

SENATE

Tuesday, September 21, 2010

The Senate met at 11.00 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it was my intention to do a small housekeeping announcement which was related to cell phones and the untimely interruption of the cell phone during our prayers is attesting to the fact that we must put our phones on silent or vibrate modes so that it does not interfere with the running of the House.

Thank you.

PAPER LAID

The Annual Report of the Housing Development Corporation for the period 2005 to 2006. [*The Minister in the Ministry of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Subhas Panday)*]

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2011) BILL

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 20, 2010]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Madam Vice-President: Those who spoke on this Bill thus far on Monday, September 20, 2010: The mover of the Bill, hon. Winston Dookeran; Sen. Dr. Lester Henry, Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan; Sen. The Hon. Mary King; Sen. Dr. Victor Wheeler, Sen. The Hon. Therese Baptiste-Cornelis; Sen. Helen Drayton; Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George; Sen. Faris Al-Rawi; Sen. Danny Maharaj; and Sen. Shane Mohammed. All Members wishing to join the debate may do so at this time.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan): Thank you, Madam Vice-President, for giving me the opportunity to join in this debate, and through you, may I, as hon. Members have, add to the

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record my particular delight in the hon. Minister of Finance's budget for fiscal year 2010/2011. I congratulate him on a job well done in finding a way to ensure that there was something for everyone in the budget, and also, for finding the opportunities with which we can begin building and restoring our economy and society. [*Desk thumping*]

At the same time, may I also congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia, for achieving something that no sitting leader in the history of our nation has even been able to achieve, world recognition as one of the top 10 women leaders on the planet. This is no small accomplishment [*Desk thumping*] and if one were to trace the political career of the hon. Prime Minister, we would see a clear definition of leadership that is built on resilience, determination, strength and courage. Through you, Madam Vice-President, I would like to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister. It has been and will continue to be an honour to be in her Cabinet.

Madam Vice-President, I open my contribution by underscoring that this budget has been able to deliver something for everyone, and carefully identify opportunities for us to begin the process of restoring and rebuilding our nation. Given the damage caused to the economic stability of our country over the past eight years and in the context of my statement today to this honourable House, the damage to the energy sector of Trinidad and Tobago, I think what the hon. Minister of Finance has been able to put forward, deserves the highest commendation. And by no means at all, do I make the claim of damage to our economic stability under the past administration without careful and deliberate thought. The people of the nation who are really the best and most reliable spectators to the debacle of almost a decade will recall sitting and looking on in horror as the last regime, the PNM government, systematically squandered, misdirected, corrupted and destabilized almost every economic sector in Trinidad and Tobago. More than that, there is just no telling exactly the level of economic, social and institutional devastation we would have found had they remained until 2012. Thank God for that.

Madam Vice-President, the energy sector contributed approximately 39.5 per cent to the national gross domestic product and accounted for approximately 47.9 per cent of the Government's total revenue stream in 2009, and approximately 80 per cent of our export earnings.

For the energy sector, the budget heralded a moment of transformation and realignment; it ushered in a new period of temperate, sane management, and a renewed aggression. We should not simply take what we have and use it like there

is no tomorrow, but also to go out there and replace what we use, strengthen our reserves, expand the sector, involve more of our own people in opportunities in the sector, boost efficiencies in the sector and make the sector more transparent and corruption proof. This budget has attempted to address all these issues, and I want today to express that there is a new policy direction and a new approach in the energy sector.

To address these issues, we have taken a policy direction that will address the proving-up of our oil and gas reserves through an aggressive exploration thrust to address the issue of declining crude oil production to ensure not only that the maximum benefit to be derived from our depleting hydrocarbon resources are realized, but redound to the benefits of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, who are ultimate owners of this resource.

Fourthly, Madam Vice-President, to provide incentives, for not only research and development of alternative energy resources, but with a view to the establishment of an alternative energy industry.

These incentives are designed to proactively seek investment and partnership opportunities in third and fourth generation renewable energy alternatives. This will link our energy policy research and development initiative, and provide new high value jobs for our people, while simultaneously contributing to our nation's energy security. Most important, our new policy direction attempts to address the issues of attracting foreign direct investment into the energy sector.

Lastly, but most important, to ensure that there is transparency and accountability in the sector, thereby ensuring that the energy sector is attractive to international investors.

Madam Vice-President, these are some of the initiatives that I would like to deal with today. Let us start with the upstream sector, the realities of oil and gas reserves and crude oil production. Our natural gas reserves have continuously declined from 2001 to 2010. In 1995, the UNC government came in and met 8 trillion cubic feet of gas. From 1995 to 2000, through an aggressive exploration thrust, the UNC administration was able to move our gas reserves position from 8 tcf to 22 tcf.

Madam Vice-President by 2009, under the PNM's so-called responsible approach to managing the energy sector, our gas reserves position moved from 25 years in 2001, to less than 10 years. If we deal with oil production, crude oil production, we have moved from close to 145,000 barrels of oil a day in 2005 to just about 100,000 today.

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What was the PNM's policy then? Take, use and enjoy it while it last. That is what it has to be because they stood there with a veritable arsenal of policy and just watched our reserves fall more and more to the point that we have reached a critical point, and need an aggressive exploration thrust. The People's Partnership Government has risen to that challenge and I would like to highlight later that we have attracted much greater interest in this sector under a People's Partnership government.

In terms of activity in the upstream sector, there is a table that tells the story because every time we hear about the PNM—over the last couple days I kept hearing about how we have taken their policy initiatives and how well the sectors did under their management. If I look at the wells started, if I look at the activity upstream, and I would really like the opportunity, Madam Vice-President, to circulate these [*A table was circulated*] for the interest of all those present.

Sen. Panday: You never had it so nice.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: If we look at the activity upstream, we will see that in terms of wells started, exploration wells in 2001 was 16, went in 2002 to 15, then to 11, 9, 7, 14, 15; 2009, one exploration well; 2010, two expiration wells.

Development wells started off in 2001 with 140 development wells; went to 59, 142, 125, 77, 97; all the way down. Today, do you know what it is? Eighteen development wells. Are those the PNM policies that we want to inherit? Do we want to use those PNM policies?

Hon. Senators: No!

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Not for that performance. If I look at the rig days, if I look at activity—Rigs in use: 2001, 26 rigs in use. Where are we today in 2010? Six rigs in use. If I look at the workovers completed, 155 in 2001. Where are we today? Sixty-three. That tells you about the activity in the upstream sector of our energy sector.

So, Madam Vice-President, on taking office, when we came into office we decided urgently as a matter of order of business, to deal with the fiscal regime. Our country's competitiveness as an investment location is supported in a large part by the fiscal system that governs the business and fostered a facilitative inward investment environment in the sector.

So, therefore, coming into office, we appointed a team comprising of technocrats from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Chambers of Commerce, tax consultants, industry stakeholders as

well as state agencies, and we decided to address all the concerns and issues raised by the stakeholders in this industry. Importantly, however, we attempted to ascertain the international competitiveness of the existing fiscal regime with a view of ensuring that future bid rounds are successful, given the dismal failure of the PNM for all parties.

11.15 a.m.

Madam President, I want to speak to that issue as well. When we look at the bid rounds, you know—because they talk about every year when we go—and I want the Senators opposite to take note—every year in their budget statement they talk about exploration, proving up reserves, but when you look at their dismal failure in terms of exploration activity, you would see that on the 14th of January, 2004 they had a bid round consisting of 18 bids but the number of PSCs which were signed were just six. On the 30th of November, 2006 they had 14 bids—number of PSCs signed, four.

