

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, July 20, 2010***SENATE***Tuesday, July 20, 2010*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I wish to inform you that the President of the Senate, Sen. The Hon. Timothy Hamel-Smith is currently acting as the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Prof. Patrick Watson from sittings of the Senate during the period July 20, 2010—July 27, 2010 and Sen. Prof. Harold Ramkissoon who is out of the country from today's sitting.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the Acting President, Sen. The Hon. Timothy Hamel-Smith:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency TIMOTHY HAMEL-SMITH, Acting
President and Commander-in-Chief of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ Timothy Hamel-Smith
Acting President.

TO: MR. SYLVESTER RAMQUAR

WHEREAS the President of the Senate has temporarily vacated his office of Senator to act as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago:

AND WHEREAS the Vice-President of the Senate is acting President of the Senate:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TIMOTHY HAMEL-SMITH, Acting President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2)(a) and section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, SYLVESTER RAMQUAR, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect

Senators' Appointment
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from 20th July, 2010 and continuing during the period that Senator Timothy Hamel-Smith has temporarily vacated his Office of Senator.

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 16th day of July, 2010."

“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: MRS. PARVATEE ANMOLSINGH-MAHABIR

WHEREAS Senator Professor Harold Ramkissoon 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, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2) (c) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, PARVATEE ANMOLSINGH-MAHABIR, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 15th July, 2010 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Professor Harold Ramkissoon.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 8th day of July, 2010."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senators Sylvester Ramquar and Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

PAPERS LAID

- (1) Audited financial statements of the Export-Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2009. [*The Minister in the Ministry of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Subhas Panday)*]

- (2) Third report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Public Transport Service Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1999. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (3) Public accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ended September 30, 2009 (Volumes I and II). [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (4) Audited financial statements of the Metal Industries Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2007. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (5) Annual report of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year 2009. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (6) Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the consolidated financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Unit Trust Corporation for the year ended December 31, 2009. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (7) Annual report of Taurus Services Limited for the year 2009. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (8) Administrative report of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ending September 30, 2002. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (9) Administrative report of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ending September 30, 2003. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (10) Administrative report of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ending September 30, 2004. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (11) Administrative report of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ending September 30, 2005. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (12) Administrative report of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ending September 30, 2006. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (13) Administrative report of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ending September 30, 2007. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (14) Administrative report of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ending September 30, 2008. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Panday*]
- (15) Annual report of the Ministry of Public Administration for the period October 2008 to September 2009. [*The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Rudrawatee Nan Ramgoolam)*]

Evidence (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill

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EVIDENCE (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL

Bill to amend the Evidence Act, Chap. 7:02 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

**MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS
(KIDNAPPING AND BAIL) BILL**

Bill to amend the Bail Act, Chap. 4:60 and the Kidnapping Act, Chap. 11:26 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

FIREARMS (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Firearms Act, Chap. 16:01 [*The Minister of National Security*]; read the first time.

**STATE OF THE ECONOMY
[Third Day]**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [July 06, 2010]:

Be it resolved that this House take note of the State of the Economy at this time. [Sen. The Hon. M. King]

Question again proposed.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, those who spoke on Tuesday, July 06, 2010, were: Sen. The Hon. Mary King, mover of the Motion; Sen. Dr. Lester Henry; Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan; Sen. Kevin Ramnarine; Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe and Sen. Basharat Ali. Those who spoke on July 13, 2010 were: Sen. Lyndira Oudit; Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds; Sen. Helen Drayton; Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim and Sen. Ted Roopnarine. All Senators wishing to join the debate may do so at this time.

Sen. Dr. Victor Wheeler: Madam Vice-President, thank you for allowing me to make my inaugural contribution in this debate on taking note of the state of the economy. I would also like to say that I am humbled by being given the opportunity to contribute at this level.

Madam Vice-President, today I intend to comment briefly on the state of the economy, but as a Tobagonian, I intend to focus most of my contribution on the state of Tobago's economy. We have already heard from my fellow Senators from all sides of the Senate on various aspects of the state of the country as a whole, and I do not intend to repeat what has already been ventilated at great depth, but I want to focus my contribution on the economy of Tobago.

The economy of Tobago is based primarily on tourism, this being the main source of foreign exchange earnings for the island. According to the World Travel

and Tourism Council, the contribution of travel and tourism to the gross domestic product in Tobago for 2009 was \$1.16 billion.

1.45 p.m.

This demonstrates that the income generated by this sector alone is not sufficient to meet the recurrent and the development needs of the island. The travel and tourism sector is estimated to be responsible also for the employment of about 14,000 individuals on the island which is just about half of the employed persons on the island of Tobago.

At this point please permit me to give a little history of the development of the tourism sector in Tobago and a significant date in this history is August 17, 1990. What is significant about this date is that it was the day that the Foreign Investment Act, No. 16 of 1990, came into effect. This was a critical piece of legislation that was introduced by the then NAR government. The Minister who led this debate then was the Minister of Planning and Mobilization, Mr. Winston Dookeran, on June 29, 1990. This Act was introduced as one of several measures in the then government's effort to stimulate investment in the country. It is ironic that just about 20 years later Mr. Dookeran is now part of this new People's Partnership Government charged with the responsibility of overseeing the country's finances during these troubling times.

Most of you in this Parliament would no doubt remember the days over 20 years ago when we had a negative list of imported items and also the severe limits on foreign exchange that we were able to purchase for overseas travel. In Tobago at that time there was very little investment taking place. The effect of the introduction of the Foreign Investment Act was to arguably change the face of investments and development in Tobago. The essence of the Act is that it allows foreign investors to acquire land or shares in either private or public companies in Trinidad or Tobago. What this meant is that a foreign investor could purchase up to one acre of land for residential purpose and up to five acres of land for commercial use. The net effect of this was that foreign investors purchased land and also constructed homes that they used either as holiday homes or retirement homes.

As a result of this activity the construction sector in Tobago flourished. Tobagonians became contractors and some even formed companies. They employed both skilled and unskilled labourers. Contractors from Trinidad also got involved in the act and also got involved in the construction sector. The economy of Tobago benefited from significant inflows of foreign exchange in pounds, US

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dollars and Italian liras. The investment in Tobago by foreign nationals resulted in places like Bonker's Restaurant and Hotel being built by an Englishman and Speyside Inn being built by a German. There was also the construction of scores of villas and residences, not only by foreign nationals but also by persons from both Tobago and Trinidad. What persons from Tobago and Trinidad realized is that seeing that foreign nationals were coming to Tobago to purchase property, they themselves decided to purchase property which they placed on the market for sale.

Madam Vice-President, from 2002 a significant increase in the number of visitors to the island of Tobago came about as a result of the increase in the number of airlines that began servicing the island. Air carriers such as British Airways, Condor Airlines and later on Virgin Airlines started coming to Tobago, further increasing the number of foreigners to the island. Some of these visitors when they came to Tobago for a holiday liked the place and decided to return and invest either in a holiday home or in some commercial enterprise which was allowed by the Foreign Investment Act at the time.

Another effect of the introduction of the Foreign Investment Act was the escalation of the price of land in Tobago, so much so that in some areas of Tobago the price of land became out of reach of the average Tobago resident. It appears that there were some who acted contrary to the intention of the Act. It seems that there was a practice by some foreign investors who had acquired land under one acre for residential purposes, but instead of constructing a home suddenly you saw an eight or 10 apartment complex being built. These apartments then were rented out to other foreign nationals abroad—what happened is that the rental that was taking place was paid abroad; the money did not come to Trinidad or Tobago, these persons were not declaring their incomes and also not paying taxes. There was a proliferation of what we call the villa rental business in Tobago.

It seems that an attempt was made by the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly to deal with this problem. Discussions were held with central government in Trinidad and the result of this was that on February 16, 2007 there came into being the Foreign Investment (Tobago Land Acquisition) Order of 2007. This Order states that:

“The island of Tobago is declared an area for which a foreign investor shall first obtain a licence under the Act before acquiring any land in Tobago.”

I pointed out that previously the Foreign Investment Act allowed foreign investors to purchase up to one acre for residential purposes and up to five acres

for commercial activities. Since the imposition of this Order in 2007 I have been informed that to date there is no process for obtaining a licence. The result is that no foreign national since the imposition of this Order has been able to purchase land in Tobago legally. This has completely stopped the foreign purchases of land in Tobago. What this has meant is that foreign nationals who were considering and in some cases were in the process of purchasing property in Tobago to use either as a holiday home or a retirement home were no longer able to do so. In fact I have been ably informed that some persons who when the Order came into effect were in the middle of purchasing property because they were not able to complete the transactions lost their deposits.

Besides the immediate economic benefits of stimulating the economy of Tobago and the other benefits of having non-nationals own property in Tobago, including having their friends and family visit Tobago, bringing much needed foreign exchange, the ability to earn this foreign exchange has been greatly reduced. The imposition of this order means that foreign nationals are no longer able to purchase property for even setting up small business in Tobago which further has a negative impact on the Tobago economy. I should point out here that this is not the case for big brother Trinidad because in Trinidad foreign investors are still allowed to purchase land up to one acre for residential purposes and up to five acres for commercial purposes without the requirements to obtain a licence.

Madam Vice-President, I should further point out that the coming into effect of this Order occurred without it being debated in the Tobago House of Assembly Chamber. In fact, it is said this Order came like a thief in the night. This, I find, is a travesty of great proportions. The main stakeholder in this matter was the Tobago public and it seems that their opinion was not properly sourced before it was introduced.

It is true that section 6(2) of the Foreign Investment Act did in fact give the Minister of Finance the power to prescribe areas in Trinidad and Tobago where a foreign investor may not acquire land without first obtaining a licence. But to prescribe the entire island of Tobago as one area, in this way, surely is not what the Act would have intended. I am sure the Act was designed to protect certain areas of Trinidad and Tobago from exploitation. In Tobago for example, it would include the Main Ridge, the rain forest area, wetlands and various other areas of national importance. The imposition of this Order, as I have said before, has meant that no foreign investment has taken place in Tobago since 2007. It has also meant that foreign nationals who currently own property in Tobago would have bought this property in Tobago on the basis of being encouraged to come

and invest in Tobago. So here it is you invite them to come into Tobago, invest, purchase property and then suddenly the goalpost has changed.

There are also other professionals in Tobago working, who, after a year or two, would want to purchase but currently are unable to do so. From 2007 the properties in Tobago that these non-nationals owned, previously they could have sold to anyone anywhere in the world, now because of the imposition of this Order, they can only sell to nationals of Trinidad and Tobago at a lower price.

I have been informed however, that this Order was introduced to deal with those few foreign nationals who were involved in the villa rental business as mentioned before, but in reality the effect of this Order could not have been what the architects would have wanted. I would say the reputation of the island has been tarnished by the imposition of this Order. Even if this Order were to be reversed and foreign nationals allowed to again purchase land in Tobago there may only be a lukewarm response. The cessation of foreign investment has meant that skilled labourers and some small contractors have been affected adversely as a result and through you, Madam Vice-President, to the Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs, the majority of the workforce in the tourism sector are in fact women. They rely heavily on the tourism sector for their day-to-day living. Many of them have been unable to get meaningful employment as a result of this Order and have had to revert to other forms of employment such as CEPEP and URP. We in Tobago have been waiting now for over three years for the regulations to be put in place so that a licence can be obtained so as to rectify the situation.

Another area that I want to comment on is that Tobago has also suffered from the fallout of the worldwide recession that has affected most of the other islands in the Caribbean. This fallout was in the form of reduced visitor arrivals to Tobago due to the reduced disposable income from our traditional visitors from Europe. Figures obtained from the Tobago House of Assembly have shown that from 2008 to 2009 international passenger arrivals declined from 56,517 in 2008 to 38,336 in 2009. This was just about a 33 per cent reduction. When you look at some of our other Caribbean neighbours such as Antigua and Barbuda there was an 11.8 per cent decrease; in Dominica there was a 17.9 per cent decrease; in Jamaica, however, there was actually a 3.6 per cent increase. We would see that Tobago had by far the largest reduction in international passenger arrivals.

One thing that may have contributed to this reduction in arrivals so that it was much higher than our neighbours' may have been the fact that the largest hotel on the island, the Vanguard Hotel, formerly known as the Tobago Hilton, has been

closed for over one year for repairs. The Vanguard Hotel has a room stock of 200. The repairs when completed were supposed to have upgraded the hotel to five-star status. It has been noted before that the island has very few high-end hotel rooms and therefore, as a result of the hotel closure, the island has very limited ability to attract high-end tourists to the island.

There were several airlines as I had mentioned servicing Tobago. Several of these airlines Tobago shares with some of its neighbours, for example Monarch Airlines and Virgin Airways share Tobago with Grenada and British Airways shares Tobago with Antigua. When the Tobago Hilton was opened and visitors came via these airlines to Tobago most of the high-end tourists on these airlines would stop off in Tobago for the holidays. However, since the hotel has been closed most of them do not come to Tobago but stay off in the other islands.

