100 per cent to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. [Desk thumping]

Madam President, this year alone we will be closing with $3.3 billion to this fund and the anticipated or projected surplus of $1.2 billion also being transferred. A commitment was also made in this budget statement to transfer this surplus to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. [Desk thumping]

Madam President, you were here when the legislation was passed in March, the investment income for the first quarter of this Heritage and Stabilisation Fund after we were allowed to invest in external markets under the Central Bank’s
watch, the investment income for that first quarter was US $24.8 million. What it is saying is as we enhance this investment portfolio it is going to grow exponentially. No taxes, or none of these revenues will in fact be taken off to support our yearly budgetary process.

I do not think any contribution can be made in this Senate without reference to the former Caroni (1975) Limited workers, and they are referred to as my Caroni workers and I really believe that I have taken adequate care of them, because we have taken all measures to make sure—not just a soft landing—that this Government continues to take care of them.

Madam President, the infrastructure we have put on the residential plots are second to none. In fact, the committee, spearheaded by Sen. Mary King if I recall, was very impressed with the quality of infrastructure at these residential plots. There are just about 4,000 ready and available. We have to get the leases ready and again it comes back to Government public sector. We have to work together to get those leases prepared.

Those lands, as I said before, are low priced at $20,000, $25,000 and $30,000 which is certainly extraordinarily low, the value of which is in excess in many cases of $200,000. We have expanded the programme to take care of other citizens so in excess of 15,000 residential plots are available to all our citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. While I am at that, let me say this is all in conformance with this Government's housing policy.

Madam President, another issue regarding housing has been affordability which is the main pillar of our housing policy. These lands would be available at 2 per cent funding and right now there are five model houses which would in fact be made available for the former Caroni (1975) Limited workers. [Desk thumping]

Madam President, I want to touch on housing because when we talk about residential land, it is to construct homes. In addition to the last five years of building 26,000 homes, right now we have just over 8,600 under construction. As I indicated, affordability has been the mantra of this Government. When we look at the reduction in mortgage interest rate from 12 per cent when we took office to 8 per cent to 6 per cent and for low income earners we now have a 2 per cent for those with income less than $8,000 with homes up to $450,000.

We have a reduction in mortgage down payment. Before if you did not have the down payment you could not own a home and we recognized it had to be reduced to 5 per cent. On top of that, and again to cater for those at lower income
levels, it is zero per cent in terms of down payment, and we have also arranged for financing to assist with the purchase of necessary appliances of up to $15,000. We are fully aware that when you are ready to buy your home if you do not have those appliances, you will have to pay very huge hire purchase prices for them and most importantly we have a 25-year assignable mortgage. So Madam President, when we look at all these things—and, of course, we have a rent-to-own programme. All these things are made available in terms of supporting our residential market in terms of home ownership and Government's comprehensive plan in terms of affordability.

Madam President, I now turn to the agricultural land and let me say that Sen. Cropper was totally correct. We just do not turn a sugar worker into an instant farmer. I want to make it clear that it was not the intention of this Government to turn the sugar workers into farmers. What we give them was an opportunity to decide if in fact you want a two-acre plot, this caring Government would in fact put measures in place to make the land available and put a host of measures in place to give those who felt they would have liked to remain in an agricultural environment. Since 2003, this Government took the decision fully recognizing the need for putting agriculture on the front burner. Some may say we took too long, that may be correct, but the important thing is we are moving forward, working steadfastly and we have a policy in place.

Madam President, just over 6,850 of these former employees have in fact physically received these lands, and I like to use the word “physically” because in the other place, all kinds of statements were made. Firstly, I cannot find that $1.2 billion. I have printed it out. My support staff went through and pulled out the details where you can find the $1.2 billion. We do not make up stories, when I give figures I can always substantiate them. Madam President, $1.2 billion has been allocated for agriculture this year. Regarding the infrastructure work for the Caroni lands, just over $600 million were used for infrastructure development. In addition to that, special arrangement was put in place so that they could be deemed to be farmers because once you are registered as a farmer; you will now get a benefit or incentives.

I know Sen. Seetahal SC indicated that she had 18 acres, I think 36 perches if my memory was correct.

Hon. Senator: Perches.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Perches. All right I stand corrected. I am not so good with agriculture. I cannot be a good shadow Minister.
Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: How you dealing with Caroni lands and you cannot deal with perches?

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Madam President, I will deal with him in Tunapuna. [Desk thumping] Madam President, I regret the hon. Senator is not here right now, but I am sure she will get a copy of the *Hansard*. In terms of the incentives offered to farmers, we fully recognize we need to revamp it and as Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie indicated, how do we make it more accessible, to have a more user-friendly environment? It comes back to public sector reform.

That is why when I come later to talk about us building a few nice buildings where we would house our public sector people where we talk about treating our people well and demand that they perform, in our own terms here, those are what I call investments. Sen. Titus was so correct in that when you see those beautiful buildings in addition to enhancing our view and how the international community views us, on top of that you do two things at the same time; you improve morale and productivity and thirdly, you create wealth. Wealth is created and it is an investment because you reduce your dependence in terms of how much you pay in rent.

I cannot understand how anyone cannot see this in positive terms. I know the economist will tell me on one hand when you spend too much money there will be stresses on the various areas and it can have inflationary trends. I agree with that, but as a good Government how do you deal with inflation? When I hear people say: “It is not all yuh, yuh know, it is only monetary policy.” How is monetary policy dictated? How do we move forward?

In any country, there are fiscal and monetary policies and even coming back to foreign exchange when you sell foreign exchange one of the benefits derived from it is reduced liquidity. There are some benefits. So at the end of the day—I deviated a bit; I will return to agriculture.

Madam President, as I indicated the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) this year increased the budget allocation to $75 million with the commitment that at mid year if this amount is consumed, additional funds will be allocated to the ADB. As a matter of fact, special concessionary arrangements have been made with the bank for the former Caroni (1975) Limited workers, so we have been holding their hands and nurturing them on how to support this process.

On top of that, I want to add the role of Namdevco. First of all, we launched the National Agri Business Development Programme in May 2007. I also participated in that programme. The National Agricultural Marketing
Development Corporation and there were correct comments that we have taken too long in terms of how this entity is operating. Over the last year with the emphasis being placed on marketing, marketing information and intelligence I want to applaud Namdevco for the efforts they have made in this regard. [Desk thumping]

Madam President, Sen. Cropper is absolutely correct in making the statement; we must look at market information, and we must give that information to our farmers. How are we going to work with them to make sure we marry together demand and supply so there are no gluts on the market. How do we support our farmers in ensuring by the end of the day they get a return on their investment that is sustainable and how do we make agriculture lucrative?

It must be done in a scientific basis, that is why when we talk in terms of large scale: 100 and 200 acres is not exactly large, but in our local terms where we are accustomed with two and five acres, I am sure you will agree that 100 acres is large. I want to say right away in terms of these farms in Jerningham Avenue we are going to have a farm of 108 acres for vegetable crops, in Edinburgh, three farms totalling 354 acres; Orange Grove, 100 acres is allocated there; Caroni, 400 acres; at La Gloria, 364 acres for mixed farming and livestock; Mon Jaloux, two farms totalling 417 acres. Again, it is not just 100 farms, the reason I am giving the acreages, in some cases there are 200-acre farms.

At Picton Estate, there will be five farms of a total acreage of 1,201 acres. Madam President, with your leave, I will arrange a tour in terms of some of these farms if my colleagues are really interested. I also like agriculture and I will certainly take time on Saturday or Sunday to take them on a tour.

Sen. Seetahal SC: I would like to find out where is Picton Estate. I looked at the map but I did not find it.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: I do not want to be cute and say you know—I think it is close to La Gloria. I am not sure, I have not visited all of them but I can make arrangements and we can all have a grand tour and visit all of them. I will get the map before the day is over and pinpoint it.

Madam President, in Chaguaramas we have two farms and now we have agreed to have one 200-acre farm. At the end of the day there were very important issues and concerns raised. The first one—and I spoke to Prof. Spence three times this week—and the former Independent Senator had many concerns. I think I
heard, some of which Sen. Cropper referred to and the question put to me over and over again is what was my commitment with the Vesting Bill and how much of the land in fact has remained in agriculture

**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. J. Yuille-Williams]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**12.15 p.m.**

**Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo:** Thank you, Madam President. I am tempted to list all the acreages right now, but I will make it available to the Senate. I think the more fundamental question really is how we use land in terms of agriculture. Because after the Caroni land was vested in the State, all the land must, in fact, belong to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. So when I am asked over and over, what we have done with Caroni lands, I am a little puzzled, because the questions I believe, humbly so, should be: Are we using the most fertile lands for agriculture? Are we, in fact, putting commercial estates where they should be put? Where are we locating industrial estates? Do we have a proper plan, in terms of land utilization? So, really, this perennial question, I hope is put to rest, but I will circulate a document in terms of the land utilization. So the fundamental question is not what we have done with Caroni land, because it now all comes into the land belonging to the citizens—and how do we move forward.

Quickly, I want to respond to some of the items raised by Sen. Cropper on her comprehensive review in terms of agriculture. Again, in terms of the detailed R and D technology, I want to say at this time in our agriculture policy—moving forward—a lot of emphasis is, in fact, being placed in terms of technology, research and development and training. That is the only way agriculture is going to be a success. This is why, when we talk about demonstration farms—and I have said it several times; I find I say it too often, but obviously I do not say it often enough because there is still concern even in this Chamber—we must have adequate training for our farmers. For too long we believe we did everything right and we recognize: how do we improve on our yields; how do we improve on productivity; how do we become more efficient and, more importantly, how do we involve our young people in agriculture; how do we get them to stay; how do we make it interesting; how do we make it sustainable and make sure it is
profitable. At the end of the day you are saying that these demonstration farms, we are looking at how we engage our people. Again, we have the former Caroni (1975) Limited workers as targeted, because, as so rightly said, several of these workers were not farmers. So we are not creating farmers; we are nurturing these farmers.

On top of that, we have had dialogue. A private sector company, PCS Nitrogen, indicated that they would also like to work with the Government. Again, Government will have more partnership arrangements with private sector companies, where they look at social corporate responsibility—giving back—and we see this as an excellent initiative. So 100 acres will be allocated to PCS Nitrogen where they will be looking in terms of introducing modern technology, state-of-the-art equipment; training and really making agriculture sustainable. You would be pleased to hear—I do not think I have even taken a note to Cabinet, but certainly—Methanol Holdings has also agreed to establish a demonstration farm and I want to applaud them also for that effort. [Desk thumping]

We are taking best practice in the private sector. They always tell us they do things better; we say, yes, sometimes they do and we therefore take advantage of these opportunities; having established these demonstration farms, having put training first and foremost on the agenda and technology.

This week YARA has brought down a consultancy group from Norway to work with the Government also, in terms of some of the models which have, in fact, been used in Norway. We have already introduced some of these models, which include: community farms and commodity farms. It has happened and I think Sen. Wade Mark asked: “Tell me which one has been formed.” I regret he is not here because I would have told him how many commodity groupings have been formed and community farms. In fact, the models that have been adopted have been tested and proven and we are working closely, as I said, with private sector organizations and they are working with the University of the West Indies and UTT in terms of—

Sen. Seetahal SC: Actually, just one short question and you have ten more minutes. The small farmers—I note everything you have said, Madam Minister, was in terms of the large farms. The small farmers, one and two, I want to know if anything has been done to upgrade Centeno. Five years ago I took a course there on citrus production and found it was very good. Are there any plans to improve there?
Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Madam President, our very busy Senator does not get enough time to do her farming so we will have to see how we could remedy that. It is a good question and I will let her know that the University of Trinidad and Tobago has now taken over Centeno, ECIAF, and I am very pleased to report that we do not just only have one university—that is to tell you the importance of agriculture. Both UTT and UWI are now focusing very intently on agriculture and with Government and private sector support, I could only say we can see a high level of success factor, as I indicated before. So, ECIAF, as I say, is right now under the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the entire arrangements—all the research and development, we are looking at being spearheaded by, not just UWI, but a shared arrangement.

The YAPA programme, that is the Youth Apprenticeship Programme, you also have a lot of young people getting involved in agriculture and this Government’s aim is after you finish a programme, we also make land available so these young farmers do not have to wait in line. So you participate in the Youth Apprenticeship Programme; it means you get land.

Mention was made of Tucker Valley and I think Sen. Cropper rightly said that grade one is the most arable land. I want to assure her and this Chamber that when the decision was taken on Tucker Valley we fully recognized the environmental constraints and EMA must look at all these farms, not in terms of the energy companies, but making sure that chemicals, et cetera, are managed and controlled. I do not have time and I have so much to say, and I am one of those persons who think you should talk for 20 minutes. I would refer to that at another time. But, really, in terms of the environment, it is certainly being looked at in totality.

In concluding, in terms of agriculture, I want to say very clearly that we are on the right path; that certainly the impetus is there; we have put in place all the mechanisms to support agriculture; it is now a viable business entity. On top of that, I would now like to link it to our industrial programme and our entrepreneurship programme, because with all of this, what you find happening is that we are, in fact, making facilities available to the young entrepreneurs.

I think Sen. Montano would have discussed earlier, NEDCO and the Business Development Company Limited regarding our young entrepreneurs. I would just like to mention that we have eight industrial parks: Debe, Reform, Factory Road, Point Fortin, Preysal, Dow Village, Endeavour and Frederick Settlement. All
these new industrial sites will, in fact, make warehousing and other facilities available for the young entrepreneur, the young investor, to give him or her support in this area.

We also have the Tamana InTech Park, because, again, much was said in terms of our innovative people; how we are going to continue to nurture our people to make sure that we move forward. The Tamana InTech Park is a construction of 1,100 acres park that will provide facilities for a wide range of enterprises, technology-based and knowledge-based industries. This is not “ol’ talk”. We are looking to 33 businesses in high-tech industries, including ICT, downstream energy, high value manufacturing, agro tech and knowledge-based operations.

I want to talk a bit more in terms of the business sector.

Madam President: You have five minutes to do that, Minister.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Thank you, Madam President. In terms of all of this, we must diversify our economy. A lot has been said by all the previous speakers in terms of our dependence on energy. I want again—and I do not know if I have the authority—to circulate: “The Future of Energy”, an article by the South Trinidad Chamber of Industry and Commerce on August 24, 2007. I do not want to sound arrogant, but if all of us here were to read this article, our debating time could have been reduced in this Chamber substantially. I say that because everybody here cares about the country; everyone here is serving country and we all care about what happens to Trinidad and Tobago. It is in that context I make reference to this, because the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, I am sure will take a lot of time on this. But in almost every contribution, comments were made in terms of the Ryder Scott Report.

Sen. Mark: Where is that report? Why do you not table that report? Lay the report!

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: I want to say again, like everything, when there are concerns, we must evaluate—[Crosstalk] I seek your protection, Madam President.

Sen. Mark: We need that report!

Madam President: Sen. Mark, please, let the Minister finish.

Sen. Mark: Why are they hiding the report? We need that report tabled in Parliament. Anyway, we will do it.
Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: I will deal with him in Tunapuna.

Regarding the future of the energy sector, I want to say again, it is not arrogance, what we have indicated is that this Government must take decisions in terms of a review; in terms of our tax incentives; we must relook in terms of how we diversify the economy to ensure that our dependence is reduced in the long term.

Sen. Mark: We demand that you lay the Ryder Report.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: In that regard, several initiatives for the manufacturing sector have, in fact, been implemented. One of these is a Business Expansion and Industrial Reengineering Programme. This Programme is to improve the competitiveness of the non-energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago by assisting domestic firms to reengineer themselves with greater state-of-the-art technologies and processes, and to expand their capacity to innovate and produce more sophisticated value-added products for the international marketplace. That is a mouthful, but, really, it is saying what support this Government is going to give to the manufacturing sector to make our products more internationally competitive and certainly to assist our entities in terms of the export market.

On top of all of that, for our small entrepreneurs, we have a fair share policy. Again, what this attempts to do is make sure we nurture our young entrepreneurs by allocating up to 10 per cent of those contracts up to $1 million, again ensuring that we make available contracts so that our very young entrepreneurs could participate.

Much has been said about the Green Fund levy. What is interesting to note—I did not hear one person make the comment or observation—at this point in time it stands at $938.6 million. So the money did not disappear or evaporate. The allocation has been there. A committee has been established to determine how these moneys will be used for the re-forestation programme. Right now, in terms of our policy in moving forward, in terms of the environment, it is very important and therefore this funding in itself will be used for re-forestation.

As you could see, there is so much more to be said in terms of so many items in terms of the state enterprise sector. Again, I congratulate those individuals who continue to serve. As you know, we still have the integrity forms and it does create problems. So I really want to congratulate all the chairmen and directors of the state enterprises who continue to give yeoman service.
In closing again, I want to congratulate the Ministry of Finance and all the other ministries which assisted and participated in this year’s budget presentation, a very comprehensive budget.

I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Madam President: Hon. Senators, we shall now suspend for lunch. We will return at 1.30 p.m.

12.30 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

1.30 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph): Madam President, I too, am pleased to participate in this debate on the Appropriation Bill 2008. In doing that let me indicate from the outset that this Government recognizes and agrees that crime is the most serious problem the country faces and that tackling it is the Government's absolute number one priority. We make absolutely no bones about that. To listen to persons on the other side who have so far participated in this debate giving the impression that the Government has not paid sufficient attention to the issue of crime and how as a government we are treating with it could not be further from the truth.

I also need to respond to concerns raised that an impression is being given that during the period that we have been in government, we sat back and allowed crime to escalate. My colleague and I do not know if I could be bold enough to say friend, Sen. Prof. Deosaran indicated and I will respond that in 1958 when the budget was presented by the late great and founding father Dr. Williams, there was no mention of crime and when Mr. ANR Robinson presented his budget there was no mention of crime. There are those who said insufficient. Of all the budgets from 2002 to 2007, the least was said about crime when more should have been said about crime.

Let me from the outset put the issue of crime that is plaguing this country in a particular perspective. My colleague, Sen. Dr. Glenn Ramadhar-Singh quoted from the Joint Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Latin American and Caribbean Region of the World Bank document. I am sure that I may have referred to this in this place or the other place. It is called Crime, Violence and Development, Trends, Course and Policy Options in the Caribbean. He talked about the fact that we made international news in the worst way because there is a chapter on violence in Trinidad and Tobago. With your
permission let me quote aspects of it to place on the record:

“In his 2006 New Year’s address as then prime minister of Jamaica, P. J. Patterson said, ‘Without a doubt the high level of violent crime remains our most troubling and pressing problem.’ In opening the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago in September 2005, President George Maxwell Richards said the country was in crisis due to the escalating crime rate. Through multiple channels, crime and violence threaten the welfare of Caribbean citizens. Beyond the direct effect on victims, crime and violence inflict widespread costs, generating a climate of fear for all citizens and diminishing economic growth. Crime and violence present one of the paramount challenges to development in the Caribbean.

Several factors which cut across the diverse countries of the region heighten their vulnerability to crime and violence. Primary among these is the region’s vulnerability to drug trafficking. Wedged between the world’s source of cocaine to the south and its primary consumer markets to the north, the Caribbean is the transit point for a torrent of narcotics, with a street value that exceeds the value of the entire legal economy. Compounding their difficulties, Caribbean countries have large coastlines and territorial waters and many have weak criminal justice systems that are easily overwhelmed.