It is interesting that at that particular time some of the companies like Total withdrew their interest in Block 2(ab). ONGC and Mittal subsequently withdrew from their PSC. Trinidad Exploration and Development withdrew from the south-west peninsula shallow and deep-water blocks. On the 15th December, 2006 they had a deep-water round and what happened? It was a complete failure. So, Madam Vice-President we needed to address that fiscal regime because it was clear that that fiscal regime was responsible and this was told to the government, eh, by the opposition. Year after year we kept saying to them they needed to address the fiscal regime.

With respect to the issues, one of them being the form of the PSC, what the last government attempted to do was to introduce what was called a taxable PSC and that is what led to the failure of that last bid round. So arising from the consultations during this time, two major issues surfaced, one, again, the form of the production sharing contract and the effective tax rate. In the case of the production sharing contract, a prior decision was taken to forego—and I want to say this, because I keep hearing from the other side that we came in and we met everything and all we did was extended the bid time by one month from August to September but when we came in, we still met that taxable PSC. A responsible PNM administration, let me just say, launched a bid round knowing full well that they had to revise the fiscal regime and did not revise the fiscal regime before launching that bid round. Here we are coming into office nearly at the beginning of June, a bid round closing in August and we have not had a thing done on that fiscal regime.

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So, immediately we got to work and what we did was say to the stakeholders, no, there will be no taxable PSC. Of course there were discussions that had taken place and I will give credit where credit is due. The Cabinet of the former administration met and decided they would look at something called an in lieu of concept, but I want to indicate we investigated the in lieu of concept and recognized that we could not use such a concept because, Madam Vice-President, it was leading to problems in the framing of the legal language therefore resulting in companies not being able to apply for it as a tax credit in their home jurisdiction. It would have jeopardized the project economics and therefore this is why we moved away. So I want to say this to Senators opposite.

We took the decision to return to what is called the conventional production sharing contract modified and when we returned to it I made a statement in the other place in July and we made public statements on it in order to encourage bidders. Madam Vice-President, that bid round closed, the shallow water round closed in accordance with the new fiscal regime and we do have bidders for that shallow water round.

In addition, that was on the 8th of September, we had a double-header event, we opened the deep-water acreage, but what we did is we chose to drop what we called the PPT rate to 35 per cent so that we will have takers. My information is that it is now—many potential contractors have expressed interest in our deep-water acreage because this is where we expect to find oil and gas.

Madam Vice-President, what was the contract model to which we went? We went to an open and biddable profit share matrix and I want to say that was something that came out of their time and we have kept it. I will give credit where credit is due. A flexible work programme, a ring-fencing of expenditure and revenues, that is cost and expenses incurred, will only be recovered from the given production sharing contract—20 per cent carried participation which is applied to only shallow acreage, no carried interest for acreages with average and deep-water depths, higher cost recovery provision—50 per cent for shallow, 55 per cent for average, 60 per cent for deep water.

In earlier production sharing contracts these were biddable, fixed financial obligations unlike the 1995—1996 conventional PSC. And again, we did this because it is recognized that we want to shorten the time frame for evaluation and therefore improve the timeliness of the award of contracts and therefore reduce the number of biddable items for consideration. What we wanted to place emphasis on was the work programmes and the sharing of profit petroleum. So we removed all the other obligations in order to reduce the upfront risks to investors, thereby immediately improving the project economics.

Madam Vice-President, let me say as well, there is an issue in that project contract which speaks to fair market value in line with the provisions of the Petroleum Taxes Act. We are taking steps as the People's Partnership Government to reconstitute the Petroleum Pricing Committee which the previous administration illegally suspended. Madam Vice-President, Chap. 75:04 6A(1) states:

“For the purpose of advising the Minister in determining fair market value or processing fees there shall be appointed by the Minister, a Permanent Pricing Committee consisting of public officers drawn from the Ministry of Finance, the Board of Inland Revenue and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Based Industries.”

Madam Vice-President, do you know how many times the Petroleum Pricing Committee met under the PNM administration? Exactly zero times; not once in eight years. A committee that is a fundamental, statutory requirement for the transparent operations of the energy sector was never constituted. The previous administration blatantly broke the law. I want to say categorically, as the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, I commit to bringing this committee into being in consultation with the hon. Minister of Finance with haste and with no delay.

The competitive bid process has been redesigned to provide for simplicity and much shorter time frames between start of the bid process and the signing of the contract. Madam Vice-President, upon taking office as the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, a major criticism advanced by industry stakeholders was the protracted and diffuse process of decision making. This applies to the entire energy sector. I want to tell you it was a complete turn-off to investors. We have taken a decision to strengthen the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs in its role in order to find timely decision making with clearly defined deterministic processes. Now, it is planned that the entire process for these production sharing contracts should take no more than nine months from the time of invitation to bid, Madam Vice-President, compared to one to two years under the former PNM administration.

Madam Vice-President, I just want to make a point in terms of proving up our reserves, the cross-border agreement. On August 16th I went to Venezuela to sign the unitization agreement for the Loran-Manatee field. This is a historic agreement which is the first of its kind in the western hemisphere. It is truly breaking new ground in cross-border relationships. The efficient implementation of this arrangement for the unitized development of the Loran-Manatee field will be achieved through the establishment of a joint ministerial commission and a

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steering committee. The steering committee will meet as early as the first week of October to discuss unit operator and, Madam Vice-President, the joint ministerial team will be meeting here in Trinidad at the end of August.

I am also pleased to indicate that we have also started work on the Manakin-Coquina field, another cross-border field, and two technical working groups, one from Trinidad and one from Venezuela, have met, in fact, to discuss the issues of that field. Madam Vice-President, I just want to say this and say it very loudly and with much confidence. It was my first opportunity as the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to travel to Venezuela. Similarly, when I became Chairman of National Petroleum I had the opportunity to participate in a delegation going to Venezuela in 1997 to be able to discuss this very same cross-border field development. Subsequent to that visit—that visit was then headed by the then Prime Minister—technical teams were established and work began on the cross-border regions.

Now, I want to give credit as well where credit is due. Much work has been done over the last eight years in the development and signing of the framework treaty agreement. I also want to indicate, however, and I hope a former foreign affairs Minister could probably indicate why since the signing in 2007 of the framework agreement, they were not able to ratify, through the exchange of the instruments, which was planned for during the OAS Summit here in Trinidad between Mr. Chavez and the former Prime Minister and what happened after that every time they attempted to get this back on the front burner. I think, Madam Vice-President, there were some strained relations, and, since the People's Partnership Government came into power there was renewed interest to work with the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Addressing declining oil production, tax royalty arrangements, again too that has been covered by a number of physical measures. Madam Vice-President, we had a situation where, over the last five years, from 2005 to now, we were at 145,000 barrels of oil a day. Today we are at 100,000 barrels of oil a day—five years; and then they tell us about their policies? Do you understand why we do not want to re-implement their failed policies? Can you imagine if we had another PNM government in place for the next five years what would have happened? We would have gone down under 50,000. This is why you are there, you know, and we are here as the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, we have targeted a number of areas with respect to the supplemental petroleum taxes and I want to say as well, much of what we

have restored today in this regime for the tax royalty regime we had advised you to do five years ago. I sat in this very same Senate on that side and I recall in 2005 you brought an amendment to the fiscal regime and the first thing that you did was you took away all the investment allowances. We said to the then government that they were going to cause a decline in the energy sector in oil production, especially land production, and given that land production is one that employs more people, the energy services companies are able to thrive better under improving and increasing land production, we indicated that they will see a crisis situation. That then government did not take us on.

What happened today? From 2005, after the introduction of that sector, the service sector declined and oil production declined. Madam Vice-President, this is where we are today and I want to say that what has been determined—and we have made announcements on this—is that we have to return to the SPT rates: at \$50 a barrel and below, we set at zero per cent; for prices above 50 and up to 90, a fixed SPT rate would be charged; for prices above 90 but less than 200, a sliding scale would be used. These rates would be calculated using a formula. The rates are also capped at \$200 a barrel for marine, that is pre-1998, at 64 per cent, marine post 1988 at 55 per cent and for land at 40 per cent.