Another factor that has contributed to a reduction in visitors to the island is the increase in criminal activity in Tobago with the accompanying negative advisories. The increase in crime has also resulted in some persons from the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe, who were residing on the island relocating from Tobago. Some of those crimes specifically targeted these foreign investors. These individuals were persons who had moved to Tobago years before, had set up their holiday home or retirement home in Tobago. The increase in criminal activity has resulted in some of them leaving Tobago never to return.

They have left their properties unoccupied and up for sale. Some of these properties have been up for sale for several years now. I had mentioned before, because they can only sell their properties to locals, most of the locals in Tobago will never be able to afford such lavish homes.

2.00 p.m.

Now, Madam Vice-President, the increase in visitor arrivals from Trinidad, mainly as a result of the two fast ferries, has offset in some way the fallout from the reduced arrivals from Europe, but the sector is still suffering. Whereas a foreign national would come to Tobago for one or two weeks, persons visiting from Trinidad—except for the July/August vacation period—would come to Tobago for long weekends at most. There was a promise by the Tobago House of Assembly, to offer financial support for these businesses that rely on tourism, but to date, I have been informed that this has not yet materialized.

Madam Vice-President, please permit me to mention another matter that has had a negative impact on the economy of Tobago and Tobagonians. This refers to the current state of the land titles on the island. There is a significant percentage

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of land owned by Tobagonians that does not meet the standard of a good marketable title. What this simply means is that Tobagonians own the land, but they are unable to get a proper deed for that land to put it to any financial use. They are unable to get a loan from the bank and, as a result, they are unable to finance any business activity, to upgrade their property, and to send their children to study abroad. We know that tertiary education in Tobago is very limited.

The results of the recent general election whereby the central government in Trinidad is controlled by a different political party, to that which controls the Tobago House of Assembly, has resulted in some unease in many quarters. The advent of the new Ministry for Tobago Development has also resulted in some uncertainty in Tobago, and time will tell how this new Ministry will impact on the Tobago economy. There are many incomplete development projects on the island and it is hoped that persons in control of both the THA and the new Ministry for Tobago Development, will be working together in harmony for the greater good of not only Tobago, but Trinidad and Tobago.

One of these major projects is the new hospital that is being constructed in Signal Hill since 2002, and yet to date, 2010, it is still to be completed. It is hoped that this new Ministry for Tobago Development, along with the Tobago House of Assembly, along with the Ministry of Health, and along with the Tobago Regional Health Authority, will all be working together to provide the people of Tobago with an institution in which health care is provided on the island at an internationally accepted standard.

The Tobago population consists not only of people who may never have left Tobago, or may never have left Trinidad and Tobago, but also nationals who have returned to Tobago after living abroad. Also, we have non-nationals residing on the island who have chosen Tobago because of its clean, green, safe and serene environment. What is required is a level of health care delivery that makes them comfortable so that they will be inclined to stay and invite their families and friends, resulting in boosting the flag in the tourism sector.

I should point out that improving the health care delivery is not just for visitors to Tobago. It is known that any country's economy would benefit from having a healthy population. A healthy workforce would mean more productivity in the economy. You would have less people staying home when they are sick, and you would also have people functioning effectively on the job. As Sen. Drayton has mentioned before, being more efficient and productive would greatly assist the island and the country.

Madam Vice-President, the importance of a healthy population has also been mentioned by yourself last week, when you sat in another chair in your capacity as Senator. It is because of this, that I find the placing of the Tobago Regional Health Authority to be coordinated by the Ministry of Tobago Development, a very interesting state of affairs.

I should point out that the new hospital in Signal Hill has the Ministry of Health as the client, with the users being the employees of the TRHA. Now, according to the Fifth Schedule of the Tobago House of Assembly Act, No. 40 of 1996, the Tobago House of Assembly is responsible for health care in Tobago. The Ministry of Health is responsible for health care in Trinidad and Tobago. The Tobago House of Assembly has placed the responsibility for health care delivery on the island with the TRHA; in spite of this, however, there are still some public servants employed by the THA providing health care.

Before May 24, 2010, there were three institutions involved in the health care delivery in Tobago. These were: the Ministry of Health, the Tobago Regional Health Authority, the Tobago House of Assembly. Since May 24, 2010, with the coming of the People's Partnership in central government, we now have four players who have major roles in the health care delivery in Tobago.

Madam Vice-President, the hon. Minister of Planning, Economic, Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs would need to explain to me how this state of affairs is for the benefit of health care in Tobago. I now have to ask myself the question: Who is really in charge of the health sector in Tobago? What would be the role of the Ministry for Tobago Development in the provision of health care in Tobago? What would be the role of the Minister of Health in the provision of health care in Tobago?

In Trinidad, all the Regional Health Authorities are under the jurisdiction of one body, the Ministry of Health; one Ministry with the responsibility for supervising all the RHAs in Trinidad. Whereas, in Tobago, we have one regional health authority, the TRHA, being overseen by three different entities, one belonging to one political party, the THA, and the other two belong to another political party. We have already seen in the full glare of the public, the animosity that was demonstrated when there was a tour of the new hospital in Signal Hill of all four parties. I hope that performance is not a sign of things to come in the future. The Tobago public will be looking on very anxiously.

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Madam Vice-President, it was reported in the *Tobago News*, July 16, 2010 and I quote:

"A row is brewing over who has responsibility for health care in Tobago and the Regional Health Authority. Sources said the government was moving to have the TRHA under the ambit of the RHA legislation and has been insisting that its Board members tender their resignations like the other authorities."

This is very worrying indeed. The residents of Tobago are demanding quite rightly an improved health care delivery. We should all be working together for the benefit of the island and the country as a whole. This is not a time for fighting, but for working together for the people of Tobago, and by extension, Trinidad and Tobago.

In closing, I would like to say that I think I have highlighted some areas when taking note of the state of the economy with specific reference to Tobago. What I would like to know is what is the new People's Partnership Government going to do about these matters? Madam Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs, what are you and your Government going to do about the state of land titles in Tobago? What are you going to do to stimulate the tourism sector in Tobago? The tourism sector in Tobago is desperate for stimulation. As the Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs, what solutions can we expect from you in this regard? What are you going to do about the Foreign Investment (Tobago Land Acquisition) Order of 2007? I hope that it is going to be repealed, but I hope that this time around it will be after full consultation and participation of the Tobago House of Assembly. So, whatever is put in place will be to the benefit of the people, not just of Tobago, but of Trinidad and Tobago.

How are these four entities going to work together to improve the health sector of Tobago, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry for Tobago Development, the Tobago House of Assembly, and TRHA? When is the Vanguard Hotel going to be completed, so that Tobago will regain its 200 high end room stock? I have been informed that about \$200 million was allocated for the refurbishment of the hotel by the previous government. I also understand that e-TecK is supervising this refurbishment. I am made to understand that about \$20 million to \$30 million has been released so far. I would like to know what is going on.

Madam Vice-President, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago after assuming office, came to Tobago and proudly stated and promised that Tobago will no longer be walking behind Trinidad, but side by side. We the

people of Tobago are looking on with great anticipation to see concrete evidence of Tobago catching up with Trinidad, so that we are actually moving side by side as we develop this great twin island state of ours.

The hon. Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs indicated the need to diversify our economy. The development of the tourism sector in Tobago to its full potential would, I believe, greatly assist in this regard.

Finally, I hope that the new People's Partnership would seize the opportunity presented to them to really transform the economy of Tobago, and by extension, Trinidad and Tobago. Hundreds of thousands of persons voted for change in 2010, please do not disappoint.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, on this Fourth Sitting of the Tenth Parliament, I would like to congratulate Sen. Dr. Victor Wheeler on his maiden contribution. Congratulations! [*Desk thumping*]

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan): May I join, Madam Vice-President, in echoing the sentiments, and congratulate my learned friend from the Independent Bench, Sen. Dr. Wheeler, on a very enlightening contribution in your maiden address.

It is a matter of great honour for me to make my own maiden contribution in this honourable Chamber, on a debate that I think is both timely and welcomed. As a new administration, we have inherited an economy that is burdened by so many deals and transactions within the visible price tags attached to them, that it affects the state of the economy in a way that behooves us to come clean with the nation and tell it as it is. It is about taking stock of where we are and pausing for a moment of detached reflection to analyze the state of the economy, and to share with the nation where we are at this point in time.

Madam Vice-President, I have heard my learned friends speak to the issue of whether we are underestimating, whether we are exaggerating, or whether we are overestimating our economic state, and indeed, the state of our political fortunes. The fact of the matter is the economy is not in as good a shape as it could be, or as it should be. That is the reality we face.

Today, I wish to look through a different telescope and proffer one of the main reasons why that is so. One of the main reasons for the present state of our economy, good, bad or ugly, has to do with the extent of mismanagement, corruption and waste that took place under the previous administration. Our

economy has been burdened by corruption, mismanagement and waste, and I should demonstrate this by reference to facts, figures and deals. It is a case of deal, deal making, deals and more deals. On the management side, I believe my colleagues have done a very good job of highlighting the skewed expenditure priorities; the incomprehensible preference for mega projects; skyscrapers; the Tarouba Stadium, which was meant to be a tsunami shelter at one point in time; summits; and the like. Some say maybe it was a well-intentioned effort to try and raise the standard of living, but instead, when one looks at the *Sunday Express* front page, an HIV positive mother with eight children having to feed her family by living off the dump, I dare say that such a picture reminds us that what we in fact did was to lower the quality and standard of living for so many in our society.

2.15 p.m.

Madam President, when corruption is secreted within the power structure of governance, it is very difficult to detect; but when it flows through the blood that runs through the veins of the power structure and the structure of a government and is secreted within the bosom of that government, then it undermines the economy and weakens and reduces it. This Government, this economy is reeling from the impact of corruption that took place under the previous administration. I dare say we are flabbergasted by the sheer magnitude, frequency and scale of the corruption. I promised to provide statistics and empirical data.

In just 10 national projects—there were 70—executed and implemented by UDeCott, there was over \$4 billion in cost overruns and the equivalent of over 20 years delay. I want to repeat that: \$4 billion in overruns and over 20 years in delay; that is two decades in delays in delivering those projects.

Permit me to cite a few examples: The Chaguanas Corporation Administration Complex; it is over budget by \$10 million, suffering from a delay of 24 months and remains unoccupied; the Chancery Lane Government Complex, \$300 million over budget, 24 months delayed and incomplete, as we speak, with haggling about the outfitting and the cost of the outfitting; the Government Campus, a legal affairs tower, \$300 million over budget, 18 months overdue, status, incomplete; the International Waterfront Project \$1.3 billion over budget; \$1,340 million over budget, six months delayed. Thank God we have started occupying it. I believe some of my learned friends—I see that Sen. Ramnarine has his office there. The Ministry of Education tower, \$300 million over budget, 20 months overdue, unoccupied; the Performing Arts Centre, \$234 million over budget, 12 months overdue; the Performing Arts Centre, I believe in San Fernando, \$238 million over budget, 30 months overdue; status, incomplete.

In San Fernando, just to illustrate the point, we have the Naparima Bowl; it needed upgrading with a seating capacity that could accommodate many people. We have spent all this money to reinvent the wheel and build a performing arts centre in San Fernando that could house, I believe, 600 to 800 persons. Naparima Bowl was in dire need of being upgraded, but it is a complete mystery to us as to why any government would leave Naparima Bowl and construct something new, with a seating capacity that could barely hold a national concert, given our love for arts, entertainment and culture in this country. It is simply a matter of disgrace.

The Beverly Hills housing \$106 million over budget, 65 months overdue, incomplete. The Brian Lara Stadium—I feel sorry for the honourable Brian Lara to have his name associated with a building that would go down in our history books as a monument to corruption and waste; what tarnishing of a legendary cricketer—\$700 million over budget, 41 months overdue; status, incomplete. Not a bat, not a ball bowled, not a single citizen benefiting to date. Of course, not to be outdone, we have the Diplomatic Centre at the Prime Minister's residence, \$700 million over budget, five months overdue; thankfully, it is occupied now by our hon. Prime Minister.

It does not end there. If we were to find corruption in one area, you could say that the cancer of corruption did not pervade the entire body of the government and you could say that, perhaps, it was capable of amputation and you could safely say there was an aspect of the government that was immune from corrupt deals and this kind of waste and mismanagement.

Unfortunately, we are finding out that everywhere you turn there is a deal; any ministry you go to, any file you open; this is the state that they have reduced Trinidad and Tobago's economy to. Let me illustrate: Housing, Trinity Housing Limited which is owned by—I do not know what his present designation is in the Opposition party—Mr. John Rahael, by the Rahael group of companies, Trinity Housing Limited; Orchard Gardens in Pleasantville, 138 units; the cost overrun is \$50 million—\$50 million is the cost overrun. Corinth Hills, Corinth, 138 units; same company, Trinity Housing Limited, \$128 million cost overrun; East Grove Curepe, not yet finished, 180 units, cost overrun, \$64 million; Bon Air Commercial Centre, the contract was valued at \$13 million, the original contract, I am told, was valued at \$13 million; the cost overrun is \$19 million. Greenvale Development Park, La Horquetta, 230 units; the contract value was originally for \$97 million. I am told that the final price, the cost overrun alone—just the cost overrun—\$156 million. This is the information that has been provided to us.