Key messages and recommendations from the report include the following:”

The document outlines 10 recommendations. Needless to say, the report indicates a country will do well—I will read the second one.

“While levels of crime and associated circumstances vary by country, the strongest explanation for the relatively high rates of crime and violence rates in the region—and their apparent rise in recent years—is narcotics trafficking.”

Madam President, I wish I could show it to you. They have it in bold.

“The drug trade drives crime in a number of ways: through violence tied to trafficking, by normalizing illegal behaviour, by diverting criminal justice resources from other activities, by provoking property crime related to addiction, by contributing to the widespread availability of firearms, and by undermining and corrupting societal institutions. At the same time, it should be recognized that there is a trade-off between resources spent on combating drug trafficking and those spent on other forms of crime and violence prevention.”
The report went on to say that governments will do well to try to find a way of stemming the inflow of drugs and guns in their country as a major means of reducing the level of crime and violence in their societies.

When this Government in its efforts to deal with the unacceptable levels of crime and violence indicates that one of its priorities is the extent to which it can put resources in place to stem the inflow of drugs and guns, they want to ask our priority.

It is common knowledge that a go-fast boat takes less than 10 minutes from Venezuela to here. The question of the radar system; offshore patrol vessels and the acquisition of all these various assets are designed to reduce the extent of the inflow of drugs and guns in this country. That is not the only reason. There are other things that are causing violence in the society, but the primary one is the drug trafficking and the extent to which we are attempting to reduce the inflow of drugs and guns coming into the country. I listened to my colleague dramatizing the number of body bags from 2002 to 2007 and giving the impression that we are insensitive to the level of homicide and violence that is taking place in the country.

Those who are opposed to us see crime as our Achilles heels and they believe that if they can use that it will cause them to win an election. Only time will tell and the decision of the electorate will determine precisely whether or not they believe that is the way we have treated the whole question of that aspect. It will not be a one issue election campaign.

The first issue that we need to put on the table is the question of the period. Those of us who know better will give the impression that what is happening is unique only to Trinidad and Tobago. Do you know what is also unfortunate? When you try to put it in an international or world perspective—I do not want anybody to say that I am attacking the media because that is the last thing that I want to do—people say, “I doh care what is happening out there; I only care about Trinidad and Tobago.” How can you care only about Trinidad and Tobago when we are part of a global village? It is naive to give the impression that what is happening here—I am not saying that we could find comfort in the fact that it is happening in other places, but we need to be aware of what is happening.

I will come to some other specifics. We talk about witness intimidation. This morning I was trying my best because there was a time when I had a set of information about witness intimidation in various jurisdictions as Baltimore. It is a pattern going through the world, but you get the impression that it is only here we have a problem with witness protection. We will talk about how we are
dealing with it. In some jurisdictions you will hear prosecutors say that they are not prosecuting homicide cases on the basis of witness because the witness does not show up. The witnesses are murdered. Debates are taking place in those jurisdictions because the prosecutors are accused of not bringing matters to court and they say that they will not bring matters to court that will be thrown out because it would affect the whole criminal justice system. Challenges are taking place. I think that it is unfair to give the impression that what is happening is unique only to here. This is not a fair world. We will talk about what the Government is doing as the Government alone can do.

Let me say from the outset what the Government can do. The Government can and is making every effort to strengthen law enforcement capability. It is amazing because there is a view that as the Executive we could somehow literally go out there and either mount raids; prosecute people or do certain things. I have no power of arrest. The Government can ensure that we strengthen law enforcement capability and deliver First World law enforcement in consistence with our vision of developed society status. We know that right now we have a vision for or before 2020. The road map is so clear in terms of the developmental pillars. I do not need to quote. One of the key developmental pillars is promoting effective government for which five goals have been identified. They are:

1. Our society and our Government will adhere to good governance principles and practices.
2. Our public institutions will be high performance professional entities effectively and efficiently meeting the needs of their clients.
3. Trinidad and Tobago will have modern technologically advanced legal repertory and enforcement systems.
4. All citizens will be assured of fair and equal justice.
5. Trinidad and Tobago will be a safe place to live; visit; do business and raise families.

We have the various objectives and strategies that are outlined to take us there. We have a clear vision and we know where we are. It is now 2007. We hope that by 2020, 13 years from now persons will be experiencing what obtains as it relates to law enforcement in developed societies. Clearly, detection rates; the number of homicides; road fatalities and others will have to be improved tremendously. We also recognize that to do that we must strengthen law enforcement capability.
Madam President, while on that, it is difficult to stand here and sound our own trumpet, but we have a responsibility to indicate what we have done. Indispensable to that is the reform of law enforcement. We have successfully this year ensured that the institutions associated with effective law enforcement have been given the legislative capability to do what is necessary.

The Police Service Commission has now been transformed to ensure that its focus can now be different. The highly fragmented system that existed in terms of gaps in government—do not worry Sen. Bro. Khan, I will answer all your snide questions. [ Interruption] I was going to say that I can smell good because of the size of the nose, but I can also hear very well, but not because of the size of the ears.

Madam President, I was saying that the responsibilities of the Police Service Commission have shifted to what we can refer to as public accountability. It is now focusing on the selection, discipline and removal of the Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioners of Police; hearing appeals of personnel matters—discipline, promotion, monitoring and evaluating the Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioners of Police and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service; communicating with the Ministry of National Security and keeping the public and policymakers informed.

In all fairness, and I would be the first to admit, we made the progress we made legislatively because of the support of the Opposition. We would not have been able to introduce the legislation without the support of the Opposition. In terms of new powers to the Police Service Commission, it required an amendment to the Constitution. We got full support. In terms of providing the Commissioner of Police with greater autonomy to run the internal affairs of his organization, we got the support. We would not be here without that support but, Madam President, that was just one piece. The Executive then went full speed ahead to make sure that in terms of the Police Service Commission it provided it with more staff because of the new role it would be required to perform. Some 45 additional positions were needed. Cabinet and this Government went full speed ahead to make sure that those positions were approved. So when I hear that we sit on our hands and we take long, yes, in some things it takes some time.

The police service, given the new responsibilities, required eight senior management positions and this Government moved full speed ahead. I remember when I debated the Police Service Bill, we talked about the need for a Head of Executive Management Services, Head of Finance and Accounts, Director of
Administration, Head of Human Resources, Director of Planning, Head of the Police Legal Unit, Head of Information Technology and Head of Internal Audit. For all of those positions, Cabinet approval was needed. [ Interruption] They are not in place. They are now being advertised. They are now dealing with the CPO with respect to the salaries, et cetera. [Interruption] That cannot be fair, Sen. King. In terms of the responsibilities of the Government as the Executive to ensure that it takes the particular action necessary in furtherance of these developments, we have moved full speed ahead. That is with respect to the legislative part.

Also, we recognize that, given the Commissioner of Police’s autonomy for the internal affairs of his organization, it requires him now to make sure that his ability to promote, et cetera, because it is no longer in the hands of the Police Service Commission, it is in his hands and he needed to be provided with the professional capability to do that. We came here and we got the necessary approval. Madam President and hon. Senators, you know that full well, I indicated then and some people made fun, trying to ridicule the whole process. We said that it was going to be a written assessment and an oral one.

I remember coming here with the brief bag identifying all of the material with which the officers would have to familiarize themselves—sometimes I am not too sure if it is in this place or the other place—but concerns were raised as to whether or not they would have to stop doing policing work to study for the exam. We tried to indicate that most of the training programmes were then a matter of course. It is for those particular areas they were going to be tested. Needless to say, the written assessment was conducted, not without its own hiccups.

I get criticized for this. Sometimes I am told to say exactly how bad the police are and that I have to tell the population at some time what is happening. I can tell the population what is happening, but I have a philosophy that says that I praise in public and criticize in private. You cannot, notwithstanding all the weaknesses of any organization, publicly ridicule the organization day in and day out and expect that organization also to be motivated. Yes, there are issues and challenges, but that is the reason we have embarked on a transformation process to bring the police service in line with current realities.

With regard to the assessment we had based on our consultants—my friend tried to talk about Mastrofski and all the money being spent. To tell you how they can be sometimes, somebody asked me the other day whether Mastrofski used to teach me. I asked why. They still feel that because we have engaged their
services, there must be some kind of relationship. Do you see how you judge others based on how you judge yourself? [Interruption] There is no relationship with Mastrofski.

This Government, in acquiring the services of Mastrofski and Partners from the George Mason University, looked at a number of proposals, including Guiliani, whose proposals—strangely enough, it was only after that we realized that Guiliani had a local agent. [Interruption] I never said anything was wrong with that. We found out that part of the reason the Government has been criticized for not using Guiliani was because of other things. We are satisfied, on the basis of what we needed to get from our consultants, that Mastrofski and Partners are offering us the best advice and assisting in many ways with respect to the transformation. As far as we are concerned, we are getting value for money. We have come here, very open, and answered any questions you have asked, only to indicate that there is no relationship between anybody in the Government and the consultants we are using to assist us in the transformation.

Getting back to the assessment process, this was also developed based on discussions with the Social and Welfare Division. Any change will bring about a certain amount of apprehension on the part of the persons involved. Representatives of the Second Division had asked for an extension of the period of time for which the assessment was supposed to be done. We agreed and provided a one-month extension of time, bearing in mind that there was a time frame because, come November, there is going to be a number of vacancies in the First Division, by which time the Commissioner of Police ought to be in a position to fill these vacancies. So there are time lines associated with everything. [Interruption] Whoever is going to be Commissioner of Police. There will always be a Commissioner of Police. The person who occupies the office now is Trevor Paul, but he will not occupy the office for the rest of his life.

Madam President, a new executive came in. I do not know what they campaigned on, but they asked for an immediate meeting and a postponement of the assessment process, which we were unable to do given the time lines. You know they took us to court to stop the process from taking place. In the wisdom of the people whom this matter was before, they decided to squash it. The first set of assessments took place and the second set will take place in a week or two.

Again, this is designed to do a couple of things. One is to move away from the heavy reliance on seniority as the basis of promotion in the police service and to try to ensure that competent people occupy the leadership.
make sure that the police organization is staffed and has available to it, at its various leadership levels, competent persons to ensure that the police organization is built to last. That is what we can do. We can do everything possible to ensure that the police organization has available to it competent people to provide the country with the level of law enforcement for which it is crying out, requires and which we are committed to ensure is provided.

We have also ensured that the new curriculum designed to ensure a better level of policing, more competent police officers, is made available to the society. I think that Sen. Seetahal SC and Sen. Prof. Deosaran would be very interested in this. There will be 100 hours of training in what is referred to as behavioural science and communications department, introduction to criminal justice system, introduction to sociology, customer relations, report writing, written communication, testifying and sworn testimony—this is under the behavioural sciences—ethics and integrity, crisis intervention, conflict resolution, domestic violence, special needs group; under the area of law, of which there will be 112 contact hours, there is criminal law, civil law, other legal issues; under police administration and operations, of which there would be 104 contact hours, we have patrol duties procedures and operations, community policing, principles of criminal investigations, critical incident management; under health and physical fitness, there is physical conditioning, emergency care; under self-defence and tactics, 108 contact hours, there are lethal weapons control and defensive tactics and less than lethal weapons.

2.00 p.m.

Under traffic laws and enforcement for which there will be 160 contact hours, there will be driving skills and vehicle operations, motor vehicle codes, and motor vehicle collision investigations.

Under police science and technology, I noticed there were only 40 contact hours, and you have forensic science lab, cyber crimes and computer crimes; computer literacy; and law enforcement technologies.

Sen. Seetahal SC: Who are the lecturers?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: I do not have the names of all the persons who will be lecturing, but it is a combination of both local and foreign lecturers. Again, I am just spending a little time talking about the improvement in the human resources competency.
Madam President, everybody keeps talking about training and development. We recognize that training has to be an indispensible part of law enforcement, so that some of the concerns with respect to the detection rate and the whole question of prevention, you are always tempted to—

We have some challenges. Can I as Minister of National Security say that I am extremely pleased with how law enforcement is being conducted? The answer is, no. There are areas of improvements that you can see.

I listened to Sen. Seetahal SC and it pains me. Immediately, I went and called the commissioner. This question about the enforcement of traffic laws yes, if we can improve enforcement and so much can happen, but saying “enforcement” is just like whistling in the dark, if you do not put systems in place and change the whole question about orientation and the question about deployment.

Sometimes it pains me when I see how we are deployed. I mean, I would not say anymore, because I will be criticized and the next day you are going to see a headline: “Minister of National Security criticizes police”. They love to say that.

There are some things which can be done even as we move toward bigger improvements. There is no question about that. Again, the key thing is the question about enforcement. In most of the crime consultations you hear everybody talking about why can we not enforce what we have, and then you are going to hear I do not have enough human resource; I do not have enough manpower.

Of course, now, let me say something about statistics. I am not going in a prepared way today, because I run the risk of running out of time. My colleague told me about riding a tiger. He said he does not want the Minister to ride a tiger. [Interruption] I was going to make a comment, but I must be parliamentary on everything.

Now, Sen. Prof. Deosaran, when we encourage—and we are not afraid to say this—the police as part of its outreach and part of the whole transformation, in terms of the regular weekly press conference which is designed to treat with the sensational way in which crimes have been reported, this was designed to put a little more structure into the reporting and to make sure that the reporting is accurate.

Let me just make another point. Sen. Dr. Glenn Ramadhar-Singh talked about the fact that the Minister of National Security walks around with three sets of statistics; one to fool the Cabinet; one to fool the public; and the other to fool himself, and he got a lot of laughter and so forth.
Madam President, first of all, we do not generate crime statistics. We report as accurately as it is given. Sen. Prof. Deosaran has been on record as saying that they are not accurate. One of the reasons for homicides—and Sen. Prof. Deosaran knows that—is that in all jurisdictions the statistics that are more reliable are homicides, because it cannot be under-reported. Unfortunately, it is the barometer for police performance all over the world. They will report so many homicides per 100,000. That is it.

Madam President, I do not know if you realize that in this society, every time somebody dies it is murder No. 270 and so forth. That is how we do it. Somebody told me that this is the only country that does this, so then we are unique. Front page! Every time a murder occurs you hear that. So, it is something to which the society has now latched on; and the whole question of how do you treat and report with it is important.

Let me just indicate that I started off by saying that we recognize that this is our No. 1 concern, but what would we gain from jimmying or fooling around with the crime statistics? We cannot gain anything from it. So, to say that I have three sets of statistics, it is designed as part of your platform thing, and the intention to make it an issue, but we do not have three sets of statistics.

**Sen. Seetahal SC:** I would not take up too much of your time. Madam President, through you, several times I have asked for annual statistics, and if we were to have official annual statistics for 2004, 2005 and 2006—I know the commissioner prepares something like that for the commission. Why can we the public not have it just like in other countries?

**Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:** That is not a problem, because then you will see the trend, et cetera. That will not be a problem. [*Interruption*] We will make it available to you in the shortest order. I do not have three sets of statistics. I do not have to fool Cabinet and I do not have to fool myself. [*Interruption*] Again, when I was looking at this last night, I was saying that people judge others on the basis of how they judge themselves. I do not know if the Senator is accustomed keeping three sets of books: one set for A; one set for B; and another set for C, but we do not do that.

Madam President, let me deal quickly with the infrastructure, because we have received a lot of unnecessary blows on that. Again, this is designed to show that the Government is not serious about crime; the Government’s priorities are all wrong.
Madam President, I became Minister of National Security about four years ago—sometimes it seems as if it was so much longer—and I am almost sure—I do not want to be inaccurate with the information—that the five police stations that are currently being constructed were supposed to be delivered, I believe they told me by January last year; Belmont, Tunapuna, Gasparillo—five police stations—and up to this date those police stations are not ready for handover.

In another place, I indicated that I am not holding my breath, because they told me that it was going to be in August. I am not even holding my breath. I am not in a position to say when they are going to be completed, and somebody wants you to criticize. I am not in a position to say when it is going to be completed, but what I can tell you is how many delivery dates have been given to me.

**Sen. Seetahal SC:** By whom?

**Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:** By the contractors.

**Sen. Seetahal SC:** Fire them!

**Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:** Madam President, I think I was responding to Sen. Seetahal SC, because this was part of her concern; delays in implementation. Madam President, let me tell you what we have decided to do with the approval of Cabinet.

Again, the Government’s Executive, recognizing the importance of the activities that need to ensure law enforcement, takes the decision. If there is anybody to be blamed, as far as I am concerned, I have to take the blame. What is the blame? The length of time it took to make a change in terms of how we have decided to do business as it relates to the construction of our police stations.

Madam President, let me tell you what we have done. It is not just police stations, but infrastructure in the Ministry of National Security has suffered tremendously because of contractors’ tardiness and so forth.

We have a number of police stations that need to be constructed namely; Manzanilla, Matelot, Maracas Bay, Maloney, St. Joseph, Old Grange, Roxborough, Brasso, Pierro, Arima, Besson Street, Maracas St. Joseph, Cumuto, La Brea, Guapo, St. Clair, Matura, Oropouche, Moruga and Phase II of the Police Training Facility.

With respect to fire stations to be built: Rio Claro, Point Fortin, Montrose, Princes Town, Siparia, Four Roads, Woodbrook, Arouca, Tunapuna, Port of Spain Training, Chaguaramas Training and San Fernando. We have a number of things also for the defence force.
Madam President, what we have done, with the approval of Cabinet, we have been able to lump a package that will be attractive enough for it to be done in a particular way. Police Stations are not hard. You can literally have a one-off design or a two-off design and just make the adjustments for the environment.

We have a situation where we have to start with drawings from scratch and the drawings take an entire year to be done. I mean, this is an archaic outdated system. Soon, you are going to hear that the Government does not like local contractors, but after spending four years having to go through all this, I can assure you and the population that by next year this time in the budget we will be talking about 18 completed police stations, fire stations and other things. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Mark: Who will be doing it?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: I have not decided as yet. I do not know. International competitors. [Interruption] Madam President, I may not be the Minister of National Security, but I can assure you that the PNM Government will be ensuring that when we report next year, we will be talking about a better performance. Sen. Seetahal SC, if you are here, you will not have to talk about the construction of police stations and fire stations, when you are treating with delays in implementation. I give you that assurance.

Sen. King: What about the prisons?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: In terms of construction, I am seeing here a prison training academy, adult dormitories—again, part of the reason is the question of execution. I have said that we have found a way to deal with the whole question of execution.

In the meantime, we have embarked on an extensive refurbishment and repair programme. We have repaired and refurbished a number of police stations: Western, St. James, West End, Four Roads, Maraval, Patna, Woodbrook, Besson Street, St. Babb’s and St. Clair. Madam President, again, yes because of the conditions under which police officers are required to discharge their responsibilities, we have agreed on the upgrading of these police stations, separate and apart from the model stations.

We talked about an initiative involving five model stations: Arouca, Chaguanas, Morvant, San Fernando and West End, where there has been a complete change. There is no charge room. It is now being referred to as the
reception area, where you interface with the public is different; a whole host of changes designed to ensure that those types of interface between the police and the citizens is in keeping with what obtains in developed societies.

The guiding features of the initiative as I have indicated before are: the question of attentiveness; being accessible to the public to attend to their needs, responsiveness; timely assistance that helps citizens solve their problems; competence, knowing how to get the job done whatever it is; and a reliable police service that routinely meets acceptable standards; respect, treating all members of the public with dignity, and using only the amount of force required by a competent officer to get the job done; fairness, treating—

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.