We are also giving investment tax credits of 20 per cent on qualifying capital expenditure which will be offered for mature fields, and when we say mature fields we are talking about fields over 25 years old and also for what we call the marginal fields, which is less than 1,500 barrels of oil equivalent per day in production and we are looking at, with respect to enhanced recovery projects utilizing steam, carbon dioxide or water flood injection, a 20 per cent tax credit on qualifying capital expenditure would also be granted.

Under this provision, companies will be eligible for one of these investment tax credits not both. Only income in respect of crude oil operations will be considered for these incentives. I want to say, Madam Vice-President, these fiscal measures are geared towards improving this country's investment climate and creating opportunities for enhanced activities in the sector by arresting the natural decline in oil production; two, stimulating activities in mature fields, prolonging the life of marginal fields and reviving the energy service sector.

11.30 a.m.

Madam Vice-President, in addition, we have also taken a decision to amend the Petroleum Act, section 24A, to allow for what we call issuing of sub-licence, which was only on land before. We are now extending it to marine operations to

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encourage investment opportunities. We expect that by doing that, it is estimated that we will be able to unlock small deposits of oil and natural gas that will be considered uneconomic to the larger operators. For example, it is estimated that in the case of just one operator, there are four trillion cubic feet of natural gas in small deposits that can be developed.

Madam Vice-President, we have also met with Petrotrin to discuss what is called the “overriding royalty mechanism”, which has been creating some hardship for the lease farm out operators. It is proposed that the lease operators will be incentivized for the reduction of what we call the overriding royalty rate, currently which is at 33 per cent for incremental production related to investment.

The lease operator’s proposal is for this base production to be based on a decline curve, instead of what we call a six-month average. It is estimated that these incentives would increase production from the lease operators by 5,000 barrels per day to about 6,000 barrels of oil per day in one year. And further to this, Petrotrin would offer 300 wells in the existing acreage to lease operators for evaluation by the end of September, 2010. It was also agreed that a further five areas with potential, at least 100 wells each would be offered under the competitive bid process by Petrotrin in the fourth quarter of 2010.

Madam Vice-President, it is anticipated that these incentives and appropriate work programmes will be put in place by all companies to increase oil production from land-based operations and marine operations, including Trinmar and Bayfield. This is what we need. We need to increase our crude oil production in order that Petrotrin can become viable. Once we have to import oil for the refinery, that refinery margin comes under pressure and Petrotrin suffers in profitability.

Madam Vice-President, let me go to the issue of downstream. The People’s Partnership Government approved a framework for the evaluation of gas-based projects in keeping with the open and transparent operations for this sector. This framework was designed to evaluate projects on the basis of transparent and competitive gas pricing, and downstream value added with additional new evaluation criteria that serve to maximize local content, drive energy efficiency, protect the environment and promote corporate social responsibility, while at the same time, provide long-term revenue and value creation for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The components of that evaluation framework can be found on the website of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs. It is one way to ensure that the people understand how gas-based projects are evaluated, and to ensure that it is open and

transparent. In addition, Madam Vice-President, you will note that from the criteria and the way the point system is designed, it is to ensure that we maximise downstream value added; to ensure local equity ownership in the energy sector; to ensure that we are able to develop what we call transferable skill sets that can be used to diversify the economy. To ensure, as well that potential investors utilize strategies, mitigation strategies, for the environment or use cleaner environmentally favourable processes.

But, Madam Vice-President, let me go to the gas-based projects, because I understand Sen. Al-Rawi had a lot to say about downstream yesterday, and he talked about a methanol to propylene and Essar Steel plant; four ammonia urea plants; the maleic anhydride; aluminium smelter and financial difficulties. I think the Senator needs to go back and check his records. He will note that all those projects have been repeated budget after budget with nothing happening. [*Desk thumping*] That is what the PNM administration was all about. Announcements; announcements. Gas to propylene. Go back to your last budget statement in 2009. Gas to propylene construction expected to commence in the fourth quarter of 2009. Where are we today? In 2010. No construction.

Madam Vice-President, everyone will be aware that—you know, let me just inform my colleague opposite. He is young and inexperienced, but probably needs to be a little more informed. He needs to understand that [*Interruption*]*—*you know, he will remember that there were investors, yes, and I do not want to really call the names of these investors.

There was an investor in the methanol to propylene plant, but what happened is that they pulled out because they went into Chapter 11. I am not sure if you are aware of that. It happened under the PNM administration, and with the restructuring, they have now restructured and they have a new board, but this is not a priority project for them and that is why that project failed. We told you that was going to happen because we saw the signs coming. However, Madam Vice-President, we are exploring such opportunities.

With respect to Essar Steel plant, you continue to encourage NGC to put down a port, and here it is, no Essar Steel plant. The investors pulled out a long time ago. Your own former Minister of Energy and Energy Industries acknowledged that publicly, and you are telling me about Essar Steel plant today.

Four ammonia to urea plants, let me inform you, during your time, three of those ammonia to urea plants were sited for La Brea, and the EMA, when it went to the EMA, indicated that based on the pollution levels, those three ammonia

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plants could not be accommodated on that site, so those three ammonia plants were cancelled on your time.

With respect to the maleic anhydride, the investors for that project are no longer interested. But you know what is interesting, Madam Vice-President? We have had so much interest in these projects today since the People's Partnership came into Government. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Madam Vice-President, let me just start by saying, based on this evaluation framework, we have started the process of evaluating an integrated downstream ammonia project utilizing this newly established framework. As such, nine companies were invited to submit proposals for evaluation, and three proposals were received on August 26, 2010. An announcement of the details of the selected proposal will be made in the coming weeks.

What is the estimated expenditure for this project? It is approximately US \$1.7 billion. The project is expected to be completed in 30 months, with peak employment during construction of 2,000 jobs; and on completion, 300 permanent jobs will be established. In keeping with government strategy for downstream energy development, steps are in train for the identification of opportunities for other gas-based projects.

Madam Vice-President, let me just turn to this issue of Alutrint. The Union Estate has 316.6 hectares, which were being developed as an industrial site to accommodate the aluminium smelter, a power plant, and a petrochemical facility; and this was to be able to facilitate the export of aluminium products and petrochemicals at Brighton.

So we have the port; we have Trinidad Generation Unlimited (TGU), a power generation entity which was established to provide 720 megawatts of power. The first 240 will be available at the end of the year. But, Madam Vice-President, the first 240 and the next 240 are going on the national grid. The last bit of it, Madam Vice-President—about 250 of it—was going to the Alutrint smelter.

Let us deal with this Alutrint, because I understand my dear friend again, the young Senator, indicated that, you know, if we had the Alutrint project we would have been able to cover the \$7 billion deficit. How were you going to do that? You were going to violate the court order? Madam Vice-President, we were going to violate the court order. Are you aware, or is that the respect we have for the courts in this country, that you have a quashed CEC before the courts at this point in time?

That is why the Alutrint smelter has not been constructed, so I do not know how it was going to be constructed. You know, even if tomorrow you started

construction of that Alutrint smelter; let us say the court came back and Government did not take a decision to cancel it and we started construction tomorrow, where were you getting the \$7 billion from?

Sen. Al-Rawi: Misrepresentation.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Let me just indicate to this House, Madam Vice-President, because I keep hearing lots and lots being said about the Alutrint project. I want to start off by saying, do you know, with respect to the Alutrint smelter, what was the rate of return on the Alutrint smelter?