The accelerated housing programme, facilitated a feeding frenzy at the trough, at the expense of the poor and homeless who were waiting on homes and now that we go into these homes we see the workmanship of the poorest kind; cracked walls, low cost everything from plumbing come back. I wonder: How could we aspire to the much vaunted Vision 2020, when you are building homes for people in 2010 and you are putting louvre blades in the windows? In the Tarouba housing settlement, every person to whom a unit is allocated, the first thing they have to do is find money to take out the louvre blades and put in a little French window, because the louvre blade by itself provides no security. Even if a louvre blade falls out and breaks, no hardware carries it anymore, because it is so outdated; that is the quality of housing you provide.

Madam President, Broadway Properties Limited, Managing Director, Joseph Rahael, contracted to build schools in Trinidad and Tobago. I went to housing, I went to sports with the Brian Lara Stadium; as I said, anywhere you turn, this is the legacy of the former administration and this is why the state of the economy is not what it should have and could have been.

The Couva Junior Secondary School—my information is 1.5 years, Education Facilities Company; the cost overrun is \$172 million; that is the Couva Junior Secondary School. Barataria Junior Secondary School, cost overrun, \$149 million; Pleasantville Junior Secondary School, \$150 million overrun.

As you would appreciate, even now to get the information as a new administration, it is like pulling teeth out of a man's mouth without using any anaesthetic, because the information is oftentimes secreted. It is concealed and even to get it out of the public service is a challenge. This is the information that has been provided to me. I am sharing it with the population, because it reveals that one group loyal to party—now campaign finance manager for local government election—seems to have been rather well fed.

The Rahael Construction Company in the construction field alone, with overruns, amassed over \$1 billion. Broadway Properties is another private company owned by the same family. They generally did little renovations to the family businesses and so on, but, of course, that was immediately transformed into a major enterprise upon the assumption of office of the political party to which Mr. Rahael belonged. That was how they were awarded the contract mysteriously for the Couva Junior Secondary School, initially for \$172 million. These schools were supposed to be completed, I am told in two years; they are all running into three years and more. They are supposed to be used as disaster relief

centres, but the work is of such an extraordinarily poor quality that things have gotten so bad in Pleasantville, I was told by one parent that OSHA has virtually shut down the construction because of safety concerns.

Before I am criticized for concentrating too much on land and before they seek refuge in the sea, perhaps I can turn to show you, that when I say it is everywhere, I mean everywhere.

The hon. Minister of Works and Transport pointed out that a vessel was purchased *HSV Su*; the cost of the vessel was US \$4 million, to date not a single trip has been made by that vessel. Why is that so? Persons who had absolutely no expertise in surveying and purchasing second-hand ships, were allowed to purchase a vessel that was almost 12 years old and in need of multiple repairs.

2.30 p.m.

Today the cost of the repairs to that vessel exceeds \$65 million. Could you imagine purchasing something that is in such a state of disrepair that it would cost \$65 million to repair it? International experts have since advised that if we repair that vessel and spend that money and we attempt to even sell it, the most we could get is about \$30 million to \$35 million. Such gross mismanagement of funds, a characteristic feature and hallmark of the former administration that has plagued our economy and weakened it.

It is not limited to just those areas. Even now that people see a sense of hope in a new administration and a new government, thankfully there are those who are willing to cooperate and highlight some of the more disturbing matters that took place under the previous regime. A letter dated July 14, 2010 has been passed to me and it is a letter addressed to the General Manager of the National Insurance Property Development Company; it is a letter from Mr. Stephen Aboud, the Managing Director of Pharmaco. Mr. Aboud is writing to enquire; he says:

"Pharmaco Industries Limited received the award to supply examination gloves shared 50/50 with Sun Crest International Limited. Our price at the time of submission last year was \$17.50, supplying a product made from the higher grade 'Malaysian' latex, yet surprisingly, the other 50% was awarded to Sun Crest International Limited at \$27.80."

So they bid \$17.50 with a higher grade Malaysian latex but yet still 50 per cent of the contract is given to Sun Crest International and theirs is \$27.80. He says:

"Both products (the \$17.50 item and the \$27.80 item) meet exactly the same standards..."

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And, in fact, if anything the one costing \$17.50 is made from a higher grade of latex.

“In the interest of transparency, (says Mr. Stephen Aboud) we wish to ask that you show:

1. The justification for sharing the contract with a supplier whose price is 50% higher.
2. We have recently provided you with evidence that NIPDEC awarded contracts for container load volumes of gloves (priced at \$27.80) paying higher than the adjusted retail market value. In other words, the man on the street has bought retail quantities at lower prices than the Ministry of Health pays for container loads.”

Everyone knows if you are buying in bulk and you are buying by the container load, the individual unit cost should be less. In this case, Mr. Aboud is saying that the man in the street could buy this for less, retail. With the mark-up cost it is costing less than Nipdec is purchasing it from Sun crest International Limited. To return to the letter:

"We insist that the adjudicators who awarded 50% cent of the contract at \$27.80, be banned from participating in future tender evaluations."

He says further:

- "3. To eliminate suspicion that there exists collusion between NIPDEC and a preferred supplier, wherein a supplier of a shared contract who quotes a higher price receives orders preferentially ahead of the other provider at the lower price, we wish to see the historical data of all purchase orders for gloves (examination and surgical) for the past five (5) years."

This is not the People's Partnership talking on a platform; this is not the People's Partnership giving information; this is a letter dated July 14, 2010 from Mr. Stephen Aboud, Managing Director of Pharmaco to Nipdec. The corruption continues.

When you thought and you slipped and thought that they would provide some light to citizens, you realize that even the light itself was corrupt. That is why the T&TEC street lighting programme, that project, was riddled with corruption. The findings of an audit report done into the street lighting project which has been presented now to the Ministry of the Attorney General for action revealed that the

tendering process was ignored. In one case a contract worth more than \$5 million to supply bolts was awarded. In other contracts, the value was broken up and awarded to various companies owned by one person.

It is the oldest trick in the book. If you want to grease the wheels of the bureaucratic process and to avoid the mechanisms for independent audits, checks and balances in the system, what you do is, you break up what is a big contract into several smaller contracts and you make it appear as if you are giving them out to different companies, but in truth and in fact, there is one puppet master and all the corporate strings are attached to his fingers, and that is what was taking place at T&TEC.

The report says, and I quote:

"In another case, in order to circumvent the need for approval of the overall sum of \$2.7 million, which was the total value of the goods purchased, six purchase orders were generated on the same day..."

Six purchase orders generated on the same day!

"in favour of one firm for the supply of these materials."

So it is like every hour they realize they need a few more nuts, a few more bolts, so "I take a \$500,000 here; take a \$500,000 there." No big deal.

The report says, and I quote:

"They would break up the tender into several bits and pieces in order to bypass the need for getting approval for the entire \$2.7 million."

Another mechanism they used was to say that they are purchasing materials on the ground that they are needed on an emergency basis. We have had this problem before with merit award contracts. Well, there were several instances of purchasing material on the grounds of urgency so you could bypass the tendering process where really no urgency existed and all of this was done to favour one particular supplier.

In fact, there was a case where they purchased nuts and bolts and it just kept escalating; nuts, bolts and washers, to the tune of \$6 million and these were made via direct purchases rather than by competitive bidding. So you avoid the competitive bidding because it is urgent: nuts, bolts and washers.

As if this was not terrible enough, the corruption was aided and abetted by those who turned a blind eye to the rape of the Treasury and the economy. There is actual knowledge in law and there is something called constructive knowledge.

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If you did not actually know but a reasonably competent official would or ought to have known, then you are deemed to be fixed with that knowledge.

It is virtually incomprehensible that rational thinking minds could have allowed this to happen to the extent that it happened, with the frequency with which it occurred and allowed the cancer of corruption to pervade every nook and cranny of the government structure. That is why, when we saw a former Prime Minister, Minister Manning, in the midst of the Uff Commission of Enquiry—when we see that front page photograph, which I remember; it is indelibly printed in my mind; front page photograph—toasting champagne—His Excellency, the President of our country, the Prime Minister of the country and, of course, Mr. Calder Hart in the middle of a commission of enquiry as it was sitting, almost as if it was designed to telegraph a message to the commissioners that, "Oy, doh really interfere with this man. Look, he toasting champagne with the President of the country and the Prime Minister of the country. Watch it." The attitude and the signal sent from the former government was not one that would inspire confidence in its attempt to deal with corruption.

Before I am criticized for saying that I talk about transportation and land and the sea, perhaps I can move to the Rapid Rail Project. It pervades everywhere. The tentacles of corruption reached and overreached into every nook and cranny and corner of the Government. In August 2007, the Manning administration announced the award of a contract for \$15 billion for the Rapid Rail Project to Trini-Train Consortium led by Bouygues Construction. The contract was signed in April 2008. Bouygues Construction has a history of engaging in corrupt deals. In 2002, Bouygues was charged with bribery in the Lesotho Highlands Water Project in Lesotho. In 2004, Alstom, one of its subsidiary companies, one of its affiliates, was banned for two years from Mexico following a corruption scandal there. In 2005, Hungarian authorities found that Alstom had engaged in cartel activities.

If you go on the Internet and you simply type Bouygues and corruption and scandal, you will see what will show up. This is not a revelation; these are facts which would have been known to any child who had passed common entrance and been given a laptop.

I wish to highlight some of the numerous proven corruption scandals in which Bouygues, which has been hired time and again by the former administration, was involved. The corporate track record is one of bribery, kickbacks, misuse and abuse of company funds, bid rigging, collusive tendering, illicit political party campaign financing, forgery and cartels.

On the home page of UNICORN, which is a body which works with trade unions around the world to combat bribery and corruption, there is an article which I wish to quote.

"In 1998...Bouygues (together with two other companies) was the subject of a major investigation by two judges, for a scandal which Le Monde...described as 'an agreed system for misappropriation of public funds'.

The companies participated in a corrupt cartel over building work for schools in...France...between 1989 and 1996. Contracts worth (almost US \$500 million) were shared out by the three groups. The system also involved political corruption..."

2.45 p.m.

On another website, Freedom For Sale.org, there was another more instructive article which is, perhaps, a little more relevant and closer to home. It is entitled "Behind the surface: A world of Fraud and Corruption" and I quote:

"The history of the Bouygues Group is full of investigations and verdicts on fraud, bribery and cartels.

In the 1990s Bouygues was accused of malpractice on several occasions. In 1995, the French police raided the Bouygues' Group headquarters over an investigation on alleged frauds and illegal deposits in a Swiss bank. Bouygues chairman Martin Bouygues later admitted that his company had paid over 300,000 euros... to a slush fund"—which was—"used to fund the re-election campaign of the former mayor of Lyon. Bouygues was later granted a 700 million euro building contract in Lyon...to fund re-election campaign."

Madam Vice-President, the fact of the matter is, the timing of payments in a mad rush to service Bouygues in the run-up to the recently concluded general election leads to the irresistible and inescapable inference that Bouygues was in political bed with someone in the Government.

Madam Vice-President, may I be permitted to illustrate payments made to UDeCott, May 19, 2010—sorry, firstly on May 14, 2010. On May 14, 2010, Bouygues was paid \$3,643,778.90. This is 10 days before the election; \$3.6 million after Parliament was dissolved. And then, if that was not bad enough, they paid a further \$10 million to Bouygues on May 14, 2010.

On May 19, 2010—you know when the advertising funds were running out, because, as you know, you could not watch TV in the last week before general

election, they were advertising day and night, round the clock, and everyone wanted to know where the money was coming from. I do not know the answer, but maybe this might provide a little inkling.

On May 19, 2010, days before the general election, given the intensity of the election campaign, a few days before, Bouygues was given another \$5 million and Valdez and Torry was paid \$54,327 for good measure. It seems as though UDeCott wanted to advertise its success record so that the population could have used it as a basis for re-electing the former administration.

But, you see, that is not all, because Bouygues seemed to have been the favoured contractor in this country. A contract valued at \$300 million—listen to these figures—to build nine police stations was executed between UDeCott and the French contractor Bouygues. This was executed on March 29, 2010. But, you know, what is strange about it? Madam Vice-President, days before the general election, after the contract was executed, the idea was that UDeCott would clear the site. If there was a structure, you would demolish it; clear the site and then Bouygues would go in to start construction, but UDeCott first has to clear the site. A notice to proceed, which has to be issued under the contract 42 days thereafter—the time had come and gone—and the notice to proceed was properly not issued, because UDeCott had not cleared the site for Bouygues to start the construction.

As the general election date was coming closer, on May 19, 2010, a notice to proceed to work was issued by Mr. Hayden Paul, Chief Construction Engineer and Mr. Brandon Primus of UDeCott. This is four to five days before the general election. It is almost as if the winds of change were already blowing. They were sensing that change was imminent, but they wanted to rush and shove this underneath the door, to bind the hands of the new administration and to further burden the state of the economy.