2.15 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Thank you very much, Madam President and I thank hon. Senators for giving me the extra time. In terms of providing the staffing for these model stations, Cabinet again, approved an increase in staffing for these model stations according to—

Sen. Seetahal SC: Where are they coming from?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Recruiting, so you are increasing the strength; increasing the establishment—24 posts of police sergeants; 23 police corporals; 125 police constables. Because there is something that exists in some police stations, where the highest ranking person in charge of a shift might be a senior police officer, sometimes you are lucky if you have a corporal. What we want to do is to make sure in these model stations no one lower that the rank of sergeant is in charge of any of these shifts. That is sworn officers or uniform officers as we know them.

In addition to that, Cabinet approved the following civilians—75 data entry clerks, because the intention is to make sure that all those police stations are fully computerized, 15 per model station; 20 clerical assistants, 4 per model station; and 20 victim and witness support officers, which I am sure you would have seen advertisements, et cetera.
Is this a Government that is not serious about trying to treat with the whole issue of crime in this country? Nothing could be further from the truth. In addition to the human resource requirements for the model stations, 20 additional vehicles per model station; short term upgrading of the facilities, as I have indicated. Because, again, the intention is to ensure that the level of policing in these particular police station districts—and somebody would say, well, why there. Because like any model you have to start somewhere.

**Sen. Seetahal SC:** May I have 30 seconds?

**Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:** Yes, 30 seconds.

**Sen. Seetahal SC:** Just one point, that victim witness assistance officers, which are used in the United States—through you, Madam President—I think perhaps the Minister could connect that to the whole victimization issues that Sen. Cropper mentioned and the fear of intimidation because that is how they are used in other countries.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:** Yes, these additional posts. Again, hon. Senator, all that we are doing, Madam President, hon. Senators, are designed to make sure that some of the issues raised here with respect to the question about citizens, citizens intimidation, et cetera, et cetera, those things can be addressed, but it takes more than just talk; it requires structures and it requires also ensuring that the necessary processes are in fact put in place. In other words, what we are doing, we are putting measures in place that are guaranteed that you would start seeing the results of those things, if not right away, but you would see the improvements in those things.

I wanted to spend a little time but unfortunately I do not have, to deal with Sen. Seetahal's concerns with respect to the whole relationship between low detection, witness intimidation, et cetera, et cetera. It is all there in a document—strangely enough I have a document before me here called “Why Homicide Clearance Rates Decrease, Evidence from the Caribbean” and this is done by part of the team of Mastrofski from George Mason University; Prof. McGuire from Bowen Green State University; Prof. King from the George Mason University, Denver Johnson and from Arizona State University, Charles Katz and it is interesting about the coming together of all of the various things to what could easily be looked at as a perfect storm.

Forensic science not being able to step up to the increase in the gun-related type of crimes, so the whole question about their backlog in terms of their area; police not engaging with the public and the public not having trust in the police,
that also contributed. So there is a whole coming together and as a result conspiring to almost a downward trend in the question about detection and as a result, also at the very time when homicides were increasing, the Homicide Bureau—well there was no Homicide Bureau of Investigation—investigations were still being done almost on a kind of piecemeal basis at the division level, et cetera. So there is an understanding, Madam President and hon. Senators, of what were some of the weaknesses that existed as a result of the way in which we have been doing business.

Let me just make one point, to sum it up. When I talk about ensuring that we provide law enforcement with the ability or we are building an organization that is built to last; it is an organization that must constantly be aware of what is happening in the external environment. And I do not want to sound academic but from the reality, what are the opportunities and threats out there in the external environment? And what are the strengths and weaknesses of the organization? The organization must always have a capacity to know what is happening.

Take for example, we talk about displacement. When we wanted to treat with gang-related homicides in particular police station districts, we targeted four. Port of Spain police district had the highest number of homicides. So, that when we started to focus on the gang-related homicides in Port of Spain—and if you look at the statistics you will see that the Port of Spain division went down; Western went down, et cetera. But then what happened? You started to have displacement; they started to go in other areas. Law enforcement ought to know that, because as they clamp down in a particular area—Trinidad is too small for displacement; I like to say they must be displaced out of Trinidad, so that we could anticipate. We should be anticipating that they are going to go to Maloney and the other places, et cetera and we put proactive measures in place to deal with them, you follow.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: Thank you, Minister for giving way. Since you are on detection rate; when I referred to the homicide press conference, I think I was trying to be helpful and I will tell you why briefly. The period you select for comparison is too short; it does not show a real trend. And secondly, more importantly, the causes for murders are so varied, that if you choose credit for a reduction within that short period, you might find yourself in a difficulty when there is spike, as is evident now. That is what I meant by you are riding a tiger, you might find yourself in a rather embarrassing position, not through any fault of yours. It is a complicated issue and I thought I would just signal to you, be a little careful in entering that arena in the circumstances I just described.
Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Two things, Professor, I am not entering in the arena; it is law enforcement, who on a weekly basis, would be reporting and they do not call those weekly press conferences to just report on crime, but clearly to provide the public with information. But again, invariably—it is like when I have post-Cabinet press conferences; it does not matter what I go to the post-Cabinet press conference to report on, invariably a reporter is going to ask me about the homicide rate and detection, naturally. So, I do not ever go to a post-Cabinet press conference without that.

Last week I went to talk about the fact that the Government settled the pay difference for the defence force, but that was not the big thing; it was the detection rate. So, it is one of those situations in which we find ourselves and I really understand that. But then, as a Minister of National Security, if I do not answer the questions then it is another kettle of fish. I understand and I know it was not being said to me in any critical way. None of the comments that I get from the upper Back Bench I see as anything being critical; I see it as an attempt to highlight areas in which—and let me tell hon. Senators something, I listen to everything that you say, even those in the Front Bench who try not to be as objective in their criticism, because you can find something good in whatever is being said. Let me tell you something, quite clearly, this Government is listening; this Government is learning and this Government is leading. [Desk thumping] Make no difference about that; make no bones about that. In the short time that I have let me—[Crosstalk]

Madam President: Please, Senators, that is enough.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Listening, learning and leading! Leading! If it is one thing I am guaranteed, my contributions usually provoke some kind of reaction of some form.

Madam President: I would ignore them if I were you; you have five minutes.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Okay, “oh goosh”. Madam President, finally, let me make some comments on the just concluded crime consultations that people thought was a public relations exercise, a mamaguy, et cetera.

You see again, I have a little difficulty praising my Government, but I have no choice, because if I do not do it nobody would do it for us.

Hon. Senators: “Oh gawd!” “Oh gawd!” I hope you realize that.
Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Coming out of the just concluded crime talks, you would realize and I thought it might have been difficult for Sen. Seetahal SC to also do that, because I could understand. In the shortest order we tried to ensure that the report of the crime consultations was made available to the public. Secondly, in the quickest order, coming out of the recommendations, the Establishment of a Crime and Justice Commission, we went full speed ahead to make sure that that was done. [Desk thumping] That cannot be any mamaguy and public relations. Thirdly, Cabinet again, the Executive approved the staff required to staff the Crime and Justice Commission and right now all we are doing is trying to find accommodation in the shortest order so that the Crime and Justice Commission can start conducting their exercise.

I am satisfied that this Government recognizes, as I started by saying, the fact that—let me just perhaps quote my Prime Minister. My Prime Minister has said on more than one occasion that the only dark cloud hanging over this country is the situation with respect to crime and violence in the society and that the Government is committed to removing that dark cloud. What we have done, clearly, in terms of 2007, is put measures in place; first of all the Government is making sure that a sufficient amount of moneys are allocated to the Ministry of National Security for the Ministry to discharge the responsibilities of building law enforcement capability so that we can provide this society with the level of law enforcement befitting a country that is moving towards developed nation status.

We have embarked on the first rung of that and all we are saying is that we can give the assurance to this honourable Senate and by extension to the national population that the Government will continue to do all in its power to make sure that the country is provided with an acceptable level of law enforcement befitting of a developed society. And in those circumstances, we are sure that the population would be satisfied with the way in which we discharge our responsibilities to them and they would show that in the best way that they know how.

I thank you very much, Madam President.

Madam President: I think it is—[Interruption]—or it is the Independent now; oh I see, I was not aware, nobody told me. Okay, Senator.

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Madam President, I was here to speak at the time I was scheduled to speak, however, I am grateful to you for allowing me to speak now. The present budget exercise has come so close to our marking of our
45th year of Independence that it has given me a theme. To what extent is this the budget of an independent nation? This will be the theme or motif running throughout my discussion.

Madam President, as a prelude and to set the tone and to drive home my concerns about the notion of independence, I want to refer to and read from an article I wrote; it was published on August 31, 2007 in the Trinidad Guardian; it is called “Cry, my Beloved Country”. The article is a philosophical criticism of the colonized mentality that has shifted into the vice or device of outsourcing, which is now common practice in our country in education, national security, design and construction and even building.

You know, Madam President, that I am a very reluctant outsourcer and I believe that we have been outsourcing, when the job could have been done by qualified nationals.

2.30 p.m.

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT in the Chair]

Madam President, in the first part of the article, I reminded people of the circumstances in which we came into our Independence. We came to our Independence following the death of the Federation, the British Government which had been telling us, “we will allow all of you to become independent in a block if you federate”, suddenly changed their tune when the Federation crashed. So we walked into our Independence through a side door; the corpse of the Federation was not even yet cold. Jamaica got their Independence; Trinidad got their Independence. We ran up the red, white and black; we scrabbled up a very ungrammatical anthem which had been intended for the Federation and was set to the tune of a Welsh folk song and we called that the “National Anthem”.

That is how we crept into our Independence and there were some very bad effects from this unplanned birth. Because the way in which we got in, made it look as if we did not have an Independence struggle. It made it look as if we did not have a fight, in which every creed and race was united in a common goal, and the consequences haunt us. We have never united as a people in a national project that all of us believe in. Up to this day, we do not have a national purpose or national purposes, unless you consider Chaguaramas a national purpose, or 2020 a national purpose.
Up to this day, we do not understand that Independence involves taking charge of your economy and involving all your people in ownership of the land and ownership of the national resources. But, Mr. Vice-President, the picture is not as bad as that, there was an Independence struggle—the schools do not teach it—and if we knew about it, then perhaps we would make better use of the Independence that we crept into. There was an Independence struggle in which there was ethnic solidarity, in which people practised politics as a people. There was an indigenous perspective and that occurred in the 1930s and 1940s.

At that time, citizens of all ethnicities combined in movements of the people—movements, incidentally, in which women played crucial roles—and that activity, the strikes, riots, the disturbances of the 30s and 40s brought us one person, one vote; it established the trade unions; it legalized the labour movement; and it outlined a truly national and participatory politics.

Mr. Vice-President, the ordinary people of the 30s and 40s who rose up and protested against the conditions in which they had to live, and the political provisions under which they were ruled, they were our first national heroes; they were the makers of our Independence; they must be writhing at the betrayal of the things they fought for and the values that drove them. That deeply rooted Independence movement was captured by politicians whom the late Lloyd Best dubbed, "The Validating Elites". The people with the law degrees; the people with the university education; the boys who could speak to Whitehall, who could negotiate for a new Constitution, they are the ones who captured the Independence movement and did what they liked with it.

Mr. Vice-President, a very interesting thing happened to that article, they cut out a paragraph.

**Sen. King:** The Validating Elites?

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** The Validating Elites cut out a paragraph. The paragraph said—I suppose that is freedom of the press. The press is free to muzzle you.

- Up to this day, we depend upon outsiders to set our goals—First nation status.
- Up to this day, we depend upon outsiders to reshape the landscape—UDeCott.
• Up to this day we depend upon outsiders to control our energy resources and to decide on the kind of industrialization we should follow—foreign direct investment.

**Hon. Member:** All of us are outsiders.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** I continue.

• Up to this day, we allow outsiders to design and build our buildings and our cultural complexes.

• Up to this day, outsiders determine our school curriculums.

That is just to mention a few of the galling items in our non-independent agenda.

Mr. Vice-President, the article was not just a negative madman's rant. It ended in a sombre, but I still think positive note. No country is as rich as ours and has so much poverty; no country is as naturally endowed and yet is so passive; no nation has as much cultural diversity and biodiversity and knows so little about it and itself; no people in such a short time has produced such individual talents and geniuses and has remained so susceptible to tinsel and sham and second-hand ideas from the larger world. We will come into our Independence when we humble up and begin to know ourselves. Look inward my people. It is in this mood and in this spirit that I contemplated the budget statement.

Mr. Vice-President, since being in charge of your economy is one of the basic requirements for Independence and since our energy resources are the carriers of our economy, I begin with energy. I am not going to come again with my annual plea for an exploration of the possibilities of solar energy, wind energy, and sea currents. I am not going to beg again that since you building so many new buildings, it should be a law that all of them should be equipped with solar panels so they could do their own cooling and refrigeration and lights, I am not going to go there this time. I am tired and I am sure that time will give them ears, like Minister Joseph, and they will hear in due course.

Mr. Vice-President, I have questions about what has recently become a mantra, the mantra that we must offer greater incentives to the energy companies. I want to know why? Mr. Vice-President, what— I hope Sen. Dumas does not heckle me, I have some very nice things to say about him and I would not say them if he heckles me.

**Sen. Dumas:** [Inaudible] [Laughter]
Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I am saving it for last, keeping him there under bribe. Mr. Vice-President, what I have to say about energy is the result of consultation and collaboration and the little problem this morning, I received from my main collaborator, a draft that I was supposed to put in the final form. I got it at 9 o'clock and all I could do is read it and see, yes, this is what I want to say. I put in a few little touches, but I did not do the radical redrafting, so I have to acknowledge that what I say on energy is technically the work of my collaborator who does not want to be named.

Sen. Seetahal SC: Oh really, we do not want to hear an anonymous.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: So here goes. Last week our Prime Minister gave an interview to the media in Whitehall. He pointed to the buckets that were placed on the floor to collect the rain from the leaky roof. He said that a professor had warned him that the rain might make contact with the electrics and there might be a fire. He went on, of course, to blame the Opposition for this, in any case, he could not bring visiting dignitaries to such a place and subject them to such danger. Well, thank God, he had the foresight to build a nice new diplomatic centre; and thank God, it was already decreed that Whitehall was crumbling, was unfit to serve as a Prime Minister's Office and somewhere else would be outfitted for the job.

Now, Mr. Vice-President, I notice you are not smiling, so maybe I should not say I did not tell you this story to amuse. I only offered it as an illustration of two important principles. The first is the principle of manipulation. And here is a coincidence, very strange that drives home the point.

Within the first two weeks of the NAR administration in 1986, the media was provided with photographs of the Cabinet meetings being held in a room with buckets collecting water from the leaky roof. The purpose then, was to show that even the highest offices were making sacrifices. You could even say, it was a noble purpose, but it was an attempt at manipulation, and when one of the weeklies ran the photo under the screaming banner, “Pappyshow”, I could not agree more, manipulation.

The second principle that this latest rounds of rain bucket photo opportunity illustrates, is the principle of disinvestment.

2.45 p.m.

How come no brilliant advisor suggested to the Prime Minister that the roof of Whitehall could be fixed? How come this admittedly farfetched option did not cross anyone's mind? But there are always reasons. If the roof was quietly fixed
under a programme of routine maintenance, there would be one less device of manipulation; one less propaganda tool; one less reason to abandon Whitehall and move to the Red House; one less reason to justify the tremendous over-investment in other accommodations.

Mr. Vice-President, the non-fixing of the roof of Whitehall is a simple illustration of what is called the strategic policy of disinvestment. No one was fooled, because everyone knows that to stop the leak, you fix the roof. But when this policy is applied to complicated matters like the energy sector, everyone is fooled. It is my task today to raise the question of whether we are being fooled.

You will remember that during my contribution on the Heritage and Stabilisation Bill I asserted, and nobody challenged me, that the last bid round for oil and gas exploration was sabotaged. I remind you again of how this was done.

Before the round was closed, before all the bids were in, the Prime Minister made a statement that the Government would up the incentives should the present bid round fail; based upon this assurance, the bid round failed. "Why not wait a few months?" The energy companies must have thought. Why not wait for incentives that would save them billions? The oil giants were essentially told, "Wait, doh bid now." [Interruption]

Sen. Dr. Saith: I am not going to hold you responsible, because you are reading somebody else's words, but the Prime Minister did not at that time say that we were going to improve. He said that we were going to have a new production sharing contract that took a larger stake for the State. It was the opposite of what your anonymous writer is telling you. I am not holding you responsible; you are merely reading someone else's words.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: If that is so, I stand corrected. I will check on it. I read it through and I agree with a lot of this; so it is not entirely that somebody handed me this and said, "Read it." So do not absolve me; the mistake is mine too.

We all should know by now that there was little exploration and only three bid rounds were ever conducted during the last six years or so. The failure of the last round was a serious affair. I have spoken about the failure of Deep Ibis, and everyone knows that bpTT invested and lost about half a billion Trinidad dollars there, but that is the nature of oil exploration. We as a host country, as an oil province do not carry success to the explorers and Drillers.
Our agreements, whether they are called production sharing agreements or tax and royalty agreements, are tailored to allocate these risks and rewards upfront. If we wanted complete control over energy exploitation I suppose we could do it through Petrotrin and have only technical service agreements with the multinationals. We do not do this, because we do not need all that risk. We do not need all that upfront capital cost with the chance of no return on investment for years. We prefer to have fairly steady and predictable income with the upside potential shared with the multinationals.

Mr. Vice-President, I understand and I am not now quarrelling with our successive governments' general philosophy on oil and gas agreements. But something changed the Government. The Government's response to the Ryder Scott report was curious. It seemed to be self-contradictory. The response on the one hand is that there is endless oil, not to worry. On the other hand, "Oh, oh, oh, we need to give greater incentives." [Interruption]

Sen. Dr. Saith: For gas.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: For gas. In other words, the Ryder Scott report became a justification for what we had been thinking of doing ever since that bid round failed. Ryder Scott which should have been a negative, became central to the marketing of a pre-existing intention. Ryder Scott is an independent and objective report and the Government did not need much assistance from its public relations machinery to sell this notion of incentives to the population.

Everyone seems to agree with the proposition that we must give more incentives, from the sober analyst at PricewaterhouseCoopers Limited, to the experts from opposing political parties. Everyone is chanting the mantra, "We must give more incentives." Such is the effect of panic. Such is the effect of the despair that is wrought in the minds of a population that believes that they are nothing without oil and gas.

The Government is saying, "We must give more incentives", and bpTT is saying, "We want more incentives", and bpTT went on television and said, "We want more incentives." When the energy giants and the governments are singing in tune with each other, I am a little suspicious.

Mr. Vice-President, in the Economist of June 02, 2007, there is an article called "Some you win, some you lose". In that article the deal between BP and Libya is described. The first paragraph runs as follows:

"For an illustration of the roller-coaster that Western oil firms ride in their attempts to get at foreign oil and gas, look no further than BP. On May 29th
the oil giant announced its return to Libya after an absence of over 30 years.

Muammar Qaddafi...who ordered the expropriation of BP's Libyan operations in 1974, is now allowing the firm to return to search for gas. At the same time another country in which BP operates is having second thoughts of a different sort. Earlier this week a Russian court ruled that it had no authority to review the licence terms for a gas field in which BP owns a share through its Russian joint-venture, TNK-BP. This paved the way for the Russian government to decide on June 1st, whether to revoke the licence, and so deprive BP of a prized asset."