Sen. Panday: Tell us.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Yes. Based on a price of \$2,200 per tonne—the LME price for aluminium—11.5 per cent. And we have not put into this equation, royalty gas. This is royalty gas that you negotiate when you have negotiations with the contractors, and that tranche of royalty gas is normally given to the people of Trinidad and Tobago through T&TEC. Instead, they took this royalty gas and they gave it to the aluminium smelter. On that basis, just the smelter, you are talking about 11.5 per cent rate of return.

Madam Vice-President, if I look at the cost with this gas, we would be talking about 85 cents per million BTUs. Do you know what we sell to T&TEC? Do you know what gas we sell to T&TEC? And that is an adjusted price; a favourable price to T&TEC. My colleague in the Ministry of Public Utilities, US \$1.18 plus 12 cents for transportation. So when you are telling me about this aluminium smelter and how much money is going to be derived, I have a serious problem. The project economics never showed that.

In addition, this is why you have to separate the port and you have to separate the storage and handling facility from the Alutrint smelter; because that project could not carry the cost of all three. But having said that, Madam Vice-President, a decision has been taken by this Government that we will not proceed with this aluminium smelter because it does not make economic sense. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to make a point. I did not bring the figures with me. I want to make a point. You talked about Sural and all the companies. You know, this government had a trend—the last government, the PNM administration—had a trend. Everybody they brought in as a partner, they were all supposed to take equity positions. That meant they put up equity cash.

TGU AES was supposed to be an equity partner. You know the government footed the entire bill? Do you know the government footed the entire bill for the

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Alutrint smelter? Everybody else who was coming in as equity partners, all they were doing was putting up what they called “in kind”. No cash. The taxpayers’ money. It is the taxpayers’ money that has been footing all these foolish ideas of the PNM, including the World GTL project in Petrotrin, which is a total disaster and it is under forensic investigation. That is why—

Sen. Hinds: Point Lisas as well.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Yes, I am glad that you said Point Lisas, because I heard in another place that we shut down LABIDCO because we want to carry some project to Point Lisas. And I wanted to remind others, Members on your side, that it was the PNM government—I have to give them credit for that—who set up the Point Lisas estate in that area. Not us. However, in order to maximize the use of the infrastructure and services at Union Industrial Estate, the projects to be established at the estate, we are saying as our policy position, they should preferably go downstream, generate quality employment, exhibit high utilization rates for power and natural gas, be export-oriented and be a significant earner of foreign exchange.

The Government has identified potential downstream industries for establishment at the Union Estate. These industries include, but are not limited to, the manufacture of inorganic chemicals, glass manufacture, an alternative energy industry, plastics and agro-businesses. We are in the process of preparing requests for proposals. Madam Vice-President, we are currently reviewing options for the anchor project, an anchor project that will allow for maximization of the existing Union Estate. The current candidates are the plastic plant provider. That is the methanol to olefins—yes, we are going to look at that project again—and the integrated complex for a world scale manufacture of glass and photovoltaic cells.
[*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, if the plastics industry—the plastic project involves the conversion of methanol to polypropylene and/or polyethylene, this will require capital investment of US \$2 billion, but I want to make a point. The integrated glass and photovoltaic project which we are currently reviewing involves the importation of silica from Guyana to manufacture glass and photovoltaic cells, modules and panels. This project will require a capital investment of US \$2.5 billion. Madam Vice-President, what a better way to diversify the energy mix in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Vice-President, it is expected that the alternative energy—the renewable energy industry—is a growing industry. It is close to US \$100 billion

now, and it is expected that the cost of solar and photovoltaic cells, and solar panels, will be able in three years to meet the cost of conventional energy supplies. [*Desk thumping*] Therefore, there will be a big export market for these products, and what a better way for Trinidad and Tobago to get involved in the renewable energy industry.

Sen. Panday: Moving forward.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: That is what we call progress.

11.45 a.m.

Madam Vice-President, the benefits that these projects provide include significant employment, diversification of the energy sector, opportunities for local entrepreneurs, as well as create substantial revenues to the Treasury. Several other smaller industries are also being considered for tenancy at this site.

I want to pick up Sen. Prof. Ramkhelawan's point. I know him from before and we shared this idea. That is why our policy is to maximize the value added, to go full downstream. It is the only way we will be able to move forward and ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago maximize the benefits from the resources they own.

In addition to that, we are examining the possibility of utilizing the Alutrint dock and the Alutrint storage and handling facilities for various projects. In fact, a company has expressed interest in utilizing the Alutrint dock at Brighton, La Brea for the import and export of approximately 6 million tonnes per year of iron ore metal. This company has advised that they are currently in an expansion mode and proposes to import the iron ore from Venezuela on barges, because of the limited drafts along the rivers in Venezuela, offload them to smaller barges at Brighton into the same type of storage facility, and then load larger volumes onto deeper draft vessels for export, primarily to China.

Presently, this company utilizes the facilities at NEC's Savonetta Pier No. 4, at Point Lisas for similar operations, but on a limited scale. However, limitations due to very heavy utilization by petrochemical users with priority berthing has prompted this company to look at alternative locations for handling their shipping needs in order to achieve their proposed import/export volumes. As of yesterday they have expressed confidence in the site and that it could achieve their objectives, and they are coming back with a proposal by September 27; that is this month.

I quickly turn to the issue of the renewable energy/alternative energy. On coming into office we met a number of committees in place set up by Cabinet;

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one was a carbon reduction task force, a renewable energy committee and a local content committee. We decided that we would shift the focus of the work being done by these committees. Because they were too research and development oriented, we, therefore, decided to expand the focus of these committees more to implementation. In the case of the renewable energy committee, it is for the purpose of establishing what we call "an alternative energy industry".

If I just take the carbon reduction issues, very quickly, based on the work that we have done with the task force today, two key areas have been identified for further analysis and that is improvement in energy efficiency, CO₂, carbon dioxide capture, storage, sequestration and/or utilization for enhanced oil recovery. This second area is the one we have a keen interest in, that is, in the area of capture, storage and sequestration. It is recognized that there is a potentially tremendous business opportunity for the use of carbon dioxide for what we call "enhanced oil recovery" and this would involve the capture of CO₂ from available sources and its transportation via a dedicated network to areas that are suitable sinks, either for storage and sequestration or utilization in the enhanced oil recovery.

When such a network is developed, the Government will encourage participation in various carbon reduction initiatives via disposal of carbon dioxide into the system and the introduction of other financial incentives or the imposition of penalties where appropriate. The successful implementation of the carbon dioxide enhanced oil recovery in existing fields has the potential to double recovery of oil originally in place and positively impact on and arrest the decline rate of crude oil production.

Madam Vice-President, CO₂, carbon dioxide enhanced oil also holds a tremendous potential for facilitating the production and monetization of our significant heavy oil resources. That is the plan for the next year that we will be putting in place.

In terms of renewable energy, we decided right away to take steps to institute policy initiatives and to establish an alternative energy industry. [*Interruption*]

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

Motion made, That the hon. Minister's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. S. Panday*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam Vice-President, I thank Members on both sides of the House for extending my time in this honourable Chamber.

I would like to turn to the issue of NPMC. I really want to turn to the issue of the fuel subsidy. As you know, the intervention and management of the petroleum retail sector in Trinidad and Tobago is structured so that it provides a high level of protection to the public from high oil prices. This protection is facilitated by the Petroleum Production Levy Subsidy Act, 1974. The matter of the subsidy on petroleum products is one that this Government is looking closely at. The average price of WTI crude oil for fiscal year 2010 up to July 2010 was approximately \$78 a barrel.