Madam Vice-President, a mere four days before the general election, a notice to proceed—in circumstances where it is completely unjustified, because UDeCott had not prepared the site—was issued to Bouygues at a time when there was no chief executive officer in place and no board in place. There was no board and no chief executive officer, but they issued a notice to proceed. They well knew that UDeCott did not have the site ready. As a result of the granting of that notice to proceed, that contractor is now entitled to payments of close to \$21 million within 14 days and the delays cost \$145,000 per day.

We have already received letters from Bouygues beating their chest—they fellas brave!—saying that there is a run/wait time and, therefore, you need to

actually pay up. Every day that goes by you are incurring a cost and there is a liability to the State. “Not a nail pound into a piece ah board”; not a posthole was dug, but the taxpayers and the economy has to continue to shell it out.

The root of the scandal and the corruption tree grows very deep, because to understand its significance, Bouygues was a joint venture business partnership with Home Construction Limited. And, of course, when you hear HCL, you remember Andre Monteil; former Treasurer of the People's National Movement and the \$110 million share in the Home Mortgage Bank exposed by my learned colleague, Sen. the Hon. Panday.

I wish to remind this Senate that in the face of continuous support of the then Prime Minister for Mr. Hart, we continued, when we were sitting on the other side to raise objection to this kind of dealing. Why is Bouygues so important that mere days before the election you can see a weekly tranche of payment being made? If the money was being owed to Bouygues all that time, where was the urgency without a board or a CEO to make those payments and rush them? Why was it so critical to issue the notice to proceed in circumstances where a first year law student would know that you are compromising the State's legal position?

We have had through Mr. Calder Hart, the Malaysian connection; today I present the French connection, Bouygues Batiment. Madam Vice-President, the burdening of the economy continues on a daily basis. When people think that we are not acting quickly enough or we are not doing enough it is because we are reeling from the impact, and we are trying to grapple and come to terms with how many leaks there may be on the ship of government. We are trying to plug leaks; we are trying to change direction; and we are trying to navigate rough uncharted waters.

When I heard my learned friend from the Independent Bench, Sen. Drayton say that we did not mention Clico and was disappointed that we did not mention Clico, it is a matter of a rather delicate constitution. The whole of that Clico matter, because it was badly handled by the government of the day, has burnt in our coffers and is one that we are still trying to ascertain, to define the parameters of it and to come up with a socio-economic solution that would at least save the innocent persons whose lives depended on those policies.

Madam Vice-President, the Minister of Public Administration sent the Broadgate matter to my Ministry. The Broadgate matter is a lease of an office in a building to be constructed at Broadgate's place—

Madam 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. [*Hon. S. Panday*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan: I am grateful to you, Madam Vice-President, and to my colleagues. This matter of Broadgate—Transcorp Credit Union owns a piece of land. It is encumbered, because there is US \$20 million owed to the Unit Trust Corporation. A deal was struck whereby they would go to the First Caribbean International Bank, but not Transcorp. They cleverly incorporated a new company called Broadgate. So, Broadgate, a shell company, artificially created, just to facilitate this transaction now goes to borrow money. All they have is the land, and they borrowed money. The money that they borrowed is to pay off the US \$20 million—so they paid off that—and then to finance the construction of this multi-storey that the Government would rent a part of. The catch to it though is that the State was providing the guarantee for all of this, and the rental was linked to the cost of the construction of the building, which was not stipulated or defined.

So, the irony is, you have a piece of land, and you are owing money on it, I tell you that I will come and pay off the money owing on the land, and I will guarantee the loan you want from the bank to build a building on the land, and I will then also tell you that I will commit to rent the building that I have helped you build—I am not renting the whole building, but you could rent out some to your partners too. To make it sweeter, we are not going to say how much this building is going to cost to put up, but we would simply say that we are guaranteeing the cost of the construction of the building. In that way, when we are constructing the building, we are going to put in a little extra there also. So, it is a tiered approach to corruption.

I would not tell you what the rent is. We must not say what the rent is now. We will say that the rent should be linked to whatever it is we have to repay to the bank. If we put the rent now and when we finish that construction, it is going to escalate—double and triple—and the rent will not be able to service that debt obligation. So, the rent was not linked to that, but it was linked to the cost of the construction.

Madam Vice-President, I read briefly from the advice provided by the technical legal officers from my own department and from the Ministry of Public

Administration in a letter dated May 19, 2010, again, just before the election. This is from the Ministry of Public Administration. The legal advisor says:

“My requests to have this matter renegotiated have fallen on deaf ears, particularly that of the hon. Minister who was not pleased with the recommendation to have an expert re-evaluate this project before Cabinet makes a decision on it.”

3.00 p.m.

“It appears to me that the wording of the note does not put the issues fully before Cabinet as it appears to give the impression that all is well with this project.”

Nothing could be further from the truth and the comments on record contained in the various memoranda from the Chief State Solicitor and the Solicitor General would bear; the legal advisor says:

“I cannot sit idly by in good conscience and allow Cabinet of my country to be misled.”

I want to repeat that. You know what it takes for a public servant to put these words to a Government Minister that:

“I cannot sit idly by in good conscience and allow Cabinet to be misled and the State to be put at further disadvantage when it is within the power of right-thinking men and women to do otherwise. I am therefore calling upon the hon. Minister of Public Administration, through you, PS, to take all steps to ensure that the note to be presented to Cabinet is balanced and reflective of the realities of this transaction.”

They were trying to fix that note to create a nice paper trail so Broadgate and those who are benefiting from this will get it through the door.

Madam Vice-President, in April, from the Solicitor's General office in my own ministry I am proud to say they stood steadfastly against this project. The lawyers wrote and said:

“The consent and the agreement is a seriously flawed document. There are considerable concerns, the main one being that this document has the effect of the Government guaranteeing the loan for Broadgate and being made responsible for settling all Broadgate's indebtedness.”

Why is the government guaranteeing Broadgate's indebtedness? Why was the government guaranteeing to settle Broadgate's loans? The exposure on this is

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over TT \$1 billion. “We pay off the US \$20 million. We pay off that!” But the exposure is over \$1 billion and we now have to find ways to treat with these matters. So when they say the economy is all rosy and when the learned Senator said we should not just paint doom and gloom, the Prime Minister is trying to obviously make a sales pitch to attract foreign investment and they wish to use that against us.

They know what they did to the economy and they wish to use the expert marketing of our country to restore some semblance of economic order to reverse our economic misfortunes; they wish to use that against us. How disingenuous.

It continues:

“It now appears that the very effect that was warned against has now come to pass.”

There is much more about sanitizing the Note to Cabinet and so forth.

In closing I wish to give this honourable Senate the assurance that there will be no case of different strokes for different folks. The cancer of corruption that afflicted the Government and that has burdened our economy and weakened it in this manner is a matter that I shall pursue to the hilt. There will be no stone unturned in the quest for justice on behalf of the people and the state of this country. We should, but for the corruption, waste and mismanagement, have been the Singapore of the Americas. We wasted billions on corrupt deals, turned a blind eye to corruption and facilitated it with our lackadaisical, indifferent attitude to the point now that some say it is road rage.

Madam Vice-President, do not mistake my passion for rage. When I am outraged and enraged people shall know. But I am passionate about people issues and I am passionate about the rape and plunder of my country's economy by those who held the reins of power for almost close to a decade. I accept the gentle and maternal advice from my colleagues on the Independent Bench. It has not fallen on deaf ears, but I want them to know that my passion is not meant to be mistaken for rage.

In closing, I say that this Government will restore law and order and shall pursue a path of economic recovery to take us back on the correct tracks, but we shall do so with the full knowledge that those who are guilty of the corruption that took place should be brought to justice and pay for what they did to the people of this country.

Madam Vice-President, I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, on the Fourth Sitting of the First Session of the Tenth Parliament I do wish to recognize the maiden contribution of the Attorney General, Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan.

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, may I first congratulate you on the seat that you now sit in and the position that you now hold. I remember with great fondness the fact that you sat on this side, in fact, in the very seat that I now sit. Well, on the bench that I now sit, if not the seat that I sit; and if one is to assume that the graduation of positions in this Senate is to continue in the fashion that you have now earmarked and that is from progression to Opposition to Government, the Chair that you are in, I would only invite my colleagues opposite, not to get too comfortable in the seats that they now occupy. [*Desk thumping*]

May I extend my heartfelt congratulation to Sen. The Hon. Subhas Panday who sits as the Leader of Government Business in this Senate for the Members of the Government and also heartfelt congratulations to my own leader Sen. Penelope Beckles-Robinson. May I also extend congratulations to Sen. Basharat Ali who sits—he says not in the capacity as leader of his Bench but the coordinator of his Bench and may I also indicate my sincere congratulations to every Senator that sits in this Senate, your contributions are for our nation's benefit. I am sure that we will be stimulated by much debate in this Senate and I hope that I can only emulate the flair and passion of my friend who my wife calls the Bollywood star of the Back Bench, the hon. Subhas Panday, in making eloquent contributions—

Hon. Senator: No, no. [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Forgive me, Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan. [*Interruption and laughter*] It was poignant that I should say Mr. Panday, in making contributions to this Senate.

Madam Vice-President, I had the privilege and pleasure of going to school with our Attorney General. We were at Cave Hill together and we spent a lot of time in developing our legal skills. I commend him on very successfully adopting the Motion that is before this Senate and morphing it into one which was a discussion on crime and justice. There is merit in saying that the economy is to be reflected in its many facets and obviously that would include the facet of justice and I compliment him on a very vibrant contribution to this honourable Senate. I do think that his example is one that is recommended to be followed by many, because in the mere two and a half months that he has sat in the chair of the

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Attorney General he has managed to come up with more conclusions of crime and corruption than the entire Uff Commission which was presented with salient facts and particulars. His recommendation to this honourable Senate are that we should be convinced that the Members of the last government mismanaged this economy, wasted the natural resources which were provided to the citizens of this country and that we should accept very bold allegations of corruption and rape of our economy.

The learned Attorney General knows better than most that these are concepts of law and that when we discuss law that certainly there are elements to crimes, because he is recommending that we accept the crimes that he puts to us. He has not condescended to any form of particulars as to what these crimes are. He has made the very sweeping allegations that there is in fact corruption and that there was rape. He has not described an animus to us and he has certainly not given us the particulars of the very high hurdle that any lawyer knows he must cross in proving these allegations beyond a shadow of doubt.

I recommend to the hon. Attorney General, as I know he is a man of courage, that he has the courage to repeat the very statement that he has made to this honourable Senate in public, where we are not blessed with the parliamentary privilege which we all enjoy here today, because I dare say that I, if I were sitting in his seat and standing in his shoes, would be very careful to demonstrate the full facts of any allegation that I would make in this Senate. Facts are the critical consequences, critical elements which deliver the consequences of the law. Without facts it is beyond dangerous to draw sweeping allegations that X is a position or Y is a position. It is what we call the snapshot effect. You are snapping the shots in a pre-election mode and you are making them dangerous allegations to those who cannot defend themselves in this Senate.

The hon. Attorney General has in fact provided particulars relevant to several persons which I would return to, after it is that I return us to the course of this debate, because in this debate we are here to discuss a principal question. That question is the burning question which has echoed in the Back Bench of the Independent Bench, which has been echoed amongst my colleagues standing and sitting here on the Opposition Bench; and that is, what is the policy of the People's Partnership? What is the policy in particular relative to revenue generation?

We are here insofar as the Motion has been moved by Sen. The Hon. Mary King who has invited us to discuss the state of the economy at present. We have had, by my count, 13 speakers; we have spent eight and a half to 10 hours in this

Senate discussing the state of the economy. In those eight and a half hours we have not heard yet one single statement from the People's Partnership as to what its policy, in particular, with respect to revenue generation is? Not one! That is the question which burns right now.

We have an unusual situation of fires having been lit, which as my hon. colleague, Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds called, could only be put for the position of wobble room. Is it your policy and is it your definition simply to complain, to lament or to make wild allegations of corruption under parliamentary privilege? What is the purpose of telling this nation in close to 10 hours of debate that things are bad; that we are, and I quote the hon. Mary King's words: "Not quite a basket case," when it comes to the situation of our economy? It is good for us to reflect upon the past because out of the past our future is born, but importantly we must reflect upon the fact that it is the positive statements of policy that define where we are to go.

The learned Attorney General has said that the People's Partnership has tried to put plugs in sinking ships—as he called it a while ago; tried to make sure that we are still alive. By that he is referring to the fact that there is some form of policy description. I am yet, as is my party yet, as is this Senate yet, as are the people of Trinidad and Tobago yet to hear any form of stated policy, in particular as it relates to revenue generation.

3.15 p.m.

Let us return to this debate. Of the 13 speakers that we have had so far, Sen. Mary King provided to us by way of recap with her snapshot of the plantation economy which is the energy economy that she has described. In that, she also took a revision as to what the drivers of this economy are. We went through all of the statistical information which has been in the public domain for a very long time and, in that regard, I can invite you to reflect upon the IMF Report, the Central Bank Report, the budget the last Minister of Finance presented for the term 2009/2010 and, in fact, in the very 2009 Annual Report of the Central Bank which has just been put upon our desks. All of the information has been in the public domain.