It is not easy to get the rights to go and drill in other people's place. It is so hard that even if they "throw yuh out in 1974 and you get a chance, yuh feel yuh go take a chance and go back."

The agreement with Libya is very interesting. BP's new boss, Tony Hayward, said that the Libyan deal is:

"...its biggest single investment in exploration. The firm will spend at least $900m, and, perhaps as much as $1.2 billion, simply looking for gas. If it finds any, it might spend up to $800m appraising its discovery, and untold billions more developing it. Even if its Libyan venture is successful, however, BP may not make much money from it. The head of Libya's state-owned National Oil Corporation says it will receive some 78% of any gas produced. Another local partner will take another slice, leaving BP with less than 19%. The Libyan government has driven hard bargains with foreign oil firms, and BP is a relative late-comer."

So look at the deal that Libya has made with BP, and I do not see Libya offering any incentives.

Mr. Vice-President, here is what was said by bpTT Vice-President Operations at the Gazchem conference at the Trinidad Hilton on June 18. He seemed to be just as ambivalent as we are: "It have plenty, we have to give incentives; we very optimistic, but we need incentives." This is what he said:

"Think about it. There are...two conferences going on in this hotel today looking at the energy industry. The Geological Society is looking at preparing for the future. That, in itself, says a lot about where Trinidad and Tobago has reached in terms of the oil and gas sector. I suspect that the message at that forum will be similar in terms of the prospects. That is that there is a future and, based on the country's track record, we can say with some confidence that the future is bright."
So the future is bright; in the next breath:

"Optimism aside, we need to remember that there is always an element of risk involved in exploration. BPTT itself experienced the downside of this in 2006, when, after spending at least 80 million US dollars to drill Ibis Deep to 19,000 feet...we found no commercial accumulation of hydrocarbons...

In the meantime, there are other areas where we think we can find new proven reserves of gas. We have an inventory of prospects identified for drilling and how we do it at bpTT is that we look at 5 or 6 prospects simultaneously and put them through what we call our exploration 'hopper', out of which we select the best candidate for drilling. Our plan is to drill one exploration well a year, starting in 2008, for the next decade. One well a year demonstrates our commitment to finding new gas..."

3:00 p.m.

It goes on:

“Compared to other parts of the world, we still dealing with very large quantities of gas still in the ground. That’s why we are still excited about the opportunities that exist and why we have an exploration programme that calls for one well a year for ten years.”

And he closes with the following:

“So ladies and gentlemen, you have asked me to give an outlook and I would say that the outlook is bright. We will continue to add new gas reserves in Trinidad. It will be a challenge but we are confident of success with a combination of great people, cutting edge technology and a good environment in terms of Government policy.”

So why do they want incentives? Mr. Vice-President, what is the case for incentives?

Energy companies’ options are limited in our world today; they have new opportunities but not in very nice places. When they go to Somalia or Iraq they emphasize the negatives of political instability and uncertainty of tenure and even the likelihood of being killed; when they operate in a country of laws, stability and commercial honour such as our own, what do they do? They emphasize our complex geology and the technical difficulties of deep well extraction.

Mr. Vice-President, I began by saying I would really like to have an explanation of why we have taken up the mantra that the energy companies must get more incentives. Given the stable environment we provide, given the
prospects that the companies declare that there is oil, we will find it, do not worry, given their commitment, why do we need to induce them any further? I do not have the answer but I would like to get it.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to turn now to education.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** On safer ground.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** On safer ground, you have some questions to answer. The theme of the contribution of the hon. Minister of Education was Value for Money. With all due respect to the hon. Minister, I think it is premature to claim that we have got value for money. We have not begun to see the results of the spending and effort, and I am not too sure that an economistic criterion is a good one for measuring what the ministry is doing or for considering what we are trying to do for children and young adults by way of education. I feel that really was an unnecessary and unfortunate theme of value for money and I wish the Minister did not feel she had to be defensive that they would say we are wasting money. Let them say you are wasting money. The criterion value for money really cannot measure what one is doing.

I would say that we are beginning to have success when the budget statement under the heading training will not show that there are 93,000 persons outside the school system who have to be taking training. We have to develop a system that would not allow 93,000 persons to be outside the formal system. We are beginning to make success when the situation that Sen. Dr. McKenzie talked about does not exist, where a large number of the persons taken into the secondary schools are not ready and God knows what happens to their morale, what kinds of warping takes place, what kinds of low self-esteem and so forth goes on when they find themselves floundering and eventually drop out.

The hon. Minister gave a comprehensive account of money invested, et cetera; she spent 35 minutes on that, 10 minutes on curriculum matters and the announcement of an intention to revise the primary school curriculum and the last 15 minutes dealt with the sectoral plan central to which was School-Based Management (SBM) by means of which the education system would be liberated from its highly centralized character.

Mr. Vice-President, so I am taking my cue. I cannot discuss all the things she spoke about but I want to talk about two items: the intention to reform the primary school curriculum and School-Based Management.
School-Based Management has been a popular reform in education since the 1960s and there was a vast literature on it, but change began to take place in people’s expectation of SBM in the 1980s. Up to the 1980s, SBM was a stand alone reform, a management device put in place to respond to crises in the school system and in accordance with current management theories. So it starts off as a management device, it entailed a certain amount of decentralization, it empowered the teachers and principals and led to administrative efficiency and it gave opportunity to the school itself to tailor it to the needs of the community better than it would have been done from a central office. So it was a commendable management device.

In the early 80s, people began to see that it should not be a stand alone reform tool; it had great possibilities as part of a comprehensive programme of school reform. In the first decade or so, SBM almost became an end in itself as if once you had this management thing in operation that is it, and suddenly they realized that SBM is a means to an end. And since the purpose of the school was to do something for the students, SBM must be focused upon student development and performance, so in the early 1980s, that switch began and SBM was no longer an end in itself, it was merely a management tool as a means to improve students’ performance. And it is worth noting that the managerial principles in SBM have led to greater professionalism among teachers, more collaboration, more trust and teamwork among teachers, and it did a funny thing to the principal.

The principal, who in early SBM was an authoritative figure evolved under later SBM into a kind of leader working and did not quite become the servant leader but on the way to becoming the servant leader working to create opportunities and remove barriers so others could assume leadership positions.

So first of all, I commend the Minister’s determination to proceed with SBM, but I have some misgivings. I feel the way in which the hon. Minister described the setting up of SBM suggests that it is being seen as more of a management and administrative device and not as fully developed towards the autonomous school which runs itself as one would have liked.

I hope, Mr. Vice-President, that it would evolve into that because that is how it evolved in other places and our experience would tell us you have taken the first step and we may well be on the way to the kind of SBM that will give real autonomy and efficiency to the schools and make of the team a learning organization which runs itself as it were. This is a very difficult thing for ministries and Government to do.
Numerous surveys of successful SBM schools have been conducted and there is one particularly good one by Kerri Briggs of the University of Texas at Austin and Priscilla Wohlstetter of the University of Southern California, October 21, 1999 in which they identified the eight key elements of successful SBM schools and I would read one or two of them:

“Successful SBM schools have an active, living vision focused on teaching and learning that is coordinated with district and state standards for student performance.”

Which allows the school to innovate and deviate from the standardized norm.

“Successful SBM schools have decision-making authority in the areas of budget, curriculum, and personnel, and they use that authority to create meaningful change in teaching and learning.”

What you are really looking at here is a system that may well require a general curriculum and each school which has its own management and autonomy will tailor its curriculum to suit its own circumstances and intake of pupils, etcetera.

“Successful SBM schools disperse power broadly throughout the school organization by creating networks of decision-making teams.”

All these key elements reflect the recognition and discovery that (SBM) School-Based Management is one of the best devices for democratizing the school system for causing innovation within the schools, self-expression, team work and creativity and so, although I have misgivings about the way in which, or the position we are in at the present time, I sincerely hope that it would evolve. I know it can evolve into this very valuable device and opportunity.

**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.*

3.15 p.m.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President and thank you colleagues.

if there is an intention to shape the primary school curriculum to lead into the syllabuses that are now being used in Forms I, II and III of the secondary school. If that is so, the question is: Should the secondary school curriculum determine the primary school curriculum? My answer is no. My answer is, it has to be the other way around. The primary school curriculum should give you ideas about the kind of secondary school curriculum you want to do.

That is why from day one, I have always been in disagreement with our decision to deal with the secondary schools first. Under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) our intention was—I hope it still is—to make all our schools five-year schools, with a core curriculum. There are all kinds of difficulties about SEMP and I would not go into that here; all I am saying is that my general argument at the time was that you cannot build on rotten foundations. The primary schools, as they exist, are no foundation at all, and that is why, when the children move into the secondary school, there is such incompetence; there is such floundering; such difficulty; people not being able to cope, et cetera.

So for me, the problem of the primary school, however, is not just the curriculum. The primary school system has been in crisis for many years. I feel very sorry for those children who do not make it from the primary schools, but sometimes I feel very sorry for the ones who make it. I have to look at the television and see little children saying: “Yeh, ah coulda come tops, but it was worth it. For two years I ain’t go to pictures; for two years I ain’t go to party; for two years is only lessons, lessons, lessons, and I have to thank my mother and father and teachers for this.” What are we doing to our little children? Where is their childhood? Are we taking away their childhood to get them to get through this system? So although I congratulate them for their endurance, skill, energy and gratitude to their parents and the love that is in them, I really feel we damage them with the present system.

So this brings me to independence. I feel that you do not have to reform the curriculum. We have to reinvent the primary school to suit the needs and nature of our country and the people who live in it. I have a whole set of things here that I am building up to—rhythm—because I have to save time. The primary school is the base and foundation of the education system. The primary school is the first location where the State can intervene to foster the childhood qualities of the child: curiosity; creativity, self-expression, et cetera. The primary school is the first location where the State can intervene to foster and protect the childhood qualities of the child and influence the emotional health of these young citizens. The primary school is the most fertile ground for removing class, ethnic and other
social barriers. The primary school is the only place where we can hope to compensate for the effects of poverty, malnutrition, lack of a sense of home, absence of family life, child abuse and lovelessness.

The primary school is the first institution upon which we must bring to bear our self-knowledge and the knowledge of our history and traditions. The primary school is the earliest institution we must reinvent to suit the needs of our particular society. There is no such thing as a universal primary school. Patterns and shapes and forms of primary school do not travel. The primary school has to evolve in its own context organically and when you are reinventing the primary school, you have to ask basic questions: What do we teach? How do we teach? Who teaches? Why are we teaching? In what kind of building do we teach? And how do we evaluate? What do we evaluate? What they know or what they are?

The primary school is important because in it you will discover what you have to do to create your own secondary school system. I am sorry to tell the Minister, there is no such thing as seamless education. You cannot get it without seams. It would not be lumpy; it would not be a sleeping policeman; it would not be an obstacle, but it has to have a seam. The only way you cannot have a seam is if we had so much money and so much oil and so much freedom, that we did not really have to go to formal school and all of us go to primary school and when we “done” we go to the secondary; then we go to the tertiary and nobody asks us to pass exams or write exam or look for work, or so. But we can devise a system where the different levels flow easily into one another and influence the nature of one another. So this is really a plea to the Minister. It is not too late to start all over again with the primary schools. We have not lost them all.

I have three more topics I want to talk about in six minutes: agriculture; governance and institutional reform and global warming. I think Sen. Cropper has done an excellent job on agriculture, so I will spare myself that; although I have some thoughts about agriculture. I am not all that in favour of agri-business or agriculture for export. I will only export what I do not eat, but that is not a big argument yet.

I wanted to commend Sen. Dumas for his steady and consistent vision of creating sustainable communities for a kind of local government which encourages regional development and for once again recognizing the efficiency of the system we have put in place in Tobago through the Tobago House of Assembly. Of course, I am praising him to use him, because I believe that Constitution reform in this country ought to begin with the creation of a set of
house of assemblies in the different regions and then we will take it from there. Let us settle the question of local government through house of assemblies and then we could deal with power any other way you want, but let us put government within the regions and in touch with the people who govern them.

The question about global warming, there are two references in the Prime Minister's statement about climactic changes and global warming but there really is not any serious engagement or fear in the budget about climate change and the devastating effect that could have. Scientific research has shown that there is a direct connection between the increased incidents of storms and hurricanes and global warming; a direct connection with readiness to flood; a direct connection with sea level rise.

So we have a question of flooding; we have a question of hurricane; we have a question of a water-logged society coming about and all I can do at this point is to commend to Members of this Senate an article in the Technology Review of July—August, 2007, called “Saving Holland” from the sea, page 50. Holland has now embarked on a $25 billion project to make a risk assessment. As you know, over 50 per cent of Holland is under sea level already and they are the masters of keeping out water and they are worried that with climate change and with the sinking land already, and with the rising sea, and with the rivers about to burst their banks, they have to take an inventory; all the kinds of risks that are involved with their dykes, polders, and so on. They are spending a lot of money conducting that survey and the rest of the world is looking at them because they are the leaders in this thing. It should be like a Sou Sou. Everybody should give the Dutch money to carry out the thing, but they are not doing that; they are just waiting to attach on to the thing.

But we must take global warming seriously and I would like to see the Government allocate funds to carry out risk assessment in Trinidad and Tobago so that we can prepare ourselves for the effect of global warming. You know, there are houses in Holland now—it is a kind of engineering thing—that as the water rises, the houses are rising. They have floating green houses, because they know agriculture would be affected; road building would be affected and housing construction would be affected.

I really cannot do much more about global warming. I have already said I am not bothering with agriculture, so I will even finish before the hour is up.

Thank you.
Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Yuille-Williams.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, there is an order; there is an arrangement—

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, please sit. I am supposed to recognize the Senator who catches my eye—

Sen. Mark: No, no—

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, are you telling me that is not what I am supposed to do?

Sen. Mark: No, but there is an order.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, please, if there was an arrangement that did change, I think you could do it differently, please. You could ask the Minister to give way; I would have allowed you and we would have had a better tone to this. Right? Are you giving way?

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President—

Mr. Vice-President: Just a minute. Let me hear what the Minister is saying.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: I saw an order here and I think the one I saw, Sen. Dr. Kernahan was speaking a little later this evening. I do not know what has happened with the change.

Mr. Vice-President: What I believe did take place was the fact that there was a change from this morning and that would have thrown everything out of sync. So I will allow Sen. Dr. Kernahan. [Desk thumping]

3.30 p.m.

Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan: Mr. Vice-President, first of all I congratulate Sen. Dr. Ramadhar-Singh on his maiden contribution on the budget. He made an excellent contribution. It was insightful, incisive and very predictive in his analogy of the Jericho wall in the battle for Jericho.

Mr. Vice-President, when Sen. Titus rose to defend his Government he was dismissive of the people who according to him, say the same thing year after year. This I found to be an interesting defence. I would bet dollars to donuts as my ex-colleague Robin Montano used to say, that this was exactly the sort of remark that defenders of the city of Jericho were making after the third, fourth and fifth day of the eight-day siege of that city. Eighty per cent of them probably abandoned the defence of the city because they felt that the walls were so impregnable. After the
third day when the invaders kept doing the same thing over and over, I am sure that they said things like, “Dem fellas not going nowhere; dey going over de same ground over and over and dey getting nowhere.” Then, they went home like Sen. Titus.

This afternoon I will caution the Senator that seemingly impregnable walls come crashing down on the appointed day. [Desk thumping] Sen. Titus should not be so quick to go home because he will still be needed to pick up the pieces. [Laughter]

Mr. Vice-President, I was also taken aback by Sen. Titus’ objection to the need for the increase in the minimum wage, given the fact that the cost of living in Tobago is higher than in Trinidad and there is a tremendous discontent among Tobagonians with respect to the inordinate high prices they pay for goods and building materials compared to Trinidadians. The fact that unscrupulous employers will seek to evade their responsibility to the employees and further oppress them is not an argument for not having a minimum wage or not increasing the minimum wage. It is an argument for the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprises Development to do his job; monitor the violations; take the necessary steps; get the labour inspectorate going; increase the number of personnel. Do what you have to do to protect the rights of workers. Bring the violators to book. It is an argument for the Government to refrain from its activity of union busting over the last few years. At the end of the day, when the trade union movement is weak, unscrupulous employers take advantage of labour.

When we talk about developed society we need to look at what kind of model we are talking about. There is too much talk in this country now about 2020 and developed society. This so-called developed society that we talk about so often is where market forces reign supreme; little value is placed on human beings, human development and condition. There are also developed societies where the quality of human life is central to the development process. Basic social and economic rights are entrenched in the constitution of some of these countries. In this hemisphere we have countries like Cuba and Venezuela where human, political, social and economic rights are entrenched in the constitution. Switzerland is another example of the developmental model where these things are entrenched.

I will give you an example. I was speaking with a Trinidadian who came home on holiday from Switzerland recently. He was a young Trinidadian who was marginalized by the PNM’s elite education system and he went away. He had primary school schooling. About 25 or 26 years of age, he was enrolled in an
apprenticeship programme. In order to get into a profession, technical or vocational, you have to work with a company and be involved in a vocational programme. They pay a small wage because most of the people who are involved in these apprenticeship programmes live at home. He was an older person. After a few months the local council called him and told him that they saw he earned that wage and asked him how he pays rent and buys food and how he lives. He said, “I live with my girlfriend and she helps me.” The local council was horrified. They said that that could not be; he could not live off someone else’s labour. They called the company with which this person was employed and instructed them to increase the pay of this gentleman because he needed a living wage. That is developed country status. That is the model we should be looking at.

The cry of the progressive trade union movement as NATUC and so on is for a living wage for workers. [Desk thumping] You must be paid a living wage. You do not have people all over the place; you do not know how they are eating, living and drinking and then tell me that you want to solve crime. Impossible!

Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Titus incomp rehensively, joined with his other colleague, Sen. the Hon. Dumas from Tobago to defend the construction of a palatial prime minister’s residence in record time, in a matter of months, when the Scarborough General Hospital project which the people of Tobago need to provide health care is practically abandoned, after a sum of almost $500 million has been spent, as far as we understand. [Desk thumping] The contractors walked off the job and the people of Tobago are suffering from inadequate health facilities. I was there. The Joint Select Committee visited the facilities and the incomplete hospital. When we had the meeting the people in Tobago came out in their numbers and voiced their concerns. Sen. Titus was also there and he heard the cries of the people, Mr. Vice-President. He has refused to fire a parting shot in their defence.

Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Titus and Sen. Dumas, in this budget debate did not come to highlight the suffering and deprivation of Tobago, but they rushed to defend the walls of Jericho and the wall of indifference and injustice that Prime Minister Patrick Manning has constructed to shut out the people of this country.

We Trinis know the reason for this lavish extravagance and this palace. “Yuh know what we call it? Keeping up with the Jones’ syndrome” when you do not have your priorities right. We are not talking about whether it is good or bad. We are talking about priorities! It happens to the best of us. You live in a relatively modest two-bedroom house. You have five children; two girls; two boys and a
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[SEN. DR. KERNAHAN]

baby. The girls and boys sleep in the same bedroom and the baby in a crib in the parents’ room. What happens to some of us is that we have a rich neighbour who lives in a palatial house. The neighbour invites you to functions at his palatial house; you get your picture in the papers and you feel that you are socializing with the rich and famous. One day you get carried away; you are in this function and you tell the neighbour, why “don’t” you have the next function by me? You come home and “yuh head hot” because you are studying how to impress the “big shots who comin to visit you.” What do you do?