The monthly claims by the wholesalers for subsidy on petroleum products for the period October 2009—July 2010 amounted to \$2.3 billion. The levy payments made by the upstream companies amounted to just about \$476 million, therefore, the Government liability for October 2009—July 2010 was approximately TT \$1.75 billion. If we assume that the monthly averages for subsidy claims and levy payments over January—July 2010 hold for August—September, then the estimated total subsidy claim for 2010 would be approximately TT \$2.69 billion and the estimated total levy payments for fiscal year 2010 would just be about \$571 million, leaving the Government liable to close to TT \$1.2 billion. If for fiscal year 2011, again if we assume a price of \$75 a barrel, the subsidy claims are estimated to be \$2.65 billion; levy payments are estimated to be approximately \$551 billion, therefore, the Government will have a liability of \$2.09 billion.

Let me just clarify, as I have done publicly, but I will say it once more in this honourable House, that we are not raising the price of gasoline or diesel. We have never done so during the period 1995—2000. It was that regime, in order to address the subsidy issues, which raised the price of fuel during their eight-year term, [*Desk thumping*] not a UNC Government. [*Desk thumping*] We have always stated that it was our strategy to use an alternative to ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago have in place a readily available alternative, and CNG is that candidate.

We stated that we needed to, and for years we have been saying that the Government needed to get more serious when it speaks to CNG. It is time to walk the talk. So let me just correct one or two errors coming from the other side.

First of all, may I take this opportunity to say that during the period 1995—2000, we started the service station upgrade programme and I think everyone is aware of that. I do not know where the former Minister of Finance got the idea that the service station upgrade programme was started somewhere in 2004.

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Madam Vice-President, I have a graph which shows where under the past PNM government, they talked a lot about CNG. Every budget you talked about CNG, but do you know what? If we take a 12-month average for CNG sales, from 2005 to now, they fell from 700 litres to 300 litres. What are we talking about? We are talking about a lack of interest in the CNG project. Do you know why? During 1995—2000 in the upgrade programme, we targeted CNG stations and that plan was there, but it was the PNM administration taking office in 2002 that cancelled it. Let me make that very clear: it was the PNM administration that cancelled the development of the service station network for two years. They decided to introduce what was called "gas bars" and when they introduced that they put no provision for CNG. That was what they did and then they talk about CNG and about our stopping it. We never stopped CNG, we improved it. I want them to tell me what improvement. How much CNG equipment did they purchase over the last year?

It is time for us to walk the talk. This is how we will address the subsidy issue, by implementing what we call an "adequate national network" of CNG refuelling stations. When I came into office, there was something else that we noticed. We saw endless projects to build service stations, PSIP funds; to put up a multipurpose fuel line, PSIP funds. And these are energy companies, NPMC and Petrotrin, what are they doing with PSIP funds? PSIP funds are for projects to help develop infrastructure in this country. Those are projects that are supposed to be bankable and if they are not, they are not economic, then put them out to the private sector and let them do it. That is exactly what I am doing with this project. We have invited companies. We are giving new sites to put up fast-fill mega CNG stations in this country, to give you that national coverage. As soon as we did that, NPMC came in with a plan that could be funded out of their own sources of funds, not PSIP funds.

There are a number of sites which have been provided and we are looking at developing these fast-fill stations with state-of-the-art technology, because we recognize that in order to encourage citizens to move to CNG, we must provide an accessible, convenient, reliable network of CNG stations.

Sen. Hinds: Do you use CNG?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Very soon, very soon.

We have identified some of the sites already, and NPMC and Unipet have also identified a number of sites, these include Invaders Bay, Mucurapo, Trincity Central Road, Edinburgh Boulevard, Dunlop Roundabout in Point Fortin and

Couva, Balmain. There are two other sites still to come in and we are moving apace. This network has got to be up. I have said 18 months, but we are hoping it will be less than that. That is in addition to the existing stations which have CNG that can be upgraded and NPMC has been mandated to do so.

Let me just talk about the incentives we have given to encourage the market to develop. You would recognize that we have given the grant of a tax credit equivalent to 30 per cent of the cost of plant, in order to develop the conversion centres. We have to develop conversion centres; removal of customs duty and import on the CNG conversion kits and the CNG cylinders required to convert a vehicle from using gasoline to CNG. We have provided dedicated private and commercial CNG motor vehicles to be exempted from value added tax on import of such vehicles for a period of five years. We have also removed the motor vehicle tax. All this is because in addition to that, we have recognized that the conventional steel cylinders for CNG storage should be replaced by the lightweight composite cylinders, in order to decrease the weight of the storage cylinder, which contributes to mechanical problems in the vehicle.

It is also imperative that each CNG cylinder be fitted with a radio frequency identification chip which interfaces with the CNG dispensers. These devices will aid in monitoring and regulating safety standards. The reason for this is that if we are able to trace the certified conversion of vehicles, checking of testing dates for the cylinders and restriction of refuelling on uncertified cylinders, then we would be ensuring that we remove the risk of substandard inflations on equipment that could lead to explosions.

There are a number of vehicles the world over. There is now a global industry for CNG and more and more vehicles are moving to what we call factory outfitted CNG.

12.00 noon.

Just let me quickly turn to renewable energies. I want to correct again, too, what we are doing. We are trying to develop a market; we are trying to develop an industry. This is how we said we will diversify; this is how we will encourage entrepreneurs. I think somewhere in the other place a comment was made that there is no way that we would be able to take off the duties from the solar water heater components because when we go to import solar water heaters, they are coming from Barbados and it is unlikely that Barbados will say no when we go back to COTED. But the language is phrased such that if Barbados is unable to supply, then we would be able to go to COTED to ask for extra-regional supply and therefore we would be able to take off the duties, and so on.

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But in addition to that, the reason for the components—all the components—is that the assembly of solar water heaters will become an improved industry and, therefore, we would be able to ask for the waiver of the duties and so on, so that we can encourage the development of that industry.

We have also looked at the whole issue of energy services and energy efficiency and there are a lot of incentives given in this budget, because we want to encourage companies. We want to introduce, what is called the bonus points for green design in the bids being offered by prospective contractors vying for government construction projects. This is why the Government will provide an uplift of 50 per cent expenditure incurred in renewable energy training activities in the year in which this expenditure is incurred.

Together with the Minister of Public Utilities in the year coming, we are looking at the legislative and regulatory framework in which we would be able to get interconnectivity and that would be addressed by the T&TEC Act and that is because we are looking at feed-in tariffs where, you know, we have given incentives for wind energy; wind turbines. I do not have all the time now to deal with all those issues, but the wind turbine, what we are looking at in some of these projects, there have been a lot of expressions of interest in this area and we must look at the possibility of what we call smart grid systems and feed-in tariff systems. That is where, if you are able to produce energy that it can go on to the national grid.

In the last couple minutes that I have, I just want to say that energy services are very important to this country. We see this country one day becoming a main exporter of energy services and local content is important to accelerating that programme. We have established a local content committee and we have done some work so far. The terms of reference for the policy framework are to define energy services and local content. We have expanded, in fact, the definition of what we call energy services companies; we have outlined a plan for structured development of local companies along the entire value chain. We need to formulate and articulate the measures to facilitate the transfer of expertise and allow for local participation in renewable energy projects.

The committee right now is determining the linkages with the tertiary institutions for training in research and development and they will be providing recommendations for appropriate legislation, if necessary.

I just want to end by saying that energy efficiency is another area that we are very much interested in and we have given incentives, especially for the

petrochemical companies to go forward and to be able to do energy audits and therefore they will have incentives to do so.

Last, but not least, with respect to the issue of the EITI, we have taken steps recently, as in our commitment as stated in our manifesto, that we are committed to transparency; open and transparent operations of the energy sector and, therefore, we will be moving forward to reestablish—in fact, the last administration allowed their membership of the EITI to lapse as a candidate. We have recently reestablished ourselves as a candidate and Cabinet has just approved the steering committee to monitor the implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative Programme. Within a year we expect to be back as a member.