In looking at those particulars, we were left with very peculiar words from a very intelligent lady, one whom I profess to have great admiration for and whose articles I have read with great interest over the years. Out of her contribution came the statement that the economy is not quite a basket case. That is a very unusual statement to be made in a House like this, sitting on the Government

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Bench. Forgive me for making that observation Sen. King, but in my role as an Opposition Senator, I am obliged to assist you by challenging you in your thought, to assist the people of this country by challenging the statements which you made.

In my respectful view, it cannot be a mechanism of confidence to say simply that our economy is not a basket case. It would by far be better a mechanism of confidence, if it is that we were to reflect upon policies by which we can move to the goals which we aspire.

Sen. Dr. Henry in his reflections to this Senate, provided us with reflections upon Caribbean economists and, indeed, he pointed us to the fact that Trinidad and Tobago was now in a position where its economic position defies the historical paradigms that we were supposed to have evolved into. He described the situation where our availability of employment is in fact the envy of the Caribbean, and defies Nobel Laureate economist, in that we now have available to us solid labour particularly in this market.

Sen. Ramkhelawan reflected that the debate in this Senate was firstly anaemic. Secondly, he took us to a reflection upon what he eventually referred to be the three horses which drive our economy. That is the governmental horse, the consumer horse and the private sector horse. He said that those three horses being the horses which in fact push and maintain an economy such as ours and in any economy, that the only horse in his view that was still alive and in fact by his estimation limping along in the game was the governmental horse, and he encouraged us to stand up and state the policies which this country is to be governed by in the next five years. He asked for concrete proposals on where we are heading to, how we are going to get there, and what the economic positions to get there will be.

We heard in fact Sen. Ted Roopnarine stand up as a classic lawyer. When faced with a baldly stated Motion as we have had, we heard him ask for particulars. We in the legal profession are compelled to argue our cases on the basis of particulars, and when we are faced with no particulars, we ask for them. Sen. Roopnarine, in fact, volunteered to sit and have answered by you, Madam Vice-President, in the position which you sat in the last debate, and by Sen. Mary King, the questions as to what your policy statements would be.

We heard Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds—I should call him Dr. Hinds because indeed he did lift the standard of debate on the last occasion by giving this Senate a reflection into what he called his blood transfusion. We stood and we

contemplated in this Senate on the last occasion, the fact that this economy is in fact in a very good state and condition, that that is a matter of relativity always, and that there would be artificiality in the extreme in taking snapshots and in reflecting negatively upon it, particularly, when it comes from the Government Bench.

We were reminded of the needs to return to the drivers of this economy again, by way of policy statements by Sen. Helen Drayton. We were fortunate to have a report as to the state of Sen. Fazal Karim's Ministry and the measures that they had taken in their first days into office in successfully delivering some of their deliverables and, then today, we were nearly sidetracked by the very solid contribution of the hon. Attorney General. You see he is a convincing attorney. I have had the pleasure of sitting in court against him on many occasions. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan: And lost.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Never! Never lost! I have enjoyed my debates with the hon. Attorney General. He is a competent lawyer. He is good at articulating his position, but I stress that it is his position. Unless we are given the benefit of particulars which I am sure will come, and I invite him to bring them, because anything that is good in the best interest of this economy, this Bench will support. This is our country. There are times when we will join issue with you, there are times when we will oppose you, but we will always oppose you and we give the commitment to oppose you in the national interest.

I heard with some concern what some people referred to as the Pontius Pilate effect. I have heard that this Opposition is now seen to be washing its hands from those events in the past from the previous regime. The point is that we are Trinidadians and Tobagonians and that responsibility must set upon us, and that we must have the courage to step forward, join issue in the best interest of our citizens. Forgive me for repeating myself, but that is a very important concept that the Opposition of this country wishes to have on record in this honourable Senate.

Arising out of the debate on the last occasion come very solid issues. Dare I say that I now respectfully wish to differ with Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan in his description, that Sen. Mary King's debate was anaemic because there can be no anaemia in her admission of certain incontrovertible facts. In my reflections of her presentation, I observed with clarity that she had made seven acknowledgments which I think properly described the state of this economy.

Firstly, Sen. King acknowledged the strength of the performance of the Trinidadian economy in the period 1993 to 2008. Fifteen years of performance

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under some eight to 10 years of PNM's stewardship. We had GDP statistics that bear out these points which have taken us in fact to 0.8 per cent recovery in the last quarter. This country, whoever is in Government right now, cannot forget the fact that we are a blessed nation. We had strong performance. The question is not so much the performance in the past, the question relative to this first acknowledgment is what is your policy relative to your continuing performance going to be? How do we achieve it?

Sen. King acknowledged secondly, an unemployment rate of 5.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2009, which was previously as low as 3.9 per cent in the same period in 2008. That can only be described as truly enviable, because by economic standards that is the proper definition of near full employment. We cannot forget that in the rest of the world—and we are citizens of the world as well in an information world—with a bundled economy approach as we have, that in this world that is an enviable statistic and that we in Trinidad and Tobago should be proud of that. Sen. King next acknowledged that headline inflation had dropped from a high of 15 per cent to 1.3 per cent, year on end in December 2009. In Sen. King's own words, that was the lowest rate in 40 years.

Fourthly, Sen. King acknowledged that we had an exchange rate which had survived oscillatory trends. That acknowledgment was made in the context of her appreciation of the sincere impact of the global recession that we have all become intimately aware of. Next, Sen. King recognized that this country has what she called "an excellent international credit rating". We have been measured by Standards and Poor's, we have been measured by Moody's, that our international credit rating is an excellent one, that being indicative of the fact that our debt commitments can be effectively serviced by our revenues, by our current economy. Sen. King then acknowledged that we had excellent external reserves.

Let me pause for a moment to stress that where the norm is three months of import cover, that a country such as ours, with a population the size as ours, to have an import coverage for 12.2 months in this current economy is a very good position to be in.

Lastly, she acknowledged the point that we have all acknowledged to be one of the saving graces of this country. In fact, it is the very subject of Sen. Ali's contribution, and that is the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. That, hon. Senators, is in fact the position that we find ourselves in, having a fund, one established for a rainy day. Ultimately, therefore, notwithstanding the honourable protestations, dare I say that I do not agree with you that this economy is a basket case or not quite one. I think that if I were in the shoes of the Government now entering, I

would thank God and thank the people of this country whose equity it is, that at least I had reserves in my hands, and an economy that I have to be able to perform the projects that I wish to do. So dare I say, with no fear of contradiction, that the baton having been passed by the people of Trinidad and Tobago into the hands of the People's Partnership, they should spend less time looking backward and more time looking forward in the race that they have now run, lest they trip along the way because I am yet to see someone successfully run a race looking backward.

Where I do draw some commonality with Sen. Ramkhelawan's contribution that there is an anaemia or a malady that prevailed in the debate previously, is in the fact that from my observations, Sen. King has made four material omissions in her contribution, omissions of acknowledgment, and there must be a malady in that.

3.30 p.m.

The hon. Senator has not stressed with any form of particular, the fact that the last government's responsibility in putting a baton, such as we have, into their hands, was born from management of the economy by sound principles. The hon. Madam Vice-President referred us, on the last occasion, to a reflection of the manifesto of the People's Partnership. I now refer this honourable Senate to a reflection of the last budget debate delivered by Mrs. Karen Nunez-Tesheira on September 07, 2009, in particular. There we would see, with certainty and clarity, the policies which the PNM set out in a planned deficit situation.

It is, in fact, the second point, that the deficit financing which this country is engaged in, is financing which was planned; it did not happen by mistake. We must reflect upon that fact and accept that it is a reflection of basic economic principles; a Keynesian economic principle which says that when you are faced with a contracting economy such as this, it is an accepted international principle that you must engage, firstly, when you are in the position of the good fortune of having a surplus budget, you must engage in deficit spending.

Sen. King has also failed to inform this honourable House that particularly after six years of growth in this economy, where our GDP saw close to 4.2 per cent of maintained, sustained growth, that the planning of the type which put us into a contemplation of cutbacks and a planned deficit of \$7.7 billion then, is now at a stage of probably closer, when estimated trajectories are concluded, of close to \$6.5 billion.

There were measures taken by the last government to deal with limiting the extent of budget financing. We return now to the echo in this Chamber for policy.

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Where is our policy? Madam President, you recommended and I heeded your advice, to reflect upon the People's Partnership's manifesto. I said to myself, "If this honourable House would not be blessed by any statement of positive policy from those Members opposite me, then I would take your advice and refer to your manifesto for your statement of policy." Regrettably, when I looked at your policy to find out what your statements as the revenue generation would be, high and low in your 73 pages of publication, there were exactly two references to revenue.

The first reference was to the establishment of a board; I think it was called the Economic Development Board, and then your second reference was in talking about the Board of Inland Revenue's need to deal with revenue.

Having only two statements as to revenue generation in your entire manifesto, with all the information existing in the public domain prior, as the hon. Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe has pointed out to this House, I had to turn next to another source of statement of policy. That was in two places; firstly, in your public statements and, secondly, in the contributions in this House. Dealing with the latter first, in looking at the excellent economist that I know Sen. King to be, I scoured her own contributions for a statement of revenue generating policy; indeed, I reflected upon every other statement after, taking it in a pyramid structure.

In Sen. King's contribution to this honourable House, revenue generation was mentioned twice; two times in the position that she delivered to this honourable House. The first position was, in fact, in her conclusion, when she told this honourable House, and I quote:

"In order to increase government revenue, one could suggest that maybe we should continue with the smelter, but anyone who has held, examined and researched and was present when we heard the state-invited guest of the then government sponsored symposium on the smelter project, cannot help but deduce that the project is uneconomic, not to mention the environmental and health factors."

The second reference to revenue generation that:

"In concluding, the ability of any government to meet the demands of its population depends on the government's ability to collect revenue based on the actual and potential economic efforts of the population."

So we had in contributions to this House by one of the chief economists, two references to revenue generation, but they were just that, references. Again, the

entire contribution from the Government Benches failed to address the policy which we have asked for.

Where next did I look? As I told you, I looked in the public statements dealt with on the hustings; there too I could find lots of complaints as to what the previous government had done, but I could not find any reference to any form of stated policy or plan on the part of the People's Partnership, as to where it was going to get the revenue for us to deal with.

Sen. Ramkhelawan described it as basic economics, in understanding that the man that he hypothesized we were dealing with, with a net revenue of \$37,000 per annum and an expenditure of \$44,000 net per annum, needed to find the mechanism by which we should balance revenue and expenditure.

We have heard as Sen. Hinds described it, "lots of wiggle room"; we have heard lots of statements, which are distracting statements, that the PNM did this and the last government did that, and this one is guilty of corruption and that one is guilty of rape, without particulars, under cloak of parliamentary privilege, but no statement as to where the revenue is coming from. Why this honourable House cannot be blessed with a statement as to policy for revenue generation, eludes me. It simply eludes me.

The hon. Attorney General was able to turn up today, after two and a half months, and give a sweeping analysis of every corruption in this country, on every board position. [*Interruption*] He may come with more and I welcome more, because the country's best interest would be served. His efficiency in arriving here with the conclusions that he has come with, demonstrated that he had the time to talk about what went on in the past.

We have had a team of people involved in the People's Partnership and despite having an election bell rung early, despite having very eminent economists on their panel, I am yet to hear the policy. [*Desk thumping*] Two and a half months later, there is no policy. Sen. Ramkhelawan was very generous in saying that there would be a "bligh" of some two and a half months until the budget came, but dare I say, hon. Senators, that we in this Senate are not in the position of being able to wait two and a half months? The position is because it is similarly dangerous to be engaging in certain activities, as I would particularize after, without a statement of policy. We cannot wait for a budget.

No state board has been appointed; persons have not been appointed to populate state boards in existence. No business is being dealt with by those boards. Anybody in the banking sector would tell you that a consent for

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assignment, for example, for an innocuous body like the Port Authority, for mortgage, cannot be signed, because nobody has appointed members to sit and make a decision. So the business of this country of Trinidad and Tobago is on standstill two and a half months later. [*Desk thumping*] We are at a standstill. Why are we at a standstill? Why can decisions not be made? Why is it that the population's business cannot be dealt with? It is beyond irresponsibility for us to accept that business must await the election bells. The local government elections are here, but the Government's business must continue.

Whilst it is laudable for the hon. Attorney General to investigate those things which he must, it is not acceptable for him to not recommend the immediate appointment of persons to state boards. How is this country running? [*Desk thumping*] Where is the expenditure being funnelled? Where are the consents? Where is the Commissioner of State Lands? We are at a standstill, respectfully.

I invite you to heed the very excellent advice of Sen. Drayton. I invite you to retreat; I invite you to join hands with those in your Lower House so that there is not only consistency in your statements, as we have heard there is inconsistency, which my learned colleague on the other side has clearly recognized today. We are not being mischievous in pointing out the inconsistencies. You are driving our car; you are driving this economy; we need you to be attentive; we need to be alert. We need to arrive there on time, safely. We are not being mischievous in telling you that you should pay attention to the road.