You borrow money to fix the house but instead of adding two bedrooms for the children; another bathroom; a little study area to make them comfortable, “yuh know what yuh do?” You decide to extend the living room; put lavish furniture; redo the whole kitchen; add on a four-car garage; landscape the garden and put a coat of paint on the front of the house. “But yuh know what happening in de back? De boys still sleeping in de girls’ room on a mattress on the floor; the baby still sleeping in the parents’ bedroom and de lil old car still in the back giving trouble because yuh doh have money to fix it.” Priorities. That is what is happening with this administration. We call that “high mind and low behind” sometimes.

The problem is that people who act like that do not care about their children, as long as they can look as if they are keeping up with the Jones’. With all this fixing up in the house, “yub doh call the lil local carpenter and mason who accustom coming and ponging yuh door when it shaky and ponging de bed when it rockin; yuh go and call de Chinese fella who jus come in de village dey because he tell yuh he will do it for yuh cheap.” That is the mentality there. That is the perversity that the two Senators rushed to defend. Defending the indefensible.

Sen. Dana Seetahal SC spoke about her sense of déjà vu and a sensation that this Government is spinning top in mud and there is no sense of progress or any qualitative change in the lives of the people. This sentiment is exactly the sentiment that is echoed by the majority of citizens. In spite of the $162 billion spent—as they have alleged over the past five years, it could be more—there is an overwhelming feeling that we have regressed as a society. This sense of regression, decay and indifference generates a spiritual poverty which when it co-exists alongside small pockets of obscene wealth and ostentation wealth, creates friction which expresses itself in wanton acts of cold, brutal and mindless violence at all levels of the society: in the schools, families and communities. Spiritual and material poverty side by side with this obscene display of wealth.
This, Mr. Vice-President, is what Sen. Titus failed to grasp when he made his contribution. He said that crime is a social problem. Crime is a social problem with economic and political roots. The solution is pro people, economic policies and systems. The solution is pro people political execution of these policies and systems.

When you have a government that closes down an industry overnight, like the sugar industry, 30,000 workers are out of a job with a rippling effect of over 100,000 persons in scores of communities. This is the economic policy that is the root of crime. When you shut down BWIA and send home workers they lose their earning power and pension plans. When the Government hijacks the pension plans of the workers, this is the economic root of crime. Similarly, you have NBN and the port. Whether you send home these people and perpetrate these acts of economic violence, families fall apart and disintegrate. There is growing poverty; homelessness; unemployment and the inability to access education. You have the issue of absent fathers; families break up; fathers go one way; mothers go one way; there are single mothers; teenage pregnancies come out of that and all kinds of social problems come out of economic violence and crime. Therefore, when you talk about crime is a social problem you have to take the roots of it into consideration.

This administration purports to care and has allocated over $15.5 billion according to the budget in the social sector, while at the same time the economic policies that they are pursuing exacerbate the problem of social displacement and poverty. That is pure hypocrisy. There is no other word for it.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, what do you think happens in a community where Evolving TecKnologies and the HDC expropriate agricultural lands for housing at La Horquetta Trace and Ramgoolie Trace in Wallerfield? There are people right now who are practically homeless because they have been evicted from the lands they have been farming for years. What do you think is the social repercussion when the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources refuses to renew agricultural leases in Chatham and Wallerfield? What do you think is the result when Bagatelle residents are displaced and are unable to afford mortgages or they give them $40,000 or $60,000? What can that do to house a family at this time with the high cost of building materials?

In two or three weeks that money will be done and they will be outside the tall buildings in Port of Spain lying at the side of the road. This Government is exacerbating the problem of vagrancy. This is not a joke. I know a young man
who was put out of his apartment in George Street recently by the HDC. He grew up there with his mother, father, uncles and grandmother, but because he is slow and he was the last one in that house—the elders in the family had died—HDC took the house and told him he had no right to that house. He carried his birth certificate and all kinds of documents to show that he grew up there with his parents and grandparents. He is practically a vagrant now living from house to house. You can multiply that story by a thousand.

Mr. Vice-President, there is a very interesting document by the Poverty Alleviation and Social Services Subcommittee, the 2020 subcommittee, which did a study and they have a good grasp of what is happening in the social sector that this Government has spent $15 billion on over the last few years. Hear what they said about homelessness:

“In 2003, there have been seven hundred and thirty four (734) socially displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago, with the largest number coming from Port-of-Spain (including Woodbrook and St. James) and San Fernando respectively. The inflicted include street children, ex-prisoners, deportees, the elderly, substance abusers, the mentally ill and persons who are HIV positive. Preliminary observations by the Social Displacement Unit indicate that the mentally ill may be highly represented among those afflicted.”

Mr. Vice-President, it says here, about housing:

“Inadequate shelters, hostels, which can provide emergency or short-term housing, assessment, referral and other immediate rehabilitative services and programmes.”

They say people:

“…are housed at Riverside Plaza. However, this venue is overcrowded and unsanitary. The problem is compounded by the fact that some outpatients of the St. Ann’s Hospital are treated at this facility.”

Hear this: Shocking!

“The NHA has been unable to facilitate the Social Displacement Unit’s request for priority consideration for the socially displaced for the allocation of housing units. There is need to access apartments for rent at a cost of two hundred dollars ($200) per month or less.”

If a government department cannot assess subsidized housing to socially displaced people, who is the ordinary person? How do you get a house from HDC when even another government department cannot get it from them?
It says here:
“Insufficient Income
Income by way of Old Age Pension, Public Assistance and Disability Grants received by those who are unable to work is insufficient to meet basic needs (food, clothing, shelter and medication).”
That is the Government’s 2020 situational analysis report.

What do you think happens in our communities and our neighbourhoods when inflation is in double digits and food prices have increased by over 100 per cent over the last four years? What does this Government think happens when women in the community are forced to depend on gang leaders for work in URP or when they are at the beck and call of the CEPEP contractors? Prostitution, teenage pregnancy, disintegration of the family. This administration handed over all these depressed communities to these gang leaders.

Someone told me she witnessed an incident where a gang leader was at some “passa passa”, which I understand is the new wave in the city, and he called this woman at 2 o’clock to bring a glass of juice for him and she got up out of her bed and brought the juice. She had to. He gives her work at URP. That is what is going on in this country.

We still have people sleeping in Tamarind Square. I passed there recently. The disabled in this society is still clamouring against discrimination and marginalization and are still very vulnerable to poverty according to the Poverty Alleviation and Social Services subcommittee.

Mr. Vice-President, at the end of the five-year term, a reported $15.5 billion is spent and the Government in this budget still speaks in futuristic terms about the family and pays lip service to the work of civil society. What do they have to say about the family in this budget, Mr. Vice-President?

I quote:
“…the implementation of the National Family Policy which we have adopted as our blueprint for creating and promoting a family-friendly society and for mainstreaming family issues into every aspect of policy making.

The National Family Policy will focus on a wide variety of issues…”
This policy is talking about a recommendation that was made by a national committee set up by the Ministry of Social Development in 2004. Three years later, it now appears in the budget promoting families. Who are they trying to fool?
The budget goes on to talk about other programmes in support of the family. Shameless! I quote:

“The National Counselling Programme;
Establishment of a Children's Authority; and
Implementation of the Second National Plan of Action for Children.”

This Children's Authority has been beaten to death by everybody who has spoken in this debate so far. I do not have to go into that because it is a shameless act of neglect on the part of this administration against the children of this country.

The Second National Plan of Action for Children; what does this mean? We had a National Plan of Action for Children in 1992 and there was another one in 2001. I have not seen any status report on the National Plan of Action for Children and I have been asking. Do you know what the time lines of the latest plan talks about now? The year 2015, 2018 and 2020. They are saying, at this point in time, that they would initiate a national plan of action for children starting 2008 going up to 2020. It shows clearly that they have nothing for children and these are international conventions that they have signed. They redo the plan and reset the dates. As Sen. Cropper said, children are an afterthought in this budget.

I believe Sen. Montano is feeling the tremors of the coming implosion of that Jericho wall. He is crying out to the population. What can a government do? He is crying out now because in spite of all the advice, exhortations, supplications, denunciations by commentators, experts, well-wishers and detractors of this Government, they have refused to guide this country along the path of real sustainable development. They have rejected all the prescriptions we have made year after year.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand just said that he would not go into agriculture because he is tired. Everybody is tired because we keep making recommendations and they keep going along their merry way and now they are bawling: What can a government do? What are we supposed to do? We tell you what to do. You have to promote institutions, at a national level, which will be charged with the responsibility of research and advice and implementation of measures to advance critical aspects of national development. Give people an input in the development of this country. Do not keep everything a secret in Cabinet.

The issue of what a government can do now arises because they have backed themselves into a corner because of political expediency and a deliberate refusal to allow for the development of strong local government institutions which
promote the development of families, communities and community institutions from the ground up. They want to control everything at the level of central government. If someone in a community wants to go to some exhibition, the Minister has to approve. They micro-manage everything at central government and keep down the people: their resourcefulness and ability to manage and to govern and look at their own environmental needs and provide for their own development.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran made the point that if you develop local government the cracks in the system would disappear because people in their communities would find solutions to the problems we have. Part of the problems we have, especially in the education system is the huge impersonal schools. One junior secondary has about five different buildings that hold about 500 children each and the head teacher, the teachers and the students do not know anybody. That is one of the problems.

If you have a situation where, at the community level children can go to school in their own area, where they are more controlled by their environment, there will be less of this problem of discipline, mayhem and violence in the schools. Then there is the problem, as Sen. Prof. Deosaran said, of the lack of linkage between the schools, industry, university, technical institutes, specialist schools for sport, music and vocational and technical training. That sort of system must be set up and this is what the revolution in education under the UNC was moving towards. [Desk thumping] We understand that you cannot haul these children through a system and expect everybody to come out with five O levels and Maths and English. It is not like that. All the children are not the same.

4.00 p.m

Some of them have different aptitudes, and you have to understand what their aptitudes are from very early and help them to grow and develop in their own aptitudes. If you understand these issues, you will know what to do. Since they do not know what to do and they stood there and cried out: What is a Government to do! I am going to tell them what to do.

Firstly, you have to promote a genuine partnership for development with the people of the country; not these fake consultations—a big all-inclusive party where everybody go and eat and drink and a good time was had by all. That is not what consultation is about!

Secondly, you have to listen to the citizens in the communities who have valid inputs into their process. You have to devolve power to the local government
bodies, and entrench the rights and responsibilities of local government in the Constitution. Let the voice of the people be heard in their own development. That is what they have to do!

Mr. Vice-President, it is not as if people are sitting and waiting for all the answers to come from Cabinet and central government. There are intellectuals in these communities; real community leaders who have developed programmes and plans and so forth. Persons who work in their communities tirelessly day and night and promote community development do not get recognition. These documents have been submitted to the Prime Minister, and they never got to speak to the Prime Minister about the plans for their development. I am talking about a document called Cedros Peninsula United and Chatham Cap-De-Ville Environmental Protection Group; Elements of the Development Plan for Cedros Peninsula.

Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Prof Ramchand was just talking about global warming and what Holland is doing to preempt that situation—making plans and being proactive. We have the same problem here. We have a rising sea level in Cedros; we have serious erosion problems on the coast there. What are we doing?

It says here and I quote:

Any development strategy of the Cedros peninsula must insist on ensuring that the land mass that constitutes the peninsula and inhabited by more than 15,000 people does not go undersea.

They understand what the problem is. It continues:

Given the rapid erosion all around this land mass, especially since the establishment of the LNG in Point Fortin and the continuing land reclamation for its further expansion, given the global challenge of climate change which Prince Charles in his recent visit to Washington pronounced the greatest challenge facing humankind today. The people of the Cedros peninsula insist that government must put in place measures to protect all our coasts but urgently and especially the Cedros peninsula, most vulnerable of all because of its small land mass. The peninsula is at certain points less than three miles across.

These are the issues that they are facing; serious issues of survival. They have recommendations with respect to fisheries, tourism and agriculture. They have recommendations for a Cedros university campus and environmental park and a technology centre. People have sat and thought about the environment; thought about what is necessary. They have sat with their groups in their communities and they understand what is necessary.
Mr. Vice-President, why is this Government not listening to them? Why is this Government ignoring all the cries, pleas and exhortations of the people of the country? And then they come here and say: What is the Government to do? After they have spent the money. Why did they not come and ask that question before they spend $15 billion in the social sector or before they spend $162 billion? Come and ask us what to do! Do not spend all the money and then come and ask us what to do! [Desk thumping] This is a wrong side, upside down and back to front government. [Desk thumping] What they should do first they are doing it last and vice versa.

This budget indicates on page 11 and I quote:

“Some of the other challenges that we are currently addressing include the transportation bottlenecks; expanding the road network, port congestion; the resuscitation of the domestic agricultural sector; and the provision of water for all.”

Mr. Vice-President, this is a euphemism for saying they have not solved these problems. So, they are saying this is a challenge that they are currently addressing.

Before I move on to understand this euphemism, one of the things I want to alert this population about—what they are saying here, “that each of these areas will be addressed when the plans for fiscal year 2008 and beyond are outlined.” What are they talking about? A general election is due in this country in 2007. Why is the Prime Minister in an official policy document talking about “when he outlines plans for 2008 and beyond?” This is not the only place that the alarm bells go off.

At the introduction of the budget—I would like to read it and I would like the people of Trinidad and Tobago to understand what they make of this, because to me this is very alarming—it says:

“Mr. Speaker, as we intend to be in Government for the next five years, I also propose to couch the budget for fiscal year 2008 in the context of a longer term plan, which in essence represents yet another phase in our journey towards Vision 2020.”

In addition, he says it a second time in a slightly more sinister context. Hear how he says it in the more sinister context. No, the second time is what I just outlined when he says that they will address these problems in fiscal year 2008 and beyond, and he says it a third time. He says:
"As we intend to be in government for many years to come, our budget for fiscal year 2008 is couched within a medium term framework that represents the second five-year span on our longer term journey. It is certainly not an election budget, as some of our critics anticipate…the welfare of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago is too important to be left to the vagaries of electoral politics."

The fascist is saying that the welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is too important to be left to the vagaries of electoral politics. You know, I grew up with my grandmother, and nobody has to read and spell for me.

Mr. Vice-President, what this is saying here is that electoral politics is soon going to be a thing of the past. If you are saying that the welfare of the citizens are too important to be left to the vagaries of electoral politics, you are saying that you are going to phase out electoral politics, because it is in the interest of the “welfare” of the citizens—you know what is the welfare of the people; you are God. Somebody died and left you and told you that you are God. So, you are there, and you will determine what is the welfare of the citizens and, therefore, you do not need electoral politics to promote the welfare of citizens. This is what this statement is saying.

You know, we laugh and grin when people say things like this. Do you know how we will end up? We have massacres; we have SAUTT and gunships. At the same time he is saying that he is not making any joke. They have these billion dollar gunships being bought; they have a security force under their personal control; and there is an army man in charge of the police. Where are we heading under this administration? If the people of this country do not stop criticizing personalities and engaging in “kuchos” and get together to get this fascist administration out of office—he is saying here that he will be in office for the next umpteen years “seeing about the welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.” [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, I want to move on to one of the issues that were raised with respect to road building and the challenges and so forth. Although the budget identified the challenges of transport and road building and so forth, it curiously did not say anything about the Government’s plans for the quarry industry, which is central and critical to all the bottlenecks and the problems with aggregate that we have been experiencing over the last few years.

We have a Quarry Policy White Paper for Trinidad and Tobago before us and it says under “Current Trends in the Industry”:
“During 2004, there was an increased demand for quarry materials in the local construction sector which resulted in a significant increase in quarrying activities and a spate of illegal quarrying.”

That is another euphemism for all the people they gave quarries to in exchange for all the thuggery and so forth. It continues:

“The lack of comprehensive legal arrangements became more obvious and steps were immediately taken by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to address the situation.”

Mr. Vice-President, how is this situation being addressed? What has happened is that there has been a massive construction boom, and this economy has been thrown into a tailspin with ordinary people now having to pay exorbitant prices for aggregate and so forth.

I want to quote an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* dated Thursday, March 30, 2006 by Sandra Chouthi entitled “An aggregate shortage Construction sector facing crisis” and I quote:

“An acute but predictable shortage of local aggregate, an essential ingredient in concrete, has thrown T&T’s construction sector into crisis mode with factories closing down, building prices heading sky-high and aggregate being imported from as far away as Canada.

As well, the shortage of aggregate, which is produced in the nation’s quarries, threatens to sink the billion dollar highrise makeover of the capital city.

It is already having a negative impact on Bestcrete, the nation’s largest supplier of concrete blocks.

Bestcrete, an Ansa McAl subsidiary, shut down its plant last Wednesday, causing the company to send home all of the casual labourers in its 150-number workforce.

On Friday, Bestcrete’s managing director, Nicholas Mouttet, told the Business Guardian that the concrete block producer had been forced to close down because it had run out of aggregate.”

Mr. Vice-President, the article goes on:

“The unavailability of local aggregate has caused Bestcrete, which produces 120,000 concrete blocks per day, to source aggregate from the Caribbean at prices that are more expensive than the available local aggregate.”
What was the Government’s response? The Government’s response on July 19, 2007—after all the hullabaloo, the problems and the hardships felt by ordinary people who needed to build houses and so forth—they threw the whole country into a tailspin—was: “PM vows to battle construction cartel”:

PM Manning’s administration has launched a war on what he has identified as a cartel of profiteers in the supply side of the local industry.

Manning asserted that the Government is now seeking the help of foreign construction sector companies operating in Trinidad and Tobago to increase the supply of construction materials as they try to expand the domestic capacity.

Manning held discussion at Whitehall on Tuesday with Kwan Foh Kwai who is the Managing Director of a Malaysian based Sunway the main contractor on the Legal Affairs Tower project, in seeking assistance in provision of construction materials.

Mr. Vice-President, the reality is that the globalization tsunami has hit the construction industry. The whole question of cartel and so forth is just a red herring. The reality is that because this Government has sat back passively, and just accepted the whole WTO globalization process and nobody made a whimper—even some elements of the business community thought that it was the best thing since sliced bread, because they were salivating over the possibilities of entering markets; $3 billion Chinese market and the whole Latin America market and so forth to export ice cream and chocolate and so on, but they did not realize that those people were planning for us.

They are coming down here to exploit our resources; to find jobs for their people and so forth. They do not realize it is a two-way street. So what has happened is that when reality hits home now, everybody is running for cover and talking about levelling the playing field.

Mr. Vice-President, let me get back to the issue; the response to the Prime Minister’s announcement about this cartel.

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.
4.15 p.m.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Mr. Vice-President, I have a press release here that was issued by Ramdeo (Dan) Persad of the Quarry Association of Trinidad and Tobago, after the Prime Minster’s announcement of this so-called cartel, and what he says here is very revealing and shows that it was pure ineptitude, incompetence and maybe something more on the part of the Government, in not developing the quarry industry here, because you know they knew very well that these international firms want to come in here and involve themselves in quarrying and production of construction materials and so on, apparently in partnership with the government; this Malaysian firm. It is called “taking in front before in front take yuh.”