[Sen. Hinds stands]

You want me to give way but I am almost at the end of my contribution. I want to say that the sector is exciting and under a People's Partnership Government—

Sen. Hinds: Thank you very kindly for giving way, hon. Minister. Having stated your Government's policy to stop the Alutrint project, what would you say by way of comfort to the many people of the area who were preparing themselves for employment in that area? And also what is your immediate plan for replacement to deal with the big hole that your new policy would have left for the people of La Brea?

Sen. Panday: What happen? “Yuh was sleeping all the time?” You were not listening?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I have one minute, Member. I will take up that issue at another time. I just need to close off but I do not know if you probably were not listening.

Sen. Hinds: You did not make yourself clear.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Let me just make one other thing clear. Under your time, I want to know what hole was left when you had to quash the CEC order and there was no activity on the Alutrint smelter. So what hole are you talking about?

But we have identified an alternative strategy. And I should also add, which I forgot, at this point in time there are still interests in the development of a downstream aluminium sector, that is for downstream rods, cables, aluminium

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products and, therefore, we are looking at the importation of aluminium for the Alutech project and so on.

In accordance with the People's Partnership, we are fully committed to good governance, transparency and accountability in the energy sector. Good governance is a step towards ensuring competitiveness and efficiency in the sector and will go a long way in attracting international investors. We have the plans and we will make the change for the energy sector.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Members, I do wish to thank the Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. I wish to congratulate you on your contribution here today. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*] I rise to make a contribution, although it is my first time speaking in this Parliament it is not my maiden contribution. As you know, I have been around here for a few years—but wish to welcome first all of the Senators appointed and to congratulate you, in particular, on your elevation as Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*] I would also like to say at the outset how pleased I am to see Members on the Government side wearing the national flag. [*Desk thumping*] I was a part of the Bridget Brereton committee that looked at national awards and other such things and we did make a clear recommendation to the government at the time that party symbols be avoided by the governing side when presenting in this august House. So it is very nice to see the national flag being worn by the Government.

I rise to make a brief contribution on this budget and to speak on two other matters related to it, that would be competitiveness on the one hand and to raise some contemplative questions on the other. I want to start by raising, I suppose, and answering very quickly a question that had first exercised my mind when I was anticipating the budget and that was: How is the Minister of Finance going to balance the budget? And, of course, the short answer is, he is not going to. And I guess the more you think about it, the more you look at the structure of our economy, he cannot. And so we have entered a phase of deficit financing now and I think Sen. Ramkhelawan is spot on to say that this is necessary; it is not something that we should be looking at in the very near future at all, otherwise I think it sets us into a very dangerous deficit spending cycle that can only be inimical to our long-term interest.

So having said that and looking at the deficit budget that we have in front of us, what does this budget really endeavour to do? What I found is—the theme of the budget is "Turning the Economy Around" and it certainly seems to attempt to do something like that, but I think what it does for me is, it begins the process of reorienting the direction of the economy. That is important and I think I am getting a fairly clear message that that is being contemplated. I know that all of the answers are not there. They cannot be there. We have been talking about diversification, moving away from energy and so on, for decades, so the answers are not going to come overnight. What I do see, however, is an attempt to plumb the depths of our intelligence to find the answers and I think that is laudable.

In a sense, in my view, budgets are overrated things, in the least they are strategic statements, because a budget tells you what you are going to spend; what you are going to make, but there are many, many strategic moves that a government can make that do not find themselves in a budget statement; do not find themselves in estimations of revenue and expenditure and so on. So a lot of Government policy escapes a budget entirely. So people look on with anticipation for budgets and budget speeches and so on, but I think more than anything else what is required of any government is greater and greater transparency so that all of the citizens can tell where it is the government is trying to go, and what are the underpinnings that anchor or moor the actions and the strategies that the government or various ministries are putting forward.

So it is very difficult to encapsulate in one document every living thing that a government is going to try to do. And that is not just true in Trinidad and Tobago; you are seeing it right across the Commonwealth. It is very difficult to capture it all in one document. And perhaps you should not. Perhaps we ought to just stick with revenue and expenditure and focus on the strategic statements elsewhere. That is something for the Government to make a determination on.

However, the budget was happily specific in one area, at least, that has been of trouble to me and that would be: what are we going to do with Clico and the Hindu Credit Union? I think that there has been a regulatory failure, is not in doubt, however, I think that what has not been said is how long before the crash of these institutions the authorities were aware that something was very wrong.

Sen. Panday: They just had to take out their own money.

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin: I saw in December of 2001—I was in a meeting and I saw a document presented there that suggested that CL Financial was in difficulty or was going to be in difficulty. In October 2003 or thereabouts, I was at

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a meeting in the Central Bank and it was raised there, that the Hindu Credit Union was of some concern and so was Clico and its diverse operations. So we knew; we knew for some time and so we have something of a moral authority to help depositors out. But what I do worry about in that regard is in doing this—and now in hearing from somewhere; I do not know if it is true or not—the Minister of Finance saying that he is going to engage with credit unions which have deposited large sums of money in Clico and its related businesses about how they are going to help them out and so on.

The thing that is of interest to me with that is that it points out how weak the financial management of some of these credit unions are. There is no way that a right-thinking person would look at someone paying almost twice the going market rate and think that that is a safe investment or everything is okay. There is an inverse relationship between risk and safe return and Sen. Prof. Watson will, no doubt, speak to that.

If you are going to get an above average rate of return, there has to be an attendant risk, so you cannot tell me that if you are running a credit union you take all of these people's money; put it in one of these instruments and have a heart attack when something goes wrong. Something is very likely going to go wrong when you invest in things that are risky.

But here is the rub, of course: how literate is our investing community? How financially literate are they? In the United States there has recently been a very lengthy debate on a complex bill called the Dodd-Frank Bill and they spent quite some time really examining exactly that point. The investor in financial instruments is often not literate about the instruments he or she might be putting their money into and that needs to be addressed. I do not think it is something that Government can address alone; I think the whole financial system has to play a part in fixing that, because that issue of financial illiteracy is extremely important.

12.15 p.m.

What people do when they are financially illiterate is chase rates and, if you are chasing rates, you are going to put your money in more and more dangerous things and get hurt.

There is an aspect that has not been covered anywhere or discussed that I think ought to be thought about, that is, that some of the people selling these instruments ought also to bear some of the burden of responsibility. A consumer may be illiterate, but the person selling should not be and should be able to

appropriately guide a grandmother or grandfather who has his or her little life savings and who wants to invest it to get some returns.

I have seen retired bankers, corporate bankers, people who have spent their lives being financially prudent and telling businesses that they need an arm and a leg to secure a small loan, go out afterwards, join a company and sell these instruments, very irresponsibly chasing rates, chasing agency fees, chasing bonuses and profits; and that I do not think is right at all.

Madam Vice-President, I endorse the public utterances of Sen. Prof. Watson, if they were reported correctly, and of my fellow Sen. Helen Drayton, which said that the directors and management of the Hindu Credit Union (HCU) and CL Financial, Clico Investment Bank—call them what you will—should see the inside of a courtroom and probably some of them the inside of a jail. There is no way you can ask the public to pay the cost of this kind of extreme mismanagement and there be no consequence to it.

In the US, they would be locked up a long time ago. It is only in Trinidad and Tobago that they walk around still. We will see them no doubt at carnival fetes next year and so on; but they should not be there. They need to be in a much more confined space and I hope that when we are thinking about bailing them out and spending the public's money—I assume the \$1.8 billion that you will put is to set up a sinking fund to pay off the moneys over a 20-year period—if that is what we are doing, we should, on the other hand, have the people responsible for this kind of thing looking at the management and certainly the boards. Those directors should be immediately disqualified from serving on the boards of other companies. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Forget the law; it is a matter of ethics.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Change the law! You should not have them serving as directors of other companies where shareholders are removed from the management and putting their money into these companies for people to manage.