Hon. Senators, we had a recommendation from the very debonair Sen. Ramkhelawan, that we should learn the meaning of the word "austerity". [*Laughter*] He is debonair; I see the smile on his face. I wish to recommend another word to this Senate and that is "hubris". The meaning of "hubris" is, in definition, an unfounded exaggeration of self-pride, [*Laughter*] because there is hubris in the self-pride of not coming to this honourable House with particulars. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan: Madam President, I just want to say to my dear friend and colleague, Sen. Al-Rawi, that the documentary evidence I have, I have, in fact, made copies and I will make them available to the media. I intend to repeat these statements I have made publicly, without parliamentary privilege, because these are the facts of the matter. So I take your advice, Sir, but I had already decided that these matters would be made public inside and outside the Parliament. Thank you.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I commend the hon. Attorney General for making the announcement that he has just made, because it is in our best interest that the

population of this country continue the responsibility of public enquiries, of some sort or the other, into the business of this country. It is not the first time that this country would have engaged in an analysis of bodies. We all recall very well something called the "Uff Commission". It does not escape me that it was the PNM that appointed the Uff Commission.

Sen. Panday: After they got a lot of pressure.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Whether there was pressure or not, as we would give you pressure, hon. Leader, was not the motivating force. The point is that it was done. It is the citizens of this country and their equity that we spend in being here, engaging in the enquiries and analyses that we engage in. We are responsible for looking after their best interest. I compliment and commend my good friend, the hon. Attorney General in his announcement.

3.45 p.m.

Hon. Senators, try as I may to have looked at where this policy is, not having found it as you recognize, I propose to return us to an analysis of policy by some of your reflections. Indeed, there are two of them that I wish to commend to this honourable Senate. We have had the People's Partnership stand in glorious ceremony to announce, firstly, that it will have an immediate amendment to the Pensions Act and, secondly, that it intends on delivering 20,300 laptop computers—not 17,000 as people are saying; 20,300 laptop computers—before the start of term to all first form students who have just sat the SEA exams.

You see, my recommendation to this honourable House is that in looking at these two policies, we can get an inkling of where your policy lies. You see, we are left to decipher what your policies are. Regrettably, I speak only five languages and not having heard any form of statement from you, I am to decipher, being the polyglot that I am. So, permit me to decipher some of the Greek that has been offered to the citizens of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

We have heard in the national forum coming out of the Lower House, a statement said with pride by the hon. Glenn Ramadharsingh. He, in delivering his maiden contribution—and I compliment him for that—to the Lower House, had the pleasure in announcing the People's Partnership's delivery of one of its promises in its 120-day plan. The delivery which he announced was the \$3,000 a month, in a slightly modified way, to persons now 65 years of age. Because despite the retreat from the fact the previous statement was to persons 60 years of age, I compliment him, however, in rethinking his position and coming up with 65 years of age, for reasons which I will describe in a short while.

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But we heard the hon. Glenn Ramadharsingh tell the Members of the Lower House and, therefore, by extension, all of us, that you must build your house; fix your roof when the sun is shining. Forgive me, I cannot find his contribution here; I would have quoted it, but permit me to paraphrase. The time to fix your roof is when the sun is shining and he said and I quote his words here: "The sun is shining in Trinidad and Tobago right now."

Sen. Ramlogan: He was referring to the "Rising Sun", our party symbol. *[Interruption]*

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: You see, this is the beauty about the system of Parliament that we are privileged to enjoy and, that is, to have differing perspectives on the same point. I am pleased to say that my perspective of the sun shining is that you are blessed to have been given responsible management by the last regime, not in every sense of the word because no one is perfect and dare I say that none of us on this side here are afflicted by the hubris which I have recommended is a danger to be avoided by all. But I say that the sun is shining in your having been passed a baton on your leg of your journey of an economy which is in a sound state, one which, if you are to develop sound economic policies, you will be able to take to a better and brighter future for all of us, because I am in your car and I wish to arrive at my destination safely.

You see, hon. Members, as my name will tell you—Al-Rawi—I am the son of Iraq and Trinidad and Tobago. My father being Iraqi, my choice was to live in Baghdad or Port of Spain. I am here in Port of Spain.

Sen. Panday: Good choice. *[Desk thumping]*

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I am proud to be in Port of Spain. This is the land which I choose to live in and which I grow my children in, which I invest my effort in and which I am proud to say, includes Members who are friends on the other side.

I want to encourage an holistic approach of confidence—of an inspiring confidence—on the part of the People's Partnership, because you, in driving the car, need to inspire me with confidence that you are a responsible driver.

Madam 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. P. Beckles-Robinson]*

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I promise not to continue in one legacy, Madam Vice-President, that my grandfather is, I think, reputed as having the longest contribution in this honourable House, so I promise not to keep you here for too long. But dare I say that I have, in fact, been a victim of my own persuasion.

Let me return to this debate so that I can hit the points that I wish to make quickly. In looking at the two contributions and that is one of pensions and one of laptops, I invite this honourable Senate to consider that the current debate which is raging amongst the developed nations of the world is in the very aspect the creation of sacred cows in the form of contributions. Both the People's National Movement and the People's Partnership are joined in issue of providing the best form of care for its senior citizens; for our grandfathers; our parents and for our youth and those who are fragile into society. We join issue on the need to look after our persons by proper health care and, indeed, the contributions to be given to income by way of pensions.

I invite you to reflect upon the fact that the last government had introduced an amendment to the Pensions Act by the creation of the Senior Citizens' Grant. In reversing the position, as the People's Partnership has done, and that is in moving to the creation of an absolute entitlement—and I would be careful of the use of the word "entitlement"; an entitlement in law to a pension—I remind you to consider that it is difficult to retreat once you have started. The move effectively means—and the devil is in the details—that the citizens of this country will be paying close to \$5 billion in the first 12 months to maintain the contributions that they have decided. But we have not been blessed with the particulars as to how the pension entitlement is to run concurrently with contributions in respect of the NIS and with contributions in respect of secured entitlements already for public servants.

Little regard has been paid to the comments of the hon. Karen Nunez-Tesheira in her 2009 contributions in saying that there were already sweeping reforms engaged by the Ministry of Finance in the contributions to public servants' entitlements. I invite the hon. Members of this House to consider that the statement of full entitlement without policy direction as to the payment of \$3,000 a month; the failure to state the concurrent application upon existing entitlements, means that this country is definitely in the position where there will be a non-equitable distribution of moneys across the board and that without the reform of the pension laws in an holistic sense, we will be headed along the trap that Greece is, in fact, in right now, where it is in dire straits and headed to the IMF solely over its pension issue.

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You see, as you pointed out to us, Madam Vice-President, on the last occasion, you intend to make definite steps to increase life expectancy in this country. The hon. Helen Drayton reminded us that we are afflicted by a migrating workforce. You know that with your stated intention, your party will help to continue the process of decreased mortality rates amongst infants. What that translates to is an aged population that future generations of Trinidadians and Tobagonians are going to have to make sure to be able to pay. You see, the entitlement as it is stated, without policy description, means that in the period up to 2015 the people of this country will have to find somewhere near \$25 billion in managing the pension entitlement.

This would be okay if we could understand where the money was coming from. You see, there are perhaps seven ways in which you can raise your revenue. These seven ways are, in fact, known to many of us. But we have not heard the People's Partnership speak to any of these seven revenue raising measures. Those seven measures include the fact that you can raise taxes, but we know what we have heard about taxes. There will be no increase in taxes in the public statements, which have now morphed into the fact in Sen. King's presentation, that there would be little taxes which has further been qualified by the fact that, "Well, you know in the IMF, Latin America is being invited to consider taxing the rich." So where we are moving to in these three positions, I am yet to find out.

So you can raise taxes. In fact, a mechanism to raise your taxes would have been to keep the Revenue Authority, because in keeping the Revenue Authority, in whatever form, whether it was modified in some better way to manage the human resource position that turned out to be a serious position; in managing that Revenue Authority you would be taking care of serious leakages to the revenue of this country. So you have said to this honourable House that you will improve efficiency in customs and in the Board of Inland Revenue, but you have not told us how.

You see, you remember these big buildings that are the subject of much debate, were built for certain reasons. As far as I recall from the public utterances, those buildings to house Customs, Board of Inland Revenue and VAT divisions, were built for that purpose. We are not considering adequately the effect of cancellation or at least the appearance of considering mechanisms better, when you cancel projects which you have built infrastructure for already.

So the people of this country, having paid with sweat and equity in their taxes which pay for these things, deserve better than that. You need to give them an explanation as to why you have cancelled or what instead you intend to do when

there is a cancellation. You see, there is hubris in throwing the baby out with the bath water. You do not throw policies out simply because the People's National Movement made them. Remember, the People's National Movement stood on an hierarchy of institutions and those are public institutions. In standing on a public institution—and that is any ministry that any Member of Government now sits in—you will recognize that you have very many capable beings—public servants of this country—who help to define policy.

Hon. Senators, we must remember that politicians are persons in revolving doors. That door turns quickly but the civil service stays there, and the policy which they have defined in helping us to come up with objectives should not be thrown away idly. Please, I invite you to reconsider: Do not throw your baby away with the bath water.

I am running out of time and therefore I must truncate myself into turning to the laptop issue. We are told that the PNM has rushed things; feeding frenzies. The People's Partnership, in its commitment to its election promise, told this country that it was going to give every student of SEA a laptop. It, in fact, in fulfilment of that promise, sent off an RFP, a Request for Proposals. That RFP was issued in July and in dealing with that RFP, delivering upon its promise, it issued the invitation to bid on July 03, 2010.

The bid is for the manufacture, supply and delivery of computers, hardware, laptops and peripherals for 20,300 new laptops. The notice of award to successful bidders is to be issued on July 22, two days from now. You hear the time frame? The contract is to be executed in 14 days thereafter. You hear that? The delivery into Trinidad and Tobago is to be by August 30, 2010; distribution to 151 secondary schools is to commence on September 08, and terminate by September 28. In addition to the 20,300 laptops, 1,000 extra to be ordered by what they call, buffers, to replace those which are broken and there is consideration for a warranty but no guarantee for it. The warrantee is asked to take care of things like damage, et cetera.

4.00 p.m.

We have heard in the public domain statements that this programme is going to cost us \$44 million. What we have not heard in the devil's details—I mean simply that, the devil is in the details—is the fact that these laptops are being delivered to Form 1 students, in a position where there are no security features; there is no current curriculum for Form 1s relative to computers and computer training; there is no storage facility in any school; and there is no electrical

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capacity in any school to receive these things. So, you get a laptop, the battery is dead and that is it; class done. There is no form of development of curricula for the programme for stakeholders in the form of parents and teachers. So, you are just giving the laptops, which are estimated somewhere at US \$300 per laptop, without the warranty, because the warranty costs another US \$300.

So, in fact, what you are telling us by way of loss-leading is to take a few laptops, and let us rush to deliver them. Who is delivering the laptops? International manufacturers, zero local content. International manufacturers received \$88 million, close to \$100 million of our money, to go into a school where you do not have a charging cart; you have no electrical supply; you have no training of teachers; you have no training of parents; and you have no security devices built in or engrained into the laptops which can deal with theft and management issues, et cetera, but you are delivering them at a time when you come to this honourable Senate—

Sen. Ramlogan: On a point of order. I am just wondering whether you can share with the Senate, in response to the RFP by the former administration, was it a local firm that was going to supply? My understanding is Cisco and Cisco is not local.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I am grateful that my friend referred to the fact that the PNM has a policy. You see, the Ministry of Public Administration in consultation with the Ministry of Education planned for the delivery of 180,000 laptops in a three-year period in defined policy to Forms 5 and 6 students after there was training of stakeholders; after there was training by parents; and after the school curriculum had been modified to receive the technology which it was getting. In dealing with that, the price tag—

Sen. Ramlogan: From whom?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Well, regrettably, I do not have the resources yet—

Hon. Senators: Ayaaaa!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—to tell you from whom. But, you see, what matters to me is that it was going to be rolled out in a proper time frame. [*Desk thumping*] It was going to be rolled out where the cost of it would have been a meaningful expenditure to the benefit of the citizens of this country, and the cost of it would have been appreciated by an audience who had been prepared to receive it; not where you spend \$100 million on the laptops; another \$200 million possibly on outfitting the schools for them retroactively; and then rush to engage in policy development for the teachers, et cetera.

You are dealing with schools where the youngest child is taking home the technology and we do not know what is going to happen. Did we talk about any child accessing information on the websites that my learned friend, the Attorney General quoted? There is no Internet access. [*Desk thumping*] It is misleading to tell this country that these children are getting Internet access, because there is no infrastructure for it. There is none! The devil is in the details.

Regrettably, I think that I am going to run out of time. Perhaps, I can stand here and beat my grandfather's record, but I am sure that you would not allow me to do that.