You know you have something that you want to bring in, so you jump and you accuse the local quarry industry of all kinds of sins. But what this document is saying, basically, is that in spite of the policy document that we have before us, where the Government had said that they are committed to the allocation of quarry lands to adequately meet the industry demands for aggregate and so on and formulation of a policy and they said that they would bring the Quarries Act to Parliament and they would set up the quarries authority and they would deal with issues of incentives, environment and conservation—“ol’ talk”; they have not done anything; their term is over and they have not done anything like that.

But what they did not do, according to the Quarry Association, was to open the quarries in good time so that this acute shortage of aggregate would not have occurred. It says here in July 2005, they finally decided to open some quarry lands but two years later none of the 66 per cent of the lands that they have given out had commenced operation. They said that the Cumaca Quarry has a capacity to produce 1,000 cubic yards a day or 20,000 cubic yards a month, but only in May 2006, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries invited operations for the quarry with the closing date for submission of bids being June 2006. In December 2006, the quarry was awarded, but again because of the bureaucracy involving the operations it had not yet been initiated.

“To summarize, had licenses have been awarded to the following quarries, the country could have benefited from 8,000 cubic yards a day of processed aggregate being made available at the local market (and they mentioned which blocks they are talking about) Block 5, Tapana, 3,000 cubic yards a day; National Quarry Companies Scott’s Quarry, 3,000 cubic yards a day; Cumaca quarry, 1,000 cubic yards a day. They said production from these quarries
could probably have made up 60 per cent of the current deficit in demand. The blame for this unacceptable situation must be placed fairly on the shoulders of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the EMA.”

The contractors have denied any question of cartel and they have said that it is the unnecessary delay on the part of the Government to give out contracts and so on that leads to the exacerbatation of the shortage of aggregates. It is obvious that the globalization issue is going to hit the local quarry industry very hard because in fact, this policy document says on page 4.16, under International Trade in Quarry Materials and I quote:

“An open market policy will prevail and International trade in quarry resources will be consistent with any international trade agreements or treaties which may be assented to by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (e.g., CSME, FTAA, WTO, etc.).”

That is to say, the quarrying industry now is under globalization; that the Malaysian firm is quite free to come in here and bid for quarry lands and so on, to set up their operations here. The Government is quite happy with that arrangement and they really have no concern for the question of local operators.

The local quarry operators have been asking for policy documents and asking for Government’s position. This is Government’s position: you are out, international big business is in.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: Squeeze out the local people.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Squeeze out the local people. But while the Government builds a wall of delay and indifference to block out the local contractors, the Great Wall of China had not stopped the Chinese from moving South and that monster of globalization which was hailed by all the private sector people as the best thing, as I said before, they do not understand that it works both ways. So, we have a situation here where this Government is very open to this process,

I just want to add that I had the privilege of participating in a seminar organized by NUGFW in 2004 on FTA and globalization and I spoke of these issues; I spoke out against the issue of globalization and the problems and a Government representative at that same conference, Ms. Diane Seukeran, Minister of State in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, stridently affirmed that globalization process was inevitable and it presented great opportunities and we just have to live with it. So, that is Government policy from since that time.
Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: No protection.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: No protection for local businesses.

So, Mr. Vice-President, hand in hand with the whole question of the Malaysians and so on, coming in to develop the quarry industry here, you have the issue of the Chinese. And this warning flag was raised in Barbados by the Barbados Contractors Association and they have serious problems there and they made reference to, not just Barbados but the Caribbean. I just want to read very quickly some of the issues that they have raised. They had said:

“China State Construction & Engineering Company, based in Beijing is a PRC owned company. It and its subsidiaries are engaged in massive Projects…”

all over the Caribbean.

“It has offices in several countries where its sole objective is to source construction Projects. China became a member of the World Bank in order to have access to Projects funded by the World Bank. Similarly it sought and got membership to the Caribbean Development Bank. However, … Projects funded by both the above institutions were only open to Private Sector companies.”

but they managed to use their leverage as a huge country to get access to these concessions.

It goes on to say here that there are several companies now operating in the region and the problem is that these Chinese companies are bringing in, whenever they get a World Bank contract or CDB, they are bringing in their own workers; they are bringing in their own construction materials. There is an incident here in Nevis, where the Nevis government had refused to provide them with 50 work permits, but because they needed the schools urgently, they were forced to accede to their request and a total of two Nevisians were employed on that project for its entire duration.

So, what they are saying here is that as a result of that, these companies are winning the majority of CDB funded contracts as they always price the contracts on the basis of using Chinese labour and buying building material from Chinese companies in China. It has gotten now so bad that none of the Caribbean indigenous contractors wish to tender for any of the CDB funded projects if the Chinese are included.
The person who wrote this article, Leon, goes on to say:

“In Barbados foreign contractors are nothing new, but they have had projects that have used foreign contractors, but the subcontractors and the labour were local and regional.”

And that is the difference now with the Chinese companies. They are saying that:

“The local newspapers in Barbados have carried allegations that they do not pay PAYE, NIS, Corporation tax and the Barbadians want to know if that is true. They are saying that they must get a level playing field.”

That is globalization; that is what it is about; that is the hard facts. So, when we are looking at markets in Latin America, China and India, that is what the bigger players are going to come here and do in our territories.

Mr. Vice-President, I have not been able get into my pet topic, agriculture, but Sen. Cropper did a marvelous job in outlining the problems with respect to land use and with respect to this Government’s policy to watershed areas and so on. The major point I would like to make is that this budget spoke to the question of these huge farms; these 100-acre farms. The truth is that the globalization tsunami has also struck agriculture with full force.

This establishment of large farms in this country has nothing to do with this Government’s “oil to soil” policy and it has nothing to do with this government having any change of heart with respect to the development of the agricultural sector. What is happening, is that international agri-business enterprises are obviously eyeing our arable soils and our fertile lands and they are saying, you know what, we could come nearer to the source of the produce; we could set up where there is cheaper labour and so on and we will process all these products and sell them on the international market at cheaper prices, because the name of the game is competition.

So, everybody is positioning themselves to be as competitive as possible. So when you outsource your business and you bring it closer to the source of supplies, in a country where there is very little regulation, the Government welcomes you with open arms; they say they are going to put infrastructure to the farm gate, which they have not done for the local farmers and the local farmers in La Horquetta, Wallerfield and Maloney have been crying out for years for irrigation facilities, infrastructure, access roads, marketing support systems and so on; nothing has been forthcoming, but all of a sudden Mr. Jarrette Narine gets very active and is saying that “priority has been given to the introduction of new and advanced technology and to improving the quality of human capital employed in the sector.”
It is because the foreigners are coming; the foreigners are coming so everybody gets busy. This plan would effectively wipe out the local agricultural sector; big business will take over and we will be more than ever at the mercy of the foreigners, as Sen. Prof. Ramchand has said.

I thank you for listening to me, Mr. Vice-President.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, we are going to take the tea break now and return at 5.00 p.m. The Senate will now be suspended for tea.

**4.30 p.m.: Sitting suspended.**

**5.00 p.m.: Sitting resumed.**

**The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams):** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. Mr. Vice-President, since we started this debate, it seemed to me I had to change my content more than once to accommodate the information that has been passed before me, and this evening I think it is the final version of it, because I found there were things I needed to attend to that came up from some of the contributors. I am sorry my colleagues Sen. Wade Mark and Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan are not here, but I really wanted to make a comment on Sen. Mark’s contribution on the first day. I suppose Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh could relate it to him.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** Because I found for some reason there was a sense of desperation coming through; very, very desperate. [Desk thumping] I have never seen him like that. And I sat all evening trying to find out where he was going and as he spoke and he continued to speak, his voice was just going and I noticed that he was just trying to pull things from everywhere to do some sort of mudslinging, which is not normally his style but it was so rapid—and it is a sign of the times, I wanted to say [Desk thumping] and certainly that was it.

It did not really come over like Sen. Mark making a contribution which he prepared. And I sometimes wonder whether we remember that the national community is looking—and I would give you a word of advice. The children are listening and if you really want to sell yourself for an election, rather than try to accuse the opposite side of doing certain things, better you tell them what are your plans; what will happen afterwards. To me, I think that is what we did when we
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sat on that side [Opposition] and I remember sitting on that side. Sen. Montano was there and some of the others and every week I took time to research the topic so well, that when I made that contribution, those on this side used to applaud it; and I remember somebody saying “you should be on this side.” I think that is what made people recognize, yes that is an alternative, they know what they are doing, therefore, take a word of advice, what you are doing would not sell.

Again, I heard people talking about taking you to the Privileges Committee and all that kind of thing. Sometimes we just cross the line, I had that with me in this Parliament with Sen. Wade Mark; crossed the line totally and if it was not for Mr. Larry Howai of the First Citizens Bank—I will always be grateful to him—who came forward early in the day and said that statement was not true, by now a lot of people would be blaming me. Luckily, he got away from the Privileges Committee, much to my dismay, I do not know how it happened.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** I was part of it.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** Yes, you were part of it. But clearly, it was the most damaging statement to make about anybody and it continues. I want to say as long as that continues here and people are allowed to get away with it, they will continue to make damaging statements like that.

I also wanted to speak to those on the other side, especially the Front Bench. I am a community worker, work out there with people, and I feel sometimes in here, we do more than humble the people, their self-esteem, we try to pull it down. Do you know how we do it? By trying to criticize them.

So, you will hear CEPEP workers—you damage them—waste of time; handout; make work; they stand up by the side of the road; lazy; environmentalists they are talking about. Before you give them some hope and some dignity in the work, we sit here and we just knock them apart; we do the same thing with the URP workers. And when it is near election and the budget comes, you turn around and say, they deserve what they are getting; they deserve to get more; ensure that they get it before the election.

Therefore it tells you that you are not sincere about those people because you cannot continue to damage people. I sat and I listened to Sen. Anthony Sammy here as he talked about the people in Sea Lots. They will listen and they listened because they all have televisions, all of them. And when I heard him talk about them, almost as if they are living in squalor and they have to come through all this
mud and wash their feet up to the knee and all these things; how we have those people in Sea Lots, I wanted to tell him, he never went to Sea Lots [Desk thumping] and you cannot continue to say that about people there, they are human beings.

They go to school; they go to the colleges; they go to the university, they live, they have equipment; their house is old, it might not be as well as yours, but they are very neat and tidy and beautifully decorated. Go down in those houses and see them. The calypsonian Pink Panther will tell you about those people. Go down and you will see how they live and do not stay in this Parliament and continue to do that. Part of my responsibility is to give those people hope and that is what we do. You cannot continue all the time to pull them down.

I really feel upset when I hear it. I listened to Sen. Cropper and she asked to be careful when we have to do things about displaced persons at homes and she asked for people to be treated with dignity. All I could ask on behalf of those people, is to be treated with dignity. And something that is worse, some of your leaders, some of the people you are going to engage for this election live there, they live in dignity. Some of the same people that you are going to engage. I just really feel that I am tired of sitting here and hear you embarrass people all over this country because of the work they do. Good work; look at this country; go down the road and look at the environment; everybody is talking about the environmentalists and landscaping people. They are there. Look at the URP, look at the work that has been done, but give them hope, say things to make them feel good about themselves. Thank God some of them do not take you all on at all. They strut out there and look very well. I know about them, I work there.

Let me just tell you, you are talking about the Beetham, Sea Lots, I just asked my staff to pull out some of the things there. We went down there because we had just built a new basketball court for them. You could have a look at it, beautiful; a multi-purpose basketball court. [Photographs waved] We opened it in style and if you listened to them speak, you could not believe it. The education system in this country had to be good because they were able to tell you exactly what they wanted; how they wanted it—it looks good and everything. The press was there with them.

St. Joseph Road Community Centre is another one that we did, all this is in the area, right in this area up here. Gonzalez Community Centre, brand new. Let me tell you something about these community centres. Where you have one storey, we have a computer room, we have teaching kitchen, we have new modern
stages because we are working on the performing arts, well designed with beautiful light, we have gymnasium and everything.

The two storeys all with elevators. So, the one in Beetham that we are putting up now, there is going to be an elevator because we talked about persons with disabilities and whatnot, we are catering for them. Anytime you see a new community centre going up—and there are many around the country—elevators, modern centres. We have seven of them going up in this Beetham, Sea Lots, Laventille area at the moment. Straker Village, I have them all here. Trou Macaque, I brought the pictures because they may think I am just talking out my head. My people sent them for me. Never Dirty, look at all the centres here; look at this one [Photograph of centre shown] looking almost like Mount Irvine Hotel, all of them. Seven of them, the best, well designed and that is what we are putting in the areas.

Then we have, not only the physical infrastructure, we have the high school in that area. We gave them five computers in that area so that they have computers in the school. It is a primary school now, that is one of the areas, so the community could now use that. At the Morris Marshall Foundation, we set them up with a community library; we have been doing counselling with them. Chinapoo Pre-school, we know that there are pre-schools being built by the Ministry of Education, but we have been doing counselling with them. St. Martin’s Welfare, I want to tell you the work that we have been doing with them, all of this through the Community Development Fund. The Peace Work Community Project where they are doing pan literacy, and then we have a new landscaping company, the Will Organization. We gave them basic training under Ms. Wendy Lue Yuen.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Wendy Lue Yuen.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** From UWI. She came in to the project; she was one of the tutors in the project; we had a graduation for approximately 35 or 45 of them at City Hall. We set up landscaping companies; we gave them vehicles to take their things around—I have it all written down here—from the Sea Lots area, the same area that is turning around now. Then you have the Beetham Gardens and that name just did not come there, they called it Gardens because they love their place, they love where they are.

We ran queen shows in there, Phase I, Phase II, Phase III; it is a queen contest in which they do talent as one of the areas for judging, they do a little platform where they do a little public speaking, things to develop them. My community
development officers worked with those queens from the area, so at the end of the day they have a product that they can sell; well developed in all ways and well attended.

This year they told me they cannot have it because they are working on the Beetham Community Centre. I said, “No, we are going to City Hall”, because I know there is a purpose, there is a finish in it for them; it keeps the community together and I said no, City Hall. So they are kind of surprised to know that they have to move to City Hall. I could give you a list of all the things that we have been doing in the area and I want to tell you, we respect them and they respect themselves. They are bright, they are educated, so do not think that everybody you see in those areas or whatever you see in those areas—they are together.

Yes, they have problems like any other community and that is why we are here. I just want to say that because I was a little bit disappointed that we continue to say this all the time about those areas and I hope that people will stop doing that now because we need to move on. When there are any types of festival or anything at all, we are always able to go into those areas to do it.

I want to just tell you, that the East Port of Spain, that company is now working in that whole area, redesigning, as you would say, the area. They are coming up with a plan to redesign it and while that is going on, we are working on it. I was surprised to tell you, because you have these Beverly Heights where they are building those new homes and it is this same set of persons there and when we left, we left those in Laventille right out there at John John. Remember the John John Towers football which Jack Warner wanted to use as a hotel? Do not forget it because he felt that was too good for those people—do not forget it—and we said no, they must live there and they are there. [Desk thumping] So when you are crying them down, think about it.

We built it; they were the best. It is true that the Arangue Villas went elsewhere to another class, you got away with that one, but that was built for the people of the area, the people of the area inherited it at a rate they can pay. I just wanted to remind you and your colleagues that sometimes you are hurting people by the way you speak about them in this Parliament and as I have said before, every last one of them is with a television on.

I remember in closing, just after you started to adopt the CEPEP workers, they came to do the church opposite me and I spoke to one of the young ladies and I said, “How you feel about it?” She started to laugh and she said, “They did not bother with us all the time, Ms. Williams, and now they want us.” Just that little
thing tells me that they knew what was going on. As Mr. Braithwaite said on Radio Shakti the other day, I think he was quipping when he said that those programmes were the children of the Prime Minister and he said when you want to be a godfather, you must be invited to be godfather, you just cannot come in as a godfather and take them away. I understood what he meant and seriously, in this place we condemn too much.

They condemn us on this side, but you are condemning people out there and I only ask that you respect all the people. My job is to go out there—and I was happy to hear Sen. Dr. Kernahan today, talking about community leaders because in this Parliament that is a bad word. That is a word this is assigned to be—and all the people that we see out there, community leaders is a bad word, but I was glad that she talked about them because we are doing very well, working with the same community leaders that you despised, you would be surprised to see how many of them are out there doing very well now. After you get into the conference and you started working with them, doing a lot of psychological work with them, doing a lot of counselling with them, having them looking forward and I am happy to stand here at this time and say there has been some measure of success.

5.15 p.m.

In fact, a lot of them were able to join the HYPE programme, one of the programmes from Sen. Abdul-Hamid’s Ministry, and are doing work driving heavy equipment. We sent them down there and they did very well. There were a lot of things to use their energies, so they have done extremely well. So, please, respect them as we go along.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to go back to a quotation from a former United Nations (UN) Secretary General, Kofi Annan. He said:

"We thrive and survive on a planet earth as a single human family. One of our main responsibilities is to leave to successor generations a sustainable future."

That is what we are trying to do. The whole thing about the single human family, we try to address from the Ministry. In our Ministry that has been the centrepiece of the work which we do. Over the years we have tried to promote unity and cohesion in Trinidad and Tobago, with an eye firmly fixed on our collective future.

Last Saturday the Convention we had was themed "Discussing the Future". I heard somebody say today that we were talking about the future. You must talk about the future, because we have a vision; that is, Vision 2020. That is talking
about the future. I saw an editorial today that tried to sidestep what we were doing and it felt that our aim in the Convention was not to discuss the future, it was to do something else. Clearly, anyone would tell you that we were discussing our collective future. [*Desk thumping*]

We are one of the social sector ministries, and that is important to us. This is a time of plenty, as some people will say. There is a consensus that a lot is going on. It is surprising that we are being criticized for erecting mansions and tall buildings, but this afternoon I also heard us being criticized for spending $15 billion on the social sector.

In the midst of all of it, what is happening? Even though there is a paradox; there is this prosperity, but we have to look for everyone; none should be left behind. There is a need at all times for investing, putting money into the social sector. If we do not, we will leave some of our people behind.

When you criticize Government's assistance to those less fortunate persons to bring them into the mainstream, because in development we want everybody, you call it handouts; again to make people feel badly; again to make those who are at this time in need of that grant, as the case may be, that facilitation, that financial need or training from the State, you call it handouts. That hurts; they are not handouts. We have a responsibility to ensure that everyone comes into that development. It is national development, so we need all.

There are some who are not there and your taxpayers' money will help to put people there. That is part of the work that we have to do. Therefore our thrust, our purpose, our mission, has been to support all dimensions of national development and to imbue them with the power of the human spirit. We do it through three divisions: the Gender Affairs Division; the Community Development Division and the Culture Division. Then we have our statutory bodies: the National Carnival Commission; Naparima Bowl; Queen's Hall and the Planning and Implementation Unit, which is a kind of incubator for the nursery programmes. We use all of them. Some people probably think that all those things seem to be disjointed. I want to look at it a bit to give you that kind of confidence that we know what we are doing.

Arising out of the Vision 2020 as a framework for transforming Trinidad and Tobago to developed country status, we at the Ministry have taken to heart the theme, "We Transform Lives". You must have seen us talking about it. When we say that we transform lives, we mean transform lives as a whole. While the task may seem monumental, we began with the notion that the starting point for a better world is the belief that it is possible.
We have continued the journey step by step, working with all our people, all our communities, our stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), driven by the belief—and I will quote Mother Teresa:

"There are no such things as great deeds, only small ones done with great hands."