Madam Vice-President, having said that, a big question for me, coming out of the budget speech and the attendant documents and listening to Sen. the Hon. King yesterday, would be: How do we get competitive? How do we reorient this economy to get competitive again? The short answer, of course, would be to fix the basics.

What is competitiveness? It is a set of institutions, policies and factors that drive productivity. Productivity in turn determines the standard of living that you

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can sustainably pay for because you are producing goods and services at a certain rate and a certain level and you have a sense from that of what the economy could continue to sustainably pay for supply.

When we look at Trinidad and Tobago's performance on the Global Competitiveness Report—I actually do the research that produces this and I have heard it quoted and misquoted in some aspects—our biggest weaknesses are at the top and the bottom of the scale.

At the very top, what you have in terms of institutions, which are the very first pillar—there are 12 pillars—and when you look at the institutional strength, there is a problem with the institutional structure and the political culture of Trinidad and Tobago, at least the perception of it, and that in part drives our competitiveness ranking.

The ranking for competitiveness comes both from objectively verifiable quantitative data and a survey of the people who are doing the major investments in the Trinidad and Tobago economy. You just survey about 120 to 130 of them across different sectors. You can use these responses when collated as a kind of proxy of business sentiment of what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago.

This is what the results are saying: the diversion of public funds, which would be corruption, we rank 81st out of 139 countries; public trust of politicians, 103rd; wastefulness in government spending, 75th out of 139 countries. So that is not a good performance at all.

So our perception of how governments handle public funds is very poor. You see that even with the recent laptop computer contract. I want to talk about that in a second because I found some aspects of it quite funny. To me it is a simple transaction. I do not understand how it reached where it did.

Our institutional framework continues to be weak. We do not trust our institutions. The Chief Justice was alluding to that. He was making the point that it is 48 years and we ought to go with the CCJ now; but I wonder if you had a referendum on that what the public would say. Do we feel we can govern our affairs in a legal sense to the extent that we want to get rid of the Privy Council?

The answers here tell us that there is a serious problem in terms of public trust and then there are some more specific aspects that are also of concern. We ranked 131st out of 139 countries for the business cost of crime and violence. If you look in the Yellow Pages or do a quick scan of the industry, there are as many or more private security officers than the military and the police. So this is a massive industry and you burden business with the cost.

You talk with small entrepreneurs all the time; their biggest problem is not just access for financing, it is crime. Somebody sets up a little business somewhere, bandits break down the wall and steal everything in the night, so when you open your gate in the morning, you see an empty shell.

What do you have to do then? You have to look for a job; look for somebody to help. So we actually reinforce a culture of dependence when we permit criminal activity to injure so grievously the entrepreneurial class of the country. Entrepreneurs cannot always afford to get back on their feet; sometimes they are already leveraged to the hilt.

That happens in the agriculture sector, too. We call it praedial larceny. It sounds so nice, so mundane and benign almost, but it is a terrifying thing. There are no lights there in these agricultural lands. In the dead of night, these people come to your garden; you hear a noise, men are outside. They say: If you come outside here, we will kill you, "yuh" know. We just come to pick our crop. They drive a big truck into your land, steal everything you spent months growing and are gone with it. Then we say that nobody wants to plant the land.

Crime and violence are obviously affecting the competitiveness of Trinidad and Tobago in a very significant way. So much so that when this thing was first done for Trinidad and Tobago—I did it again in 2003—again crime and theft was the number one issue. Here we are in 2010: Crime and theft, number one issue and so much more has to be done where that is concerned.

[SEN. PROF. PATRICK WATSON *in the Chair*]

So, in a sense, I am always tempted to wonder whether we do not wrong-foot ourselves as a society when we drill into certain questions. To me the issue is not just getting more police officers on the street. Yes, we are about 2,000 or 3,000 men and women short. We know that, but if what is reported is true; that the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT) is being shut down—which I absolutely agree with—those people will then be put back into the defence force or the police force, wherever they came from and populated those agencies.

One of the problems is that this is a kind of musical chairs arrangement. Whenever someone sets up a new unit, they take people from somewhere else in the service to do that. You saw the same thing in San José, in Costa Rica, when multinationals started relocating headquarters there. What they found to their detriment was that there were a finite number of people in San José who could speak English. So they started jumping from one multinational to the other and

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charging more money. The rate of intake into our protective services is not sufficient to replenish the ranks, so we need to look at that.

Again, I do not think that is the right question. It is not just a question of what you do with SAUTT and getting more officers on the street. The question the entire country is ignoring with extreme efficiency is how we have come to so systematically manufacture criminals. The society is a factory for criminals. We are producing criminals every single day. Even with the lowest detection rate in the world, the courts are full and the jails are full.

So what is happening in our society that allows us to produce a criminal for everyone that is killed or incarcerated or put in Remand Yard? I read in the newspaper this morning that the former head of SAUTT, former as at yesterday or today—I do not know again if that is true; sometimes the newspapers get it wrong—says: We do not spy on politicians. That cannot be true. He says further, if the statement is to be believed, that they only spy on criminals. If a man is a criminal, why is he not in jail?

Sen. Hinds: Some politicians may be criminals.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: May be criminals. I accept that. But if he is a criminal, Sir—I call you Sir because I do not know how to address you. Mr. Vice-President? Would that be appropriate?

If they are criminals, why do you not have them in jail and how do you know they are criminals to spy on them? I have seen for myself that calls are monitored. There is more than one way to monitor a call. You do not have to do wiretapping. The telecommunication services in this country and the intelligence agencies have that capability and they use it.

In fact, Mr. Vice-President, you look so natural in the Chair, if I may say so. I think the people who have the least access to these technologies and databases would be the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and I say that with some knowledge of things. I do not think it is right to say there is no spying. Far from it!

Coming back to competitiveness, we have a problem here. Our institutions are too weak and, on the other side of the scale in innovative terms, we are not doing enough.

12.30 p.m.

What must we do? Where are we? We are stuck in the middle. We are stuck in no-man's-land. If this were a game of lawn tennis, we are between the baseline and the net. You are at the place where you should not be at all. You should be

traversing there and not standing there. We have been standing there for a while. Sen. Al-Rawi was right, we went from 49th to 84th and we did add over the five-year period, 37 countries to the mix. What it will mean is that we have not really advanced the way that we should have. So we continue to be a transition economy and that is because, in part, I would not call it a curse, but because we have done so well out of gas.

We need now to change that. We need now to diversify from that, to grow from that, to use gas to our advantage. The question would be: Are we producing what the economy needs to do that? A quick check on the Internet and then some quick calls suggested that UWI in St. Augustine offers 150 different types of degrees. I do not know how much the UTT does and I do not know how much the private folks do, but that is a lot of different types of degrees. UWI, St. Augustine at the moment has a larger student population than the University of Cambridge. You have to wonder what happens to quality when you have such a vast, rapid expansion in enrolment. I would say that education is too important to leave to educators. I think that the society needs to have a much greater say in what is offered at tertiary level. It should not just be a function of what we are capable of teaching, but we need to make some strategic decisions about where we are going to carry this economy and this society.

I think that the GATE system, in part at least, is being abused; it must be. I was very glad to hear the Government say that they are going to look at that. The rapid expansion of GATE can also be inimical to the development of an innovative society. Let me explain what I mean by that, because I know I am probably sounding counter-intuitive. I think that the metric, as stated here, it is an honourable goal to have 60 per cent enrolment. I also think that is the wrong metric. I think when you talk to people, even at postgraduate level in the UWI and UTT, my overriding sense is that some of them should not be there at all. They have no business being in a university. The question then is: Is the secondary system producing enough people who should be in university, to fill the intake of those two major institutions? The answer I suspect is no. So what do you have? You have a whole raft of private institutions that come up, that are accessing state funds to subsidize low quality programmes.