In summary, I wish to recommend to the hon. Senators and to the good citizens of this country that responsibility is expected of the People's Partnership; not only in its talk, but in its walk. When you are walking, we need to know where you are walking. In fact, to use my analogy, I need to know where you are driving me to and how I am getting there. Do I have seat belts on? Where are we heading to? We cannot play with the emotions of our senior citizens by an ill-thought pension policy and our junior citizens by an ill-thought policy relative to laptops when, in fact, what you are really doing is loss-leading on those two. You cannot escape the fact that it is, perhaps, filibuster for you to say that you are delivering. These are important legacy consequences to the people of this country.

I recommend to the hon. Senators that a retreat is in order. We will support you in your retreat. [*Desk thumping*] We will provide you with whatever policy we had in our possession. I thank hon. Senators and my party for allowing the contribution that I made today. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President: Congratulations to hon. Sen. Faris Al-Rawi on his maiden contribution, well done. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. David Abdulah: Madam President, hon. Senators, it gives me great pleasure to speak on this particular Motion this afternoon and to join with others—[*Pause*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, does the Independent Bench have a Senator ready to speak? Would Sen. Abdulah give way in the speaking order? [*Sen. Abdulah sits*] Thank you.

Sen. Dr. James Armstrong: Thank you, Madam Vice-President and my colleague on the other side. I am very pleased to join this debate at this point in time, although I realize that I am not going to have much time and, therefore, I am going to try to condense my interventions in this debate.

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I was particularly happy that this Motion was put on the Table to look at the economy, because the work in which I have been involved for a number of years, that is where I started my review, by looking at the economy as a development planner. However, usually what I would do is add something to that; review of the economy. What is the reason that we are looking at the economy? What is the purpose for really examining the economy? I have found that this debate has been quite open-ended and I would like to bring my own focus to it.

I think that one of the things that we have to keep in mind is that people are still living here in this space. Whether the economy is good, bad or indifferent, we still have people living in this environment. I am particularly interested in people focused development and, therefore, in examining the economy, what I would expect is that we would come up with some prescriptions as to how we would use the economy to uplift the well-being of people in this environment. That is what I was really expecting that this debate would have led to.

One of the problems that I have also found is that whenever we are discussing the economy, particularly economists, we tend to stay at the macro level—talk about for instance investments, savings and the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and so forth. The question is: How can we then use that, as Sen. King has written on a number of occasions, to transform the economy to look at diversification that would change the space in which we live?

In this country people are hurting. That is a fact. There are disparities that exist in the environment and, therefore, we have to find a way to bring those people that are hurting in particular communities to a higher level. The question is: How are we going to do that?

When His Excellency the President actually opened the Tenth Parliament, he left us with some ideas and some recommendations. He said that we needed to look at education and poverty alleviation. He talked about artisans, and those who are actually living in poverty, and that is a reality. Now, the question is: Where do we start in terms of diversification? That is what Sen. King herself has been talking about for a number of years. I have also read a number of her articles. I am always taken to the edge by economists, not just Sen. King, but by a number of economists who would take you to the edge and say, okay diversification, and as a spatial development planner, I am now waiting to find out what exactly does that mean. What is meant by diversification? So, if I am able to ascertain that with the assistance of the economists, I am then able to go back to the communities that we are trying to transform, and begin to do the work of development, so that when we

do our monitoring and evaluation, we can then see what progress we have actually made in the development of the country and the development of communities. That is something I would really like us to focus on in particular.

In crafting a development policy; a philosophy for development, I think we have to come up with an objective that is achievable. The question again is: Where do we start? What do we start with? I would like to make a few suggestions that the Government may look at eventually to see whether these are actually possibilities for doing what we are supposed to be doing, which is good governance and upliftment of our people.

I think we have to start with what we have. There has been this discussion where we talk about a “knowledge-based economy”, and that is something that we need to look at, which often tends to suggest that there is an absence of knowledge. In fact, I think that we are a very enterprising people. I think that there is knowledge in this place that can be used and that we can build on, and it is not in a vacuum. Now, I understand that when we talk about a knowledge-based economy, that we are talking about research and development. Very often many of us tend to think in terms of computer technology and so on. I think it is really starting from where we are and with what we have.

What are some of these things that we have that we can actually use to diversify the economy or to build the economy? As indicated by His Excellency, we have many excellent artisans in this country. We have many excellent professionals in this country that we can make very effective use of in building this economy. We have many talented engineers and we have very creative people. For instance, we have invented the steel band. We have Carnival which really came from some of the very depressed communities in this country. Is that a starting point? Is that something that we can build on?

We have many craft people, with a lot of creativity. Can we find them? Can we jump-start those economies? I say economies because, as I said, very often we are dealing at the macro level without understanding that there are communities in the country where there are actually economies that are operating very much like an island at a different level, all within a different hierarchy, but where there is talent and potential.

4.15 p.m.

So can we ascertain where that potential is, exactly what that potential is and try to build on that? I have suggested that perhaps, and it is one of the areas that I have been very much interested in for many years, which has to do really with

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culture and the arts as business. In this particular country, because of the multicultural composition of the people that we have here—I think it is one of the areas that we need to also look at in greater detail. Now what do I mean by culture and culture as a business? We have the culinary arts that we need to look at for instance and I know every year that we do have a culinary fest but then it is finished as if there is nothing else happening. So why can we not have eating as a business? Every evening eating as a business, every evening dance as a business, every evening playing mass as a business, every evening playing the steel band as a business and linked to that, not just playing the steel band—but then selling 100,000 pans a year. Is that something that we can do? If it is something that we can do, then what is the infrastructure that we need to put in place in order to facilitate that and to facilitate our people in this situation in which we are right now and the talent that we have? What have we done with the things that we have done? Nothing or very little. That is the orientation that I am hoping that we can look at to see if we can start where we are.

Another area that I think I would like the Sen. The Hon. King to look at is construction and I have singled out construction because in my own work, in a number of depressed communities or in a number of developing countries, whenever we looked at where best we can jump-start an economy that is depressed, very often it has been housing and construction. Why? Simply because it easily lends itself to a number of other linkages in terms of manufacturing, in terms of community upliftment and so on; so that in effect if we were to support the construction sector:

1. It is labour intensive; and
2. It lends itself easily to production, increased capacity in your economy.

Therefore, the question is not so much about local content; the question really is about foreign content. There is talent here and therefore the question should not be about local content into what is basically an offshore operation or a foreign operation, but it is really, in my view, using the talent, the excess labour that we might have and to then ask the question about foreign content.

I want to also ask the Senator to look at the whole question of land; and this falls directly in her ministry, because I see land really as an important input into the development process and this is because we are an island state and we have a very limited land capacity. So when we start to talk about industrial development, commercial activities, infrastructure, housing, schools and so on, and transforming the economy, we have to do that really in a spatial context and I

would like to remind the Senator that the last spatial development plan for Trinidad and Tobago was done in 1984 and we cannot continue to use land in a very ad hoc way, put this here, put that there and then when we get it wrong we then say, "Oops, now let us throw some more money behind some other investment in order to get this right because it was done incorrectly in the first place". Therefore, I would like to urge the Minister to really look at the whole business of how we utilize the very limited land mass that we have and the resources that we have. It is very critical.

Not only are we a small twin-island nation, but I would also like to perhaps cite a very brilliant economist from Trinidad and Tobago, Willy Demas. I remember reading one of his books in which he indicated that the process of development really cannot be removed from size, and he was talking about size not only in terms of your land mass but also your market, and he used as a basis 10,000 to 20,000 square miles in terms of land and five million population in terms of a market. In fact using the lower level in terms of land mass, we are about at least six times smaller than the land mass that he was talking about.

He argued that because of our limited land mass we also have a lower potential to be productive and to be able to produce in such a way where we can satisfy a very large market and therefore, I think we also need to look and to safeguard the markets that we have now, which in fact is about the same level that he spoke about four million to six million population and that would have to be our Caricom market.

I would like to also mention in that context the land mass of Tobago. While Trinidad might be about six times smaller than what Demas was talking about, Tobago is actually about 86 times smaller, and I have heard some of my colleagues Sen. Dr. Wheeler and Sen. Cudjoe making the case that particular attention should also be given to Tobago. It is because of these factors, these disadvantages that I think we need to also pay particular attention to Tobago, to find out in what way can that economy, while it is based on tourism as my colleagues have said, given the constraints as pointed out by Demas, what are the other kinds of opportunities and where are the other markets that we can now look at for diversifying that economy and also trying to redress some of the disadvantages that exist in that environment.

There are some other areas that, for instance, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce has identified. Some of these pertain to what I suggested earlier, which would be looking at culture and looking at the manufacturing sector. But the president also suggested that we look at the

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informal sector, and by the informal sector I mean those people who really demonstrated some skills but with some limited assistance from the State might be able to make a meaningful livelihood for themselves. For instance let us think of what we used to call the Drag Brothers. Let us move from the macro level, go down to the economy of the household, the economy of the block, the economy of the community; what role can they play at that level and with our assistance then begin to play a larger role in the national economy?

For instance, in that informal sector, the guys that we call the Drag Brothers, I recall that they made very beautiful sandals. They had to be moved. They could not remain in the location that they were but could we have removed them to an environment where we still recognize the potential for creativity, for workmanship and assist by saying, okay, we will assist with the raw materials, with the machinery, quality control and instead of making only sandals, you are working with leather, make belts, make handbags, make hats and from that find linkages where you can then begin to develop that particular aspect of the informal sector and aggregate that into the national economy.

The waterfront—I once had a vision for the waterfront where perhaps eight or 10 cruise ships would be fighting to get a berth in Port of Spain. Why? Because of our culture, because of our arts and crafts. So if you come in we have the marketplace right there where you eat, you drink our local foods, our local craft and so. So we need to also look at the informal sector as we look at the macro economy. It is a problem that I have with economists. They say look at the economy and it is always the macro level, forgetting that we have people living here and our responsibility really, in this Chamber, is the business of the people. Whether the economy is bad or good, or who got it that way or who is now responsible, we still have that responsibility for upliftment. We still have a responsibility to deal with the people of this country and to recognize the fact that there are these disparities.

I am not saying that because I read it somewhere or anybody told me that. I have worked with an international agency all my life. I was there for about 25 years, came back home about 10 years ago and I was asked to assist with the planning that was going on at that time and was involved in one of the committees called, I think it was, Regional Planning and Sustainable Communities. In fact, Sen. The Hon. Ramgoolam was my team leader in that exercise. So I am aware from that exercise that there are disparities in the environment, in the community. I am aware of that. So I am not guessing it and that is what I am saying we need to address. We need to focus on people and the fact that some people are hurting.

Talk about the economy in a macro level and what happened and so on, but as we are doing that we urge that you kindly also keep in mind that we do have people in this environment and that we need to pay some attention to that.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is 4.30 p.m. We will take the tea break and resume at 5.00 p.m. This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I would like to remind Members of this House that we require a quorum of 10 Members so that we may resume after the tea break. When we broke for tea, Sen. Dr. James Armstrong was on his legs and he will continue. You will proceed until 5.20 p.m., Sir.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. To continue where I left off, I was emphasizing the point that we really need to recognize the vast amount of talent that we have in this country, and I was emphasizing the talent that we also have in the informal sector and citing the example of what we used to call or perhaps we still call the Drag Brothers and the vast amount of work that they did, that we should have been able to build on and have not done so. I think that we can also look at other things that are happening in the informal sector and see how best we can address those. Again, to cite one of the things that His Excellency the President actually talked about was the whole business of the education system and how best we can also extend that to assist in the informal sector.

There was a time in this country that we also had very, very talented craftsmen. People who were able to work on buildings with very fine craftsmanship, have produced a number of buildings that we really have not been paying attention to, and I think this is an area as well when we talk about diversification of the economy. I think it is something that we can also look at. Again, some of the things that we have done and which we should be doing something about now. I want to touch a bit on the whole business of preservation and conservation. We do have the Magnificent Seven for instance around the Savannah, and they have been left to decay. Is it possible that sometime in the near future, we can see buses lining the streets to go and see these buildings if we were able to rehabilitate them, and several other buildings like that, including the President's House?

I was quite astonished recently when I heard some utterances that perhaps the President's House for instance might have been torn down. Fortunately, I understand that is no longer so. But again, the point is that those are some of the things that we have done, that we can perhaps pay attention to, and that could be

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part of this diversified economy that we are talking about. We can take this building, Madam Vice-President. Look up at the ceiling. I am sure from time to time you would probably need to look at it yourself to get some relief, but it is an excellent ceiling. How many people have seen it? I do not see any children lining up outside, or any buses outside, to give recognition to this magnificent structure. Again, these are some of the kinds of things that we need to be looking at. Yes, talk about the economy at the micro economic level, but I think there are things that we can also consider at the micro level to see how best we can expand on these opportunities.

I talked about land as well and I want to talk briefly, Madam Vice-President, about our capital city and the economy of the city, and to ask ourselves: Does that economy work; does the economy of this city really work; does this city work as a city? My conclusion is that there is significant room for improvement. It looks pretty, it looks nice, but does it work as an economy, as a capital city in this economy? What is the metabolism of the city? What makes a city a city?