We have a band of people; all our stakeholders. I will go on a little later to compliment and thank all of them for the work they have done. In this sense, the work of the Ministry and the Government is powerfully transformational. It has required that we critically examine ourselves and address the needs of all sectors, all communities, all families, the neighbourhood and the nation as a whole.

I am sure you know this quotation:

"To survive in the world we have transformed, we must learn to think in a new way. As never before, the future of each depends on the good of all. We must learn to think in a new way."

That is what we are not getting in here; a change in the thinking, Sen. Dr. Gopessingh. Yes, we have to get out of the box. We have to think in a new way if we really need to transform. We cannot go on the same way. When people try to think or move in a new direction and you just move along the line, you get criticism for it, because that is not the standard way. If you really want transformation, you have got to think in a new way. Our way has been and continues to be attending to the future of each and the good of all.

I want us to look at that as a backdrop for what we are going to put in this afternoon. I want you to fit what I have to say very quickly into the five pillars. Sometimes I need to say them so we could remember what they are: developing innovative people; nurturing a caring society; growing effectively; enabling competitive business; and investing in sound infrastructure and environments.

How do we do it? If you have a vision you must have a plan, because a vision without a plan is just a dream and a plan without a vision is just drudgery. A vision with a plan can change the world. We have the vision and we have the plan. We intend to use that vision and that plan to transform lives and change the world. I want to look at the approach we have used very quickly.

The approach we have used to move that theme through is to give hope to our stakeholders. Who are our stakeholders in the Ministry? The men, women, artistes, cultural practitioners, community leaders, celebrants of the festivals, HIV
sufferers, female heads of households; all those are our stakeholders. We do what we do by giving hope to the stakeholders. I hope I have the chance to show how we do it. Secondly, we do what we do through respectful partnership; we partner with persons to do this work.

Last week I was at the Arthur Lok Jack School of Business where there was a graduation of community leaders sponsored by the School of Business and I think Bhp Billiton. I was the person doing the feature address as the person responsible for community development. I quoted for them this quote from Margaret Meade:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

I say that to all the stakeholders that we have working with us; however small they are. Do you know how many groups we have in this country; persons coming together, coming to the Ministry, but not for handouts? They want to do it, but they want some help to facilitate what they want to do. We are happy to work with them, because we cannot do it. Some people just got together in groups and registered. We help them technically and financially; we work along with them to see that they are sincere in what they are doing. They want to help, because they feel they can do something to help change this world.

When we saw those community leaders who graduated at the Arthur Lok Jack School of Business, they felt good about themselves going there; their self-esteem went up. They had a nice little graduation for them. They came from Mayaro, Guayaguayare and somewhere else out in the East. I had to compliment Dr. Balgobin for that vision of having it there. It was similar to when we did our Defining Masculine Excellence Programme, we took our people to the university to do the work, because they wanted to do that.

We did this through two approaches; one, we showed leadership. There was Government leadership and stakeholder partnership. Our government leadership we did through consultation; we had a lot of consultation. We did it for the gender policy, which I will speak to quickly; the cultural policy, even on Carnival. At the end we had a consultation on Carnival; that was one of the ways we led. We did it by engagement and we gave them policy direction. We led through funding. I have a whole list of how we did it—and you are quite aware of how much funding we do—and we did oversight, which is monitoring and evaluating.

If at any time somebody said this morning that a review or evaluation had some negatives in it, I was not sure if it was true, but even if it was, we monitor
and we evaluate. That is what tells you where you need to strengthen. Evaluation is not necessarily criticism; it becomes that way if after getting an evaluation, you do not change your direction or change how you do things. Therefore, any organization or any programme that you cannot do an evaluation on, something is wrong. If when you read an evaluation and it has something in it that you probably might say is negative, I say that it is very positive, because by seeing it you know in which direction to go.

I could not tell whether it was a true evaluation or not. That was not important to me, but we do evaluate. Therefore, when we give to our stakeholders partnerships, we look at the contracts we give to them, we see how they work, we ensure that they are accountable and that at the end of it there is growth in the communities. All of that we have to do as part of the way in which we intend to deliver.

From our Community Development Division we wanted to foster sustainable communities. The role of the community in the evolution of the nation from Independence to now, cannot be understated. It was out of the ideas and involvement of the people in communities and programmes that it has been developed and modified over the years. People in the communities have ideas. They are rich, and we give them that opportunity to bring their ideas forward. Some of the programmes we have came from the people within the community.

Therefore, as we move towards the goal of developed country status, we must continue to build on the foundations which we have inherited, while we must accommodate new ideas. When we come to a debate like this, we do hope that even our colleagues in the Parliament will give us new ideas; that is so important; not just the criticisms or what you are doing wrong. If you are thinking about national development, it is important for you to contribute by giving us new ideas. I want us to look at some of the things we have done in some areas, particularly in the Gender Affairs Division.

I want to use the Gender Affairs Division, because I think it is so important for us to do it. Just today I saw a flyer that was going around which said:

"The Danger of the Gender Policy and Action Plan"

It is from the Emmanuel Community, Rosalino Street, Woodbrook. I remember that the last time we put out the Gender Policy, we were faced with something like that, and then it was withdrawn by persons in the Cabinet. We went back to the drawing board and we have brought it forward again. We worked for almost a
year on it, and again this flyer is out there. I will like you all to get a copy of it. Only the first page that was sent to me, but it is so negative and all the terminology is so wrong, because people do not understand what it means.

Let me just tell you very quickly some of the achievements of the Gender Affairs Division. At the moment we have the Gender Policy before Cabinet. It is going to come before the Parliament and then for discussion. It is finished, as far as we are concerned. The draft is there; it needs national discussion now and I hope we will all participate in it, because it affects all of us.

What are some of the key policy measures proposed in it? Listen to what they are, before you get up and say you do not know: Evaluation of existing labour laws to ensure they promote gender equity and remove barriers to the equitable participation of men and women. We have been trying that. That is why I have the non-traditional skills programme in the Ministry, because at some time there were those barriers and they could not go into certain areas. [Desk thumping] If this is so, we do not need the non-traditional programmes again. As we go through we will have that equitable participation.

5.30 p.m.

The second key example is the provision of gender equality at all worksites mandating gender awareness in the provision of adequate occupational health and safety, sanitary and changing room facilities for men and women. That is a gender policy, and nothing is wrong with that because if we are now training them—and I want to compliment the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme (MuST) and HYPE—because when I look at the figures I am seeing almost equal numbers of male and female in the programmes now, but at the end of it all the policy is saying you who are now putting up worksites must have facilities to accommodate both male and female.

Institutional arrangements which facilitate the balancing of men and women, private and public gender role facilities such as increased access to child care facilities including work-based models, home-based centres and after school clubs. The budget took care of that early enough, there is that $500,000 which is there and, therefore, we are hoping that the business community will respond. The Gender Affairs Division has now prepared a documentation which it will circulate to advise and they are willing, they have taken on something into the division so there can be consultation as to what is needed in the setting up of these centres. We are not leaving them to chance.
The gender policy is an advanced step. We have been talking about it and I am so glad we have been talking about these things because there are certain things in the policy I have already seen happening and this is one of those. Now there is that $500,000 which is really a good sum to help set up proper facilities and to have your tutors trained and all those things. It is for male and female at the job sites and I am hoping that through Government and the ministries, we will be the leaders in setting up some of those. I think the Attorney General had his own set up before and he is very proud and all the others should have it.

We have already done that with all the programmes in the ministry. We have day care centres there so the mothers bring their children. Wherever the programmes are, we have day care centres there. We have to ensure that all the other programmes outside the ministry will have that accommodation so we can have equitable participation in the programme.

Then we have advancement of mechanisms that support increased food production and a better quality of life for men and women in agriculture in rural areas giving recognition to their different and complementary roles in the agricultural forum. I am quite sure they are happy about that, we are doing training and we are going to be working with the others to get that kind of support because the one that was giving support for agriculture is one of the areas we felt was left out, but with increased funding to the ADB we are going to be able to help them. Even when we have those young people going into agriculture, we are ensuring that they have all the facilities there. We are supporting the rural women and all the areas in food production.

Provision of gender awareness facilities within public and private buildings is coming with the gender policy with defined specifications equipped for the changing of babies providing areas where nursing mothers can feed babies, safely extract and store breast milk and attend to the needs of young people in public and private buildings. That is another area at which we are looking, where you can take your baby, change the nappy and breastfeed. That is important because we are talking about equitable participation. So you are out there in a public building and it should have those facilities. If it does not, you would not be able to do what you have to because you have to think about the baby and you cannot take the baby around.

Identification of the differential issues affecting boys and girls within the education system with particular emphasis on drop-outs and the performance rate of boys and the creation of mechanisms to address these issues.
Promotion of mechanisms to equitably educate and train men and women boys and girls in rural and underprivileged communities, utilizing distance learning and mobile facilities which include exposure to information technology. I remember some time ago Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie talked about the mobile facility which she used to have and it is no longer there. I think the YTEPP has prepared themselves with a bus that goes to different rural communities and the policy is saying that we cannot leave anybody out and whatever we do we must get it there.

We are trying to build as many community centres as we can now, we are going to build 100, but we have been able to touch on just 22 because the same problems that the police stations are experiencing in building, we are experiencing the same with these community centres. Even though it was said to give to small contractors, they become very big too, because they are doing more jobs and several other jobs and it is difficult to get them to finish at a specific time. So there is a difficulty there so we will have to adopt the method of the police stations and then hand them out in bulk. It would have been so nice if the community contractor could work on them, but that is not working out. We need to get on with it, so probably we would have to use some other method.

Introduction of more family-friendly hospital practices, increased involvement of fathers in prenatal birthing and post-natal activities, female-friendly birthing for students, and parents ability to stay overnight with children who are ill and expansion of male support initiatives including parental training and favourable recasting of men’s role in society and their ability to develop network taught within the communities and the workplace. Those are some of the things within the gender policy and, therefore, things that we welcome. Anybody who talks about Vision 2020, these are things that we need right away and these are some of the things that are in there.

In the ministry we also have some public sensitization and education on gender development and after reading this poster that was sent out—[Senator holds up paper] I think our education programme has not fulfilled it, because some of the things I am reading about in this poster we have gone far beyond it, it means we have to go into heavier education programmes so people would appreciate what we are talking about.

We work with schools, the security forces, Government ministries, we have worked with CBOs, I think we now have to go to the Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and try to see if we can work with them in education and what this whole
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[SEN. THE HON. J. YUILLE-WILLIAMS]

gender policy is about. Some people just do not understand gender, so whenever you are doing anything whether it is in the schools or the workplace we have to prepare programmes recognizing male and female.

This thing tells you that gender mainstreaming is an attempt to rearrange the truth to fit an ideology and to put forward a new social construct and learn how to become—it is nothing like that. The entire article is flawed in every way and this is serious to us and we need to attend to it because you are going to hear the other side of the story and this is not just controversial, it is saying you just did not understand. And there is another attempt to have the Gender Policy withdrawn, but we cannot. It is needed; people have been asking for it, we have worked too hard on it.

We have reviews on distinguished lecture series, we have brought in people to talk, you will notice we are on the television, we have a six-part television series entitled Gender on the Agenda for those who are at home, it is also on radio. We have used all the media as much as we can; still there is a lot of work to be done.

We have other programmes and initiatives that we have taken because we feel we need to assist not only women but men. And there is the Defining Masculine Excellence Programme which I see as one of the flagship programmes where we have worked with the men so successfully. I talk about it every time because I always feel that is one of the programmes that have made us move forward. We are training the graduates to be trainers in the community and I think there is a lot of success in that programme.

I want to let you know in terms of the equity, we have about 300 organizations we have helped financially—I cannot go through all because time is so short. We gave financial assistance to a large number of NGOs, CBOs and we are concentrating to a large extent on the Faith-Based Organizations because we think that they are in a position to help. I have always told Faith-Based Organizations when they come to us for funding, we only give if it is outside their immediate congregation or membership and they have always given us the assurance—and I am seeing it happen with Faith-Based Organizations now that they are working within the communities and that really tells us something. They are outside of their church.

Sen. Seetahal SC: In terms of the programmes, I was hearing something of what you were saying in the tea room. Of all the different programmes for the communities, do you have any measurement as to what the results are? Tell us something about that.
Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: We have a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, in fact the Government also has a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the Ministry of Social Development and we monitor, evaluate and we also do some tracer studies. We can tell you how many businesses were set up, and how many persons have found employment. Yes we do.

That is why I say it is so important, although some people when they look at the evaluation do not look at it for the reason for which it is done. We have one or two Evaluation Officers at the ministry, the Ministry of Social Development has a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit which is to monitor and evaluate all their social programmes and also to see if there is overlapping in any programme, that type of thing.

We also do tracer studies which tell us where our graduates are. I am one of those persons who know about the professional students. They go from one programme to the other simply because there is a stipend and we try not to have that happen, so we encourage them to keep going and whatever we do, we give them that support to continue it, so when they go out there are people who keep them there. That is why we go to NEDCO and we stand security for them. When they graduate from some of the classes which they did, they get a kit when they leave and whatever discipline it is, that kit is to help you start-up whatever you are doing. So you do not leave empty-handed, you leave with some tools and you get ideas of where you can go. There is a placement officer who helps people to get jobs.

I want to thank those corporate persons who have accommodated them because they do well as females and as I said before, even when we do Defining Masculine Excellence and we work with the men, we also try to fit them into employment afterwards and try keeping up with them.

We have employed three of the men in the ministry after coming out of the programme and they are now working with groups outside and it is really working well. So yes, we have that evaluation area and at any time you can get a copy of how things work.

Let me move quickly into the community development area and because of where we are and the things that have to be done. We want a new Community Development Officer as you would say, it is a new image and we are now approaching the University of Trinidad and Tobago to see if we can get a programme because I know there is a niche market. It is very difficult to find programmes for them, but their role has become much more important now. We have had the Social Worker which is quite different from the Community Development Officers.
Every time you look outside and you see something happening within a community, you see people protesting—yes there are parliamentary representatives and so forth that is quite different—there are needs out there that the officer should be able to pick up, bring in information, and get help for them. This is a dynamic age now and we have moved along from just working with the village councils and helping with the programmes we have because they do quite a lot of training, lectures and seminars, but we need to have them outside to be more proactive out there. So there is a new image for the worker at this time and it is absolutely necessary, and we need to get a programme so we can do a lot of training for the Community Development Officers.

5.45 p.m.

Let me just move very quickly to the community centre construction programme which is part of this. I want to tell you that community centres are not now just for underprivileged areas. People are now asking for that type of centre in all areas, but we have a priority at the moment. Part of what we are going to do to the new housing areas is build community centres and flood-lit playing fields; flood-lit because we want them to be out there at night playing instead of getting into trouble. So that is part of the design for all the housing areas, that there should be a community centre and a playing field. The HDC knows about that. They have a community development division themselves. We are now trying to build 100 community centres around the country, and as I said before, we might have had some difficulty, but we have been able to do about 22 of them this year and the refurbishing has to be done to that extent.

There are certain centres that you might have seen in the newspapers, Preysal—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: There are some centres you might have seen in the newspapers that were delayed and I want to tell you what happened. They are very modern centres but you cannot look at everything all the time, so one day I called the contractors and my officers and we started to talk about them. They were to be finished a couple months ago. I asked: “What has happened to
the centres?” “How many people can they accommodate?” They said the auditoriums could accommodate 50 and 75. I could not believe it. Therefore, I said: “There is no way—I do not care where the community was, we have to stop the work.” In stopping that kind of work, do you know what you had to do? You have to go back to the same drawing board again and do all that work and that took a few extra months.

So they will be finished this year, but they have now gone to 300 and 500 seating accommodation in the auditorium. Even though people may say, you could have opened them before election, I had to put that behind my back because I have a duty to community and I have to be truthful. That was just not right. You would have seen it in the newspapers. Preysal was one that was there and the residents there were asking. All have restarted, but now they are going to get much larger auditoriums. I had to insist and ensure that we have large auditoriums. That is why they had been stopped.

Let me just move very quickly into the culture area. I just want to remind Senators that last year we hosted Carifesta and one of the areas in that festival which I thought we were not as strong on was the area of cultural industries. That was an area that we had to focus on: music, paintings, drawings, art, and all of that. We were not strong on it. Jamaica was sending us some paintings but they had difficulty getting through Customs. Yet, we were trying to move the musicians around but we had some difficulties.

When we look at cultural industries in certain countries, it is a billion-dollar investment; $350 billion in America; $400 billion. In Trinidad and Tobago, we have between $75 million to $100 million from cultural industries. In the south of the hemisphere we are strong on culture; very creative, and that is one way we could move with the diversification, to build up the cultural industries. Clearly, that is the new area in which we have gone. We have now got together a committee looking at what recommendations we need to make to Cabinet.

Let me just tell you why it is important for us. We wanted to ensure that the same kind of facilities that we give to the manufacturing sector; the same kind of incentives we give to the cultural industries centre, we need to have that stipulated. We also noted, for instance, the publication of books. A large number of books are not being published in Asia and our publishers are sending out all the material for publishing and that is a part of the industry. So we have to see why and what we could do to encourage them to remain here and do the publishing.
Our music industry, let me tell you something. We have freedom of movement within the Caribbean as far as the artistes are concerned but, you know, the equipment cannot move that way. There are many barriers to the moving of equipment and that is absolutely necessary for the development of the industry. So the committee is also looking at that.

In terms of recording, we have somebody in Trinidad now talking to us and we have been told that the facilities we have here for the recording are not of the best quality and, therefore, when Rhianna from Barbados sends hers outside, you find she gets a better appreciation for it. So we have to look at the recording industry we have here and see what help, as a Government, we could give to facilitate it. That is important to us, because when the producers outside there say, “Send your material”—sometimes they do not say send the artiste; they say send the material—what they receive is not of the best quality and is not accepted.

Therefore, this committee is now looking at all aspects: paintings, sculpture—we do not get much of that. In fact, some people call them luxury items. We have to understand what it is, really, because if you wanted to move paintings—even when moving those paintings we had to pay a heavy customs duty because they came in as luxury items. So I just wanted to say that there is a lot that we have to do in terms of that, because we want to ensure that we could diversify this economy. We feel quite sure, at the end of it all, there are so many people in the cultural industry here not making the kind of money they should make.

Our museums, for example, we have a lot of heritage material here that we have not looked at the way that we should. We want to do that and do some training of persons for the museums. Right now we are trying to facilitate the Indian museum but they need to have a trained curator. We have few trained curators and I could tell Sen. Prof. Ramchand that all these are things that we need to have there. We do not have enough trained persons. We set up 10 community museums. At the end of it, there is going to be a lot of pressure because we are going to do short courses for them. We want them to qualify in that kind of thing.

There is a lot of heritage material in Trinidad and Tobago and things that we can do and we need to have all our people working. There are so many artistes in this country and if we had a stronger cultural industry sector—that sector is really very small and we want to develop it. I came with a lot of material to talk about that but I do not have the time today, but that cultural sector area is one that we can diversify and make money for the artistes here and people abroad.
One of the suggestions that came through—and I will tell you why. People like to buy what they hear and see. Video cameras and what not, and all the equipment, that aspect of it is very expensive and if you want to have the elements of a film industry—last year we tried some young people for Carifesta. We set them up to do video recording and taping and they did extremely well. They showed us what they did at Queen’s Hall. How could we put them to develop the elements of a budding film industry? So we have to look at the equipment that is coming in, the cost of the equipment and the training.

Southeast Port of Spain School wants to have one now. Yes, but the cost of it to go on afterwards is what we are looking at. But that is an area that is almost untapped, just lying there and we need to focus on it and really open it up. So we are going to try our best to ensure, when the committee brings its report on the cultural industries—and a lot of people are going to be extremely happy about it. We are going to be setting this up. We are trying to also make some of our cultural people sustainable.

I know people say we started with our steel pan; we have had it patented; where do we go from there? The National Steel Symphony, we have done all for it; we have our people there. Actually, they are going to be using the new pans and they are now putting together the full range of it. So that, yes, the National Steel Orchestra, we wound that up; we will be paying them their gratuity and they are now going to move into the National Steel Symphony, using some of the new pans. We are just waiting on the final number of them.

The chroming factory is still on hold. As you notice, we started the headquarters again with UDeCOTT helping us. The convalescent home is working and at least we want to set up one proper studio so that it would be an incentive to the others around to see what could be done. I am saying again, this is one area that we need to tap into.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Vice-President, through you, thank you, Madam Minister. The members of the National Steel Orchestra are extremely concerned about their position in terms of the new formation of the National Steel Symphony. So would you be kind enough to clarify that?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** I just said that we are getting their gratuities to pay them off and they are moving into the—they had auditions already, two or three months ago. The delay had been because of it, but they are right now on a month-to-month, which means they are getting salaries and they are moving—
Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: No one is being left out?

Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: Nobody is left out at all. We took care of it. Two or three of them did not wish to go into that; they wanted to go into administration because there are positions there. They are very talented and that is why we gave them the opportunity to use the new “G pan”. It is the National Steel Orchestra persons who went there. They have been there for years; graduated; they had all their degrees and what not, so they are moving into that.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: They would be part of the new system?

Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: Yes, and they know; they came to all the meetings. I know they are very nervous, but they are doing all sorts of nice things all around, helping all kinds of bands, schools and what not, at this time, and there is no hassle behind them because they give it their all, and they are very talented. But there are three of them who do not want to stay and they wanted to go into administration.

Let me just very quickly—before the time is up—speak to Sen. Cropper on another area which is not part of the area that I should be speaking on, necessarily, and that is the whole question of the Children's Authority. I just want to let you know that the package of legislation—let me just read quickly what I have here to bring you up to date and I am doing that as a member of the committee and Chairman of the Legislative Review Committee, so the legislation came. Let me just tell you quickly why there was a delay. The package of the children’s legislation was enacted in 2000 and all but one of the Acts remained unclaimed. I just want to name those Acts for the benefit of the Senate: the Children’s Authority Act; the Children’s Community Residences, Foster Homes and Nurseries Act; the Miscellaneous Provisions (Children) Act; the Adoption of Children Act and the Children (Amdt.) Act.

Following the establishment of the pilot Family Court in 2004, it was felt that there was need for the establishment of a properly functioning Children's Authority Act and that was critical to the work of the Family Court. So they started to look at all this legislation again in line with the Family Court. After that, they had a two-day seminar workshop and at the end of it, they sent in a report. That report said that there were some key areas that needed to be amended. Therefore, they went back to the drawing board.

These were very dedicated persons who worked on this. They went back again to do some changes and they have been working seriously from then till now on the package. In fact, they were not only amended in some cases, but doing over
the entire Act. We have a very dedicated bunch of persons and they included in
the final package the International Child Abduction Bill and the Family Court
Bill. Those two were new pieces that they have now put into it, so none of those
were there before. So the entire package is now complete. It went to Cabinet and I
do not know why Sen. Kangaloo did not remind me that the Status of Children,
2007 Bill was also done. That was done to provide for DNA testing. You realize
that we had the DNA Bill and I think that was removed from the earlier draft, but
put back into it now.

All I am saying here, very quickly, is to show you that over time how many
changes were made and it was dedicated work. It was not because we did not care
about the children; we cared about the children. When Sen. Montano brought his
child labour legislation, all of that was transferred into it. It is a comprehensive
package. Everything that deals with children is in that package. So the Children’s
Authority is there; it is going to be sent to the Lower House probably next week—

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** It is in the Lower House.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** It is in the Lower House, I am told and,
therefore, if it is one thing we are extremely happy about. All of us who worked
along with those persons are very happy and we want to thank them, and I
suppose at the appropriate time the Minister with responsibility will allow you to
know all those who worked on it. I am glad that you have raised it to give me an
opportunity to respond.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** It was laid on Monday.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** I understand it was laid on Monday. It is
complete, I am sure, because I stayed with them long hours at nights trying to get
it done. In fact, they were there working and I was giving them that support as the
chairman of the committee. Sen. Kangaloo was also there with us. I want to say
thank you very much for that.

I have to rush through very quickly with the work that the Ministry has been
doing. We are very focused; we are ensuring that none is left behind; that the
social programmes work. And let me tell you, it is not a matter of them staying
there all the time. We are tracking them down so we do not have the repeaters,
and as soon as they are able to move off and go into something sustainable, we
are doing that, because our business is to have sustainable communities. We are
following Vision 2020 and we have the plan there, and with our leadership and
our stakeholder partners, we will succeed.
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I thank all the several NGOs throughout Trinidad and Tobago who have done so much for Trinidad and Tobago. They are volunteers; they do not get paid but they are very happy to work.

Sen. Mark: Your time is up.

Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: I thought you were going to say thanks to the NGOs yourself.

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

6.00 p.m.

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie SC): Mr. Vice-President, I rise to make a short contribution on the budget debate 2007 to 2008. As I begin, I am surprised to be here this year to speak in the budget debate. Last year on Wednesday October 18, 2006, I remember having spoken on the budget debate in the Senate. On that occasion, I thought that it would be my last budget debate. I remember having a very vigorous exchange, and it is tabled here, with Sen. Wade Mark who greeted me so well when I came into the Senate. There was a very vigorous exchange which took up maybe about half of the contribution. Here I am this year for another budget debate.

It is an honour for me to speak in support of my colleague, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister in the budget debate 2007. I do so without a proper speaking brief because I was down to speak tomorrow. I have been asked to speak this afternoon and I am delighted to do that. I am a team player. If at times I seem to be a little disjointed it is because I did not have an extra night to translate my scribbles into proper form.

This year the budget has touched the lives of nearly every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, from the sick and diabetic to the youth in training for future employment to the most vulnerable among us. All of us have been touched in some way. I want to make a distinction. The budget and the budget debate were particularly clear to me this year. The budget was presented by the Prime Minister and in the Senate by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance. That was a job well done. It spoke to a government committed to ensuring that certain goals were met. It set benchmarks; it said where we were in terms of developmental benchmarks; whether we were somewhere along; at the beginning point and whether we had failed in some areas. In all, the budget was a job well done.

I cannot say as much for the budget debate, that is with the exception of the Back Bench. I have enjoyed the contributions of each of the Independent
Senators. I have not always agreed with them. For example, I did not agree with Sen. Cropper when she said that there is nothing to differentiate this Government from any other political party in terms of ideology. During my contribution I hope to enlighten her on that. In general terms, the Back Bench distinguished itself as it always does in a budget debate. [Desk thumping]

What we saw from the Front Bench—

**Sen. Mark:** I thought you said you have no brief.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC:** I have no brief. I am not reading unlike Sen. Dr. Ramadhar-Singh who stuck slavishly to his notes. It was almost as if he practised gesticulations. The Front Bench was particularly disappointing this year in the budget debate. [Desk thumping] I have to join with my colleague Sen. Yuille-Williams in how she described the contribution of Sen. Mark in his absence, because he is never here to hear these things, when they are said about him. In his absence she described it as a work in desperation. [Laughter]

Last night the Vice-President spoke about his facial movement being able to switch at the blink of an eye, but he is a piece of work. [Desk thumping and laughter]

When the Minister of Works and Transport came into the budget debate to deal with him and certain allegations he made in connection with the Rapid Rail Project, his complete tenor went from—he told me in one breath, you have to investigate that project, bogus, and then in the next breath, you have to investigate that man, the Minister of Works and Transport. Why? Because the Minister of Works and Transport was speaking to the point that he raised. He put a sound licking on him. So much so, that my colleague Sen. The Hon. Montano said that it was whipping a dead dog. [Interruption]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Please do not refer to the Prime Minister as Patrick Manning.

**Sen. Mark:** “Well I following the Commissioner of Police. He say Manning—

**Mr. Vice-President:** No, no, no, Sen. Mark.

**Sen. Mark:** I agree with you; the hon. Prime Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC:** That is precisely the point I was making about flogging a dead horse. I did not want to say anything.
I say that the budget was a job well done, not the budget especially as it was made in the Front Bench. It was a job well done. [Interruption] I am going back to the university to do law.

I said that I wanted to speak to a point that Sen. Cropper made when she said that there is nothing to differentiate the two sides. When you look at our record in terms of integrity in public life—

**Sen. Mark:** Get on to some other subject.

**Sen. Hon. J. Jeremie SC:**—you see a clear distinction between them and us. They make allegations about the Rapid Rail Project; Alstom; Bouygues or Bogus and Bombardier. The fact is that we have found—and over the last year the Office of the Attorney General has received over TT $50 million from that airport project; as we say, the “cow shed”. I checked the *Hansard*. Last year I said that I expected to go into a new mode. Now I can report that we have $50 million either in hand or under management; that is frozen or available to us having been returned to us. On top of that we have contrite apologies; expressions of contrition on the part of all the main players in that project. More than that, people are actually serving jail time in the United States of America because of that airport project.

**Sen. Mark:** Monteil should be in jail.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC:** In terms of the individual contributions made in the budget debate from where it counted, that is the Back Bench, it is difficult for me to choose. I will have to locate my comments in the direction of Sen. Seetahal SC because she spoke on the administration of law and justice. This is no disrespect to any of the other Senators who spoke well on virtually every area of the budget.

In relation to the prison rules and the DNA Bill, it is true to say that there has been an inordinate delay. I do not know if the Minister of National Security spoke about it. Has he contributed?

**Sen. Mark:** Yes, he spoke today. It did not make much sense.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC:** I am sure that it slipped his mind to say that the prison rules are a work in progress. He has the junior Minister, Hon. Hinds who is working assiduously on the rules. I am assured that the rules will be ready within a fairly short period of time.

In relation to the DNA Act, it was passed in the Lower House and is to be debated in the Upper House. That is not an excuse for it having taken so long to
come to us. I was told that quite a lot of work was required between the officers in the Forensic Science Centre and the line Ministry of National Security. I understand that the entire Bill was reworked and that is why it has taken so long. The Minister also reminds me that the Bill went to a Joint Select Committee and that could have taken some time. I am not making any excuses for it. The Bill did take an inordinate amount of time to come. It is an important piece of machinery in the tool against criminal activity.

6.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, what pleased me during the course of the contributions coming from my colleagues on the Front Bench was their recognition that integrity in public life is important. So while they spoke in airy-fairy terms, they made no specific allegations. They were unable to say that there was specific wrongdoing in X project; that we have a paper trail which links X to Y in relation to A. There was recognition, but that recognition has come too late.

I refer to my contribution during the budget debate last year where I spelled out what we had done with respect to asset recovery and targeting of assets that had been misappropriated. I said that we were looking at a figure in the vicinity of $4.65 billion. I checked the figures today and that is $4.65 billion that had been squandered, stolen, misappropriated and played around with during the five years between 1996 and 2001. It was concentrated in the year 1999/2000.

That is a lot of money, Mr. Vice-President. It would account for all the building work that this Government has done and all the projects they speak so glibly to in terms of the offshore patrol craft. If you add all the money we have identified as having been misappropriated, stolen, you do not get what has been spent in terms of buildings, which is necessary infrastructure as some of my colleagues have pointed out; and military assets, which is necessary expenditure, as the Minister of National Security has pointed out.

I want to tell Sen. Cropper that it was the hallmark of their tenure in office to transfer funds from the Treasury, seamlessly, to private hands—Sen. Mark wants to know how—and into exotic locations around the world, such as Liechtenstein. Mr. Vice-President, I did not know where it was before I came into this job, now I speak to employees of the Ministry of the Attorney General in Liechtenstein on a weekly basis to ask them the status of X and Y. There were all sorts of exotic company names all over the world. I think that their expressions of interest in corruption and anti-corruption have come just a little too late.
I assure Sen. Mark that I listened to what he said in relation to Bouygues. I myself sat on the rapid rail committee and I intend to take an interest in looking into the allegations, so I will look at Bouygues and Alstom and the clause which stipulates that if you are convicted of fraud, within a certain period of time, you are not eligible to bid on the contract.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that the sitting continue until the completion of the contribution of the hon. Attorney General.

Question put and agreed to.

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Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Mr. Vice-President, I have given the undertaking and I intend to stick to it.

Now, I said in the budget debate last year that the Ministry of the Attorney General is not a revenue earner so when I talk about performance, in the context of my Ministry, I am speaking about the administration of justice and the rule of law. In that context, I am also speaking about the efforts of my civil law department and my criminal law department.

In the year under review, the civil law department was highly functional. It engaged in 41 enactments during the period 2006/2007 and 16 to date in 2007. Admittedly some of that comprised Cricket World Cup legislation and that legislation in large part was sunset legislation. There were some legacy items. For example, the drafting department did the Advance Passenger Information Bill, 2006, which is a piece of legislation we would like to keep on the books long into the future as we move towards a single domestic space in Caricom.

We did the ICC (Cricket World Cup) Bill and the Evidence (Amdt.) Bill to facilitate the use of hearsay evidence. We passed that Bill over their protests. It was a good Bill. We did the Visiting Forces Bill and that, too, is a legacy piece of legislation; the Security Assistance (Caricom) Bill, which is also a legacy piece of legislation; and the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, which has helped us in relation to our efforts in anti-kidnapping. That is undeniable. [Interruption] It runs out in two
weeks’ time. It was introduced in the other place and is down for debate, I believe on Monday. I would appreciate if you would lend your support by giving us the necessary constitutional majority, but if you do not, well such is life.

We also passed the police package with the constructive support of the Opposition, to the credit of the Minister of National Security. We had been trying to pass that package for 12 years. The Bills as they are now are much better than before the Opposition’s input, so they did contribute in a meaningful way.

Work continues on the Criminal Procedure (Disclosure) Bill in the Law Reform Commission. That is a bill to facilitate a system of mutual disclosure in criminal trials. I am sure Sen. Seetahal SC knows about it. There was a workshop at the Hugh Wooding Law School some time ago on a bill to facilitate trial on indictment without a jury.

The Law Reform Commission and the Parliament are closer to the completion of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Bill. I am not sure if we would be able to get it in. Sen. Mark sat on that joint select committee.

**Sen. Seetahal SC:** Mr. Vice-President, on the Bill to facilitate trial without a jury, you passed it so quickly and it is so vital in terms of the intimidation of jurors and the fears we might have, can you tell us a little more about it?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC:** Mr. Vice-President, I am not sure if it is modelled on section 33 or 34 of the UK Act. It is intended to deal with the problem Sen. Seetahal SC raised during her contribution—that of cowardice in the general population—but it is an exercise independently taken by the Law Reform Commission, not on reference from the Attorney General, so that the judges, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Law Reform Commission are the drivers in that initiative. It should come to fruition some time this year.

The Bankruptcy and Insolvency Bill is intended to partner with the Companies Act passed in 1995. At the time, it was contemplated that the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Bill would be passed right after it so that the provision in the Companies Act which relate to insolvency would be tight. They are not so tight because they contemplate another piece of legislation which was to have been passed almost simultaneously. It has taken us 12 years, but we are finally at the point where we will be able to say that we have a Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, if my colleagues on the other side cooperate. That, too, went to a joint select committee.
Mr. Vice-President, in collaboration with the Judiciary—and the Office of the Attorney General has an excellent relationship with the Judiciary—we have moved some way toward the establishment of a special criminal court designed to hear and determine serious crime—homicide, kidnapping and narcotics trafficking, on an expedited basis.

The Ministry has set up an implementation committee to shepherd the establishment of the court in much the same way as the process used when we reformed the Family Court system. When we speak about the breakdown in the administration of justice, we do not remember the Family Court. It is the one bright star in the whole system of the administration of justice. Sometimes I wonder if it is because we have had two consecutive Attorneys General who come from the civil side of the profession as opposed to the criminal side. So we have some work done on the Family Court, but the criminal side has been neglected.

Now, in the Family Court, matters are not adjourned more than three times and no matter goes on for more than one year. This is what I have been told and that is a high level of performance from any court. We are attempting to replicate, in the special criminal court for serious crime, the systems which have caused that kind of progress. This is now on the drawing board. It would be ambitious to say that this would be completed within a year. I think that within the next two years, when a report is made on this by the Attorney General, whoever he or she might be, that court would have achieved a similar level of throughput as the Family Court.

6.30 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, I feel a great sense of personal pride and achievement having been a part of the Ministry of the Attorney General at a time when the funds, to which I referred earlier, were ordered to be returned to Trinidad and Tobago.

I feel that after the excesses of the period 1995 to 2001 that the core function of the ministry which is the maintenance of the rule of law, which is essentially saying what is right and what is wrong, a powerful signal was sent when we got that judgment in the criminal court in the United States of America during this year. Now, for that alone, I feel a sense of pride and achievement.

Our courts in Trinidad and Tobago have not worked as quickly. It has taken us five years to deal with the preliminary enquiry in relation to what is commonly termed as “Piarco No. 1” and “Piarco No. 2” has not even got off the ground but, at least, in the United States of America, we have for the first time in the
Caribbean where any country has prosecuted a serious crime in the United States of America and obtained a restitution order in the amount of TT $38 million. We far exceeded that in terms of recovery, because we had a civil claim for TT $315 million. As I said, we have $50 million under management, either in terms of frozen assets or in terms of assets actually recovered and available to us. So, I feel a sense of great pride at that. Apology letters have been read into the Hansard in the other place by me and my colleague Dr. Rowley.

Mr. Vice-President, also unprecedented were the convictions. They ranged in the vicinity between one and a half years of which 86 per cent of the time actually has to be served, because these are federal sentences—seven years in the case of Mr. Hillman who was a partner in Birk Hillman in relation to the construction of the airport.

My only regret is that as we depart this House, this matter is still not completely finished. There are still major players in this largest ever corruption transaction in the country’s history, who are still before the courts in Trinidad and Tobago and elsewhere and, therefore, the matter cannot be considered to be closed.

There are persons who are indicted by the United States authorities in the matter, and who are yet to submit themselves for judgment. There is an extradition case going on—that is on the way—and so far things are on track. That is all I can say about it. It is a matter which is before the courts and I respect the sub judice rule.

Mr. Vice-President, I wish my friends opposite goodbye, because I expect that they will not be here for very much longer and good luck, because I suspect that they would need it. I thank them and the Independent Benches.

I remember it was just yesterday when I walked in and Mr. Arnim Smith was sitting in the front there—big and towering presence—and the Front Bench now is a joke compared to the Front Bench at that time [Desk thumping]—and Mr. Robin Montano was there and, of course, the “town crier”, Sen. Wade Mark. [Interruption]

Mr. Vice-President, I thank my colleagues for the spirit of camaraderie in which we have worked during this period; friend and foe alike.

Thank you. [Desk thumping]
ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that the Senate be now adjourned to Thursday, September 06, 2007 at 1.30 p.m. at which time we will complete the debate on the Appropriation Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.36 p.m.