I made a statement once that if we were not mindful that we were pouring too much concrete into the city, a situation which cannot be easily redressed, then we may very well have a problem, again it is something that we need to look at. What kinds of economic activities can we introduce and nurture in the city that has potential? How does the economy of the city relate to the adjacent communities that are depressed? Can we look at that relationship, because there are communities that are adjacent? I do not think we have abject poverty in Trinidad and Tobago, but we do have what I will call relative poverty and some of those communities are not far from the city.

In developing the economies or looking at the economies at a city level, very often what happens is that the adjacent communities tend to benefit tremendously, particularly after there are vast investments in the city itself. I think the problem is that we have failed to pay attention to the potential that we have. So in this city—and I am arguing that there is room for improvement and in that improvement, we can also look at the relationship between the capital city and the adjacent communities. I am looking to see to what extent we can enhance employment in the city. What is the reciprocal relationship between the two? The tendency is for the city to be parasitic, rather than to be serving as some sort of the potential and enhancement for those communities, and we need to look at how well that works and see how best we can improve it.

One other thing that I need to touch on that I had some problems with in my own developmental work has to do really with the whole business to crime and an

economy. There seems to be a strong correlation between crime and poverty, depressed areas and so on. This has been borne out in a number of studies. I have found that as we are doing developmental work, if you have significant pockets of crime, you are going to find that the work or the development that you try to engage in, the investments that you are trying to attract, whether looking at it at the national level or sub-national level, that crime in itself is going to affect your efforts to increase or to enhance the economy.

Very often my colleagues will tell me: "Well you are an urban and regional planner, you are a designer, why bother about that?" I have to bother about it because as we approach development, we have to first assess what the problem is, define what the problem is, and analyze the situation. I find that it is a problem, in development work, although it is not something that my discipline deals with. Therefore, the approach to development or the planning for development must now begin to look at an interdisciplinary or an inter-sectoral approach to that kind of problem solving, otherwise we are not going anywhere. It means that you cannot come up with a proper development objective, and the activities to address that objective if you have not defined the problem carefully.

I recall a former commissioner of police saying something to the effect, that we expect the police to be the garbage collectors of society. I found that was a profound statement and in effect saying that, look, this business of crime is not simply more police cars, more guns, more shooting, but also looking at an intransigent problem within the society itself. Therefore, do we really need to also engage in the disciplines that we have looking at these problems? Looking at economic development, do we also need to engage other disciplines, for instance the behavioural sciences?

You have a number of programmes in a community. They say, well look, we have programmes. We have social programme so on and so on, but the communities remain depressed; nothing is happening. It means that somebody is not making effective use of those programmes, but that is not my discipline.

5.15 p.m.

Maybe it is not the discipline of the economists, but then it means that we need another discipline to assist us in understanding the totality of the problems within the community, because if we look at it in isolation and one not knowing what the other is doing, we are not going to be very successful. I think that it is something that we have to look at and we have to bring the behavioural sciences into the problem solving network in order to address these problems.

You may very well find that while we are talking about an objective, we may say, "Look, we need more schools." Maybe it is not more schools that we need; maybe we really need education and that is a whole different approach.

Some Ministers might say, "Well, look, we really need more hospitals and health centres." What we really need is wellness. So how you define the problem or how you look at it, would then assist you in resolving the problem in its totality and bringing to the table the range of disciplines that we need. I want to emphasize again that all communities in Trinidad and Tobago are not the same; they are not at the same level of development. There are problems in some that we need to resolve, and to do that it means really having a much better understanding of those communities. If we are talking about development and economic diversification, these are some of the things we have to look at. Although, again, in reading a text on economics and development planning, it is not something that we often appreciate.

So, do we really understand development? Have we really analyzed the situation in which we live? When we talk about economic development—in fact, when we talk about development, in my view development is really about the people, as I said earlier—I would like to stress that economic expansion is not a development objective—economic expansion is not a development objective. It is a means to development; it is not an end in itself. So even when economists that I work with demonstrate how we could expand the economy—and many economic planners you work with say, "Yeah, yeah, we can expand; lots of models and expand the economy"; that is not the objective.

In fact, you may very well have an economy growing at 8 per cent, 9 per cent, vast amounts of revenue, and the society still is not changing. We need to look at some of these things and ensure that whatever we are doing, whatever we try to do, they are intended to uplift the people; enhance the living conditions in those communities.

I conclude by also indicating that I was quite pleased when I saw the name of the Ministry that Sen. King is in charge of, because for many years we have been talking about the need to really look at development in an integrated way. Therefore, when I heard the name of the Ministry, I realized that we were looking at economics, we were looking at planning—economics, social transformation and gender. [*Interruption*]

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. S. Panday*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: I was just about to conclude, however, Madam Vice-President. Thanks to my colleague.

I am quite happy with the title of the Ministry, because it shows the inferences that we are looking at planning, but we are also looking at economic and social transformation and gender. When you hear "gender", a lot of people think it is about women; it is really about young men in our society, young women in our society and the sort of peculiarities which they face. That is something I was very happy about and assumed that the Motion was really to elaborate, to outline, some of the policy issues and strategies within that new dispensation, that new framework. It is something that I am hoping very much would happen, that all of us would be able to contribute in some way to this whole business of our economy, planning the economy, social transformation and gender.

Madam President, I would like the end by sharing with my colleagues a very profound mid-career experience that I had quite some years ago. As I sat in this Chamber, it came to mind again.

The agency that I worked for actually sent me as an advisor to one of the governments in the Caribbean. Actually, I was working with a number of planners, but one planner in particular was the head of the planning department. In the work that we were doing, he would always say to me, "You know, we are not really getting anywhere; we have all these good ideas; we have all these projects, all these programmes, we prepare all these plans." He was very, very disappointed that the politicians or his Minister would not listen. I felt that we were doing good work; we had lots of plans and so on.

Sometimes he would say to me, "You are from an international agency, you have an opportunity to talk to the Minister," who happened to be the Prime Minister, "Talk to him; tell him that nothing is happening; what is going on?" On occasions I was able to meet with the Prime Minister and I would tell him about some of the things that we needed to do. He was someone that always walked with a little handbook, who would always take out his pen and write down everything I said. He would ask me a few questions. I would go back to my friend who was the Director of Planning and say, "I spoke to the Prime Minister and we are going to get some action." Then I would go back to my office and he would call me and say, "You sure you spoke to the Minister?" I would say,

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"Yes;" and he would say, "But nothing is happening." I mean, you do little things, but by and large— Then I heard that my friend who was the Director of Planning was himself running for politics, and I said, "Okay, fine." So they had elections and he won.

I am halfway around the world and I said to my boss, "I need to go down to this country, because we have all these fantastic projects and my friend is now the Minister, so he is going to solve everything." I went down there and I was very elated. We embraced each other, but after the embrace he looked very disappointed, very dejected. I asked him, "What happened, you are now the Minister, you can solve all these problems." He sat in his chair and looked at me and said, "Jim boy, is not so it does work, you know."

I relate this, Madam President, because it seems as if when we are in public life, private sector, we have lots of ideas and visions and interpretations of what political life is like, and I have had quite a few surprises here myself, but when we actually get into that environment, we then find that it is extremely difficult to do some of the things that we would have envisaged in public life.

Therefore, I would like to end by urging all of us in here to recognize that our task really is a common task; it is a common task. Whatever side of the isle we sit, we have a common task and we are now in a different environment with a different responsibility. I trust that we would be able to really work together for the development of this country.

This is a fantastic country. I have had the good fortune of visiting about 100 and something countries around the world and working in about half of those, and this country is a development planner's paradise, once we can put our heads together. I assure you, Madam President, I am here to make that contribution.

I thank you.

Madam Vice-President: On your behalf, Senators, I would like to congratulate Sen. Dr. James Armstrong for his contribution in our Tenth Parliament.

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Rudrawatee Nan Ramgoolam):

Madam Vice-President, it would really be remiss of me, if I did not join the debate at this time in this honourable House, to really bring clarity to some of the issues raised, i.e., the laptop for Form 1 students who would be entering secondary schools in September 2010.

I understand the concern of our good friend, Sen. Al-Rawi, on the other side, but we on this side take a holistic, strategic approach to treating with issues, particularly when these are projects that have a beginning, a process and an end. We do not do things "vaille-que-vaille" and, therefore, it is important that we clarify some of the issues raised here this afternoon.

Firstly, I must take this opportunity to congratulate the young Senator on his attempt—and I underscore the word "attempt"—to convince this honourable House that the Government does not have a policy, a plan or probably both, for the acquisition, distribution and maintenance of laptops. I would now probably identify some of the issues raised. Madam Vice-President, I love the line where the goodly Senator said that the devil was in the details. I believe in that statement. Believe you me, I love it and I totally agree with the Senator.

5.30 p.m.:

The Senator further indicated that we have no security features; there was no current curriculum for Form 1 students i.e. computer training. I think reference was made to teachers and parents; as well as no storage facility in any of the schools; and no electrical capacity that treats with the issue of connectivity in the schools to achieve the desired outcomes. So you get a laptop; the battery is dead and that is it; class done. I am quoting. Yeah? There was no firm development of curricula for the programme, et cetera, which treats with the whole issue of curriculum development for ICT.

Well, my dear Senator, I will have to disappoint you from this side. The Government has already put mechanisms in place and these things are going on as we speak here at this time. We are acting on it. Just to give you a bird's eye view into what we are currently doing, the following, I am pretty sure, will provide an update on each work-stream of the Laptop Project for the Senator as well as for this honourable House.

One: Procurement and project management. This project is currently on schedule. Update: Invitation to bid document was approved; tender advertisement was published; over 20 manufacturers to submitted proposals. These are some of what the Senator refers to as: the devil is in the detail. Right? A detailed project plan, including risk register; responsibility matrix and a schedule plan, have been completed and compiled.

Next step: Update on the procurement process: Evaluation of bids will be commencing as soon as it is closed. We have identified policies; acceptable usage policy at home—at home, I repeat—and at school policy, targeted to users, students, parents, teachers as well as parent-meeting policy. We went a little further.

Next step: Work to continue. We are in the process of formulating policies i.e. governance policy; buffer policy, pool and replacement policy; administrative policy on Internet and e-mail use targeted to administrators; security and theft policy; asset management policy; training policy for students, teachers and parents; repairs, maintenance and post-supply policy; transfer policy and vendor management policy, to name a few.

Update on expansion on secondary school connectivity: the issue of laptop battery; the thing dead and done.

Next step: Preliminary field study of the connectivity infrastructure at all secondary schools was completed; connectivity infrastructure gap to be assessed and development of work plan to address lapse in connectivity and the expansion of this network.

Next: The infusion of ICT in the secondary schools curriculum. Update: The National Energy Skills Centre is contracted to provide computer literacy training for 5,000 teachers beginning from July; access to on-line computer literacy training via Alescon, presently offered to all Ministry of Education staff of the Victoria district and to be extended to all districts by the end of July 2010. Eight hundred teachers trained in Microsoft Word, Office, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, to prepare them for the teaching/learning environment. Various modes of teaching and learning are extremely important, because we all learn in different ways. So it would be Powerpoint; it would be lectures; it would be teaching; casework; student/teacher interaction; discussion, et cetera.

Ministry of Education: Professional development workshops were conducted in 2009 and are continuing in 2010 so as to develop the 21st Century skills among users and learners as well as the use of ICT in teaching. With respect to that, we are training 300 teachers.

The Ministry of Education schools' curriculum from Forms 1 to 3 are revised to incorporate the use of ICT in all subjects. Further, some more information on project details. We have the project name. You know it is the "Laptop Roll-Out" we call it. Right? We have project managers; we have the project scope and project description. I am not going into all of these because this is the devil in the details. The details are too many to outline here.

We have also found on risk criteria policy; the issue of business impact analysis; risk management activities, to include risk monitoring; risk reviews and

risk reporting, to name a few. Not only that, we do have a rolled out action plan, complete with Gantt chart, dates, times, responsibilities, et cetera. Of course, as we move along and we meet our targets, these will be updated and communicated.

So for the information of this honourable House and the hon. Senator, I have tried, on behalf of this side to put some—

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister in the Ministry of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Subhas Panday): Madam Vice-President, I beg to move that this Senate be adjourned to Tuesday, August 03, 2010. There will be no Senate on the 27th but the 27th is Private Members' Day. The Government has agreed to give the Private Members' Day to the other side and there are two Motions on the Order Paper by the hon. Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan, each as provocative as the other and we are willing to debate any one of those Motions on that day.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senator, Leader of Government Business, Sen. Subhas Panday, with all due respect, I would ask, please, at this time that the Senator on her legs, before we adjourn the House, if she is willing to complete—I understand it is a short contribution—that she can do so.

Sen. The Hon. S. Panday: She does not intend to complete today.

Sen. Ramgoolam: Madam Vice-President, I would like to continue at the next sitting.

Sen. The Hon. S. Panday: Madam Vice-President, as I have indicated, the Government intends to give Private Members' Day to the other side and if the hon. Senator could indicate which one of the Motions will be debated.

Sen. Ramkhelawan: I believe the first Motion is the effectiveness of Parliament and that is what we would be starting with, with the approval of the Leader of Government Business.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.39 p.m.