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, a well-meaning organization, was put in place to kind of manage and resolve some of this. But, how do they really make an assessment of quality or alignment with national strategic intent? They cannot do that; not to mention because they are dealing with institutions that are selling degrees that are really done up abroad. It is very

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easy for a larger institution abroad, even one of low quality, to come up with the structures and frameworks to pass something; to pass an accreditation test. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Too many of those graduates come out with degrees in management, telecommunications or whatever and they are no good.

Okay, but we meet our statistical targets, that is fine. Here is the rub, when you give a private entrepreneur who has a school, money from the State and you say: "I am giving you that because there is a bottleneck in the public system, so I want rapid expansion of access, so I am giving you that now"; what that man or woman does, when the financial year is up, is put it in their pocket. This is why I said that the unfettered widening access of GATE can be inimical to innovation. Because for the development of innovators and innovative thinkers, you actually need the public system. It is one of the few places where you need the public system. Public institutions spend money on innovators and innovation. How? They spend it on research and research does not always pay. In fact, there are a lot of times when research does not pay at all, but it contributes to the body of knowledge which will one day do something great in the world. A private institution—ask yourself this: How many of those institutions that are GATE funded that are private have produced a single professor or a single researcher?

We have doctors galore here, professors and all sorts of things all from the public system. We have to be careful when we are spending our money to make sure that if we want to really create an innovative society, a national innovation system has to have into it a public education system, which is encouraging research, not just teaching.

Mr. Vice-President, you and I both know if I write a journal article today and I send it to the Harvard Business Review, it could take up to one year; the Academy of Management will take two or three years in some cases, before it is published. When you just have teachers you are never going to build innovators, because they are teaching something that is published now but it is already three years old. It has been taught where those researchers were researching for the last three years. We are three years behind the curve already. The only way to beat this is to produce researchers ourselves.

I think we need to get away from this notion of consumerism. We consume everything. We are consuming ideas. We are consuming everything that is produced abroad. We just like to consume. Nobody is talking about how do we build a more productive citizen. How do we build a citizen who is capable of producing more? That, to my mind, would answer the obvious question that Sen. Abdulah might have, which is: How do we raise the minimum wage? You do not

raise the minimum wage by just arbitrarily saying 'raise it'. You raise it by being more productive. You raise the minimum wage and you are not getting any productivity out of people. All you are doing is raising cost.

In fact, the old economic principle of money versus leisure can kick into the equation too, where the more you earn the less you work, because you value leisure more. I think it is a very important question for us to contemplate: What are we going to do with the kinds of people we are producing? I am suggesting that the 60 per cent target is probably the wrong metric and it ought to at least be buttressed by perspectives on the production of knowledge.

Let me say, and I make no apologies for saying it, very good institutions abroad are surrounded by businesses that are spinoffs from the research done at those institutions. Around UWI, I see apartments and roti shops; and they are not innovative with the roti either. We need to see more. UTT is still young, so we would give them a chance for now, but we need to see more. We will know that we are doing the right thing when businesses choose to locate outside of UWI St. Augustine, because they want to be near to where the research is. They want to be close to what is happening, so that the cross-pollination can occur. That is how we will know when we are doing the right thing and when we are doing a good job. Out of those startups new locomotives will come. What is a locomotive? Right now the locomotive pulling our economy is oil and gas; more gas than oil and we need more. We need more locomotives. I thought the budget was silent on the financial services sector, which I think is an important part of our economic development, but I assume it was considered a given.

When I think about this and I look at our competitive performance, I see something very interesting arise. That is the promotion of growth poles, but I did not hear the Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs link her contribution entirely with this notion of growth poles and I think it is very important that the growth pole logic be plugged into the national innovation system. I saw that the growth pole logic excluded or appeared to ignore the eastern seaboard. I assume that was an error, or the people in Biche would be unhappy. I think there is a very large part of the island that deserves that attention. Perhaps, I missed it, but on pages 28 and 29 of the budget, I was not sure that I saw it there.

Aside from that, we want to have a truly innovative country. The things for us to talk about are not clusters. Clusters have been around, that notion, for a very long time and it is a very valid notion, but I think we need to advance that thinking. How do clusters form? We all know there are different people doing

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similar or related things. They are cross-pollinating all the time and they are working together. Okay, fine. But in an island economy like ours, we need more than that. What we need is to advance the notion, not just of an economic cluster but of a competitive community. What is the difference? The difference is that a competitive community is probably going to host a cluster, yes, or a few, but it also has good schools, a good hospital, a good recreational park and things for people to do. A competitive community is a place where people want to live, instead of everybody trying to come into Port of Spain.

It begs the question: What do we do with rural development? I have heard a very unfortunate thing said about Vision 2020. Let me say that a number of us here involved in Vision 2020. It was a well meaning exercise in which a number of people in this country worked very hard. It was not a wish list. The State's interpretation of it, having received it, would have been different to what was put forward. It would have been. I want to say one of the best reports that were put forward was the report on regional development, chaired by Sen. Ramgoolam, who did an excellent job and can tell you it was not a wish list, because the quality of the analysis was very, very good. It was deep, it was intense and it was a very clear vision for how regional/rural development could occur. To me, that notion of regional development also has to be plugged into this question of a national system that encourages innovation.

Let me come now to this laptop thing, because people are talking about it. You would steal the children's laptop, or there was some skullduggery in the acquisition of the laptops. The cost appeared to me to be reasonable. I looked up what was being proposed to be purchased. I do not know; we have these weird relationships in the society. If something is done fast, it is corrupt. The private sector will tell you if it "aint done fas, it aint done right." You have to do it fast and you have gone and bought your laptops.

Then everybody gets into a debate about whether corruption was involved in it. I have looked at this thing from as many angles as I can. For the life of me, I cannot see how. The numbers appear reasonable to me. It might however, have been unhelpful to say it was going to cost 40 and then it cost 80-something million.

12.45 p.m.

It occurred to me that the people trying to explain the matter might not have been as conversant with the technology as they should have been, otherwise it would have been a relatively simple matter to explain. Again, that is the wrong question. Just like the question of can we get more police officers on the street, is not entirely the right question.

The question of laptops is not about whether they will get stolen from Form 1 students. The question about laptops is: Are schools ready for that? Is our Form 1 secondary education curriculum ready for that? My guess is no. We cannot fix schools to open them on time, surely, we are not ready for 30 or 40 students in a class with laptops open. The learning dynamic is completely different. We need to ensure that there is integration with the curricula.

My own view is that it would have been better to computerize the classrooms, because this notion of one laptop per child was put forward years ago by people when you had a simultaneous school of thought that said you should have \$100 computer. You were really trying to reach people in extremely deprived, depressed and poor areas, and which themselves were located in very poor countries. That logic was not for us. Now, we took it and we ran with it. Okay, fine.

More computing power at the hands of our young people is not a negative thing. I think it is wrong for us to assume that they would just do bad things with it. We are dealing with a very networked young generation and they will find a way to keep in touch with each other and share, develop and grow. I think it would have been better to computerize the schools and the classrooms. I do not think our teachers are ready, and we need to make them ready.

Sometimes if you try to rush this—UWI St. Augustine had a catastrophic drama a few years ago when they had online registration, if you would recall. It went very badly. It was a nightmare; it was a mess. I think that the one laptop per child initiative had a different audience in mind, but I do not think in and of itself that I see anything in it that should cause the breadth of alarm that I saw all around the place.

In terms of the budget, and some of the speeches made in the Lower House, I noted the raising of the minimum wage from \$9. What I wanted to say with that would be two things. You have a Government where there is a very strong labour representation. I think that is a good thing because labour has a very important part to play in this thing, but labour has a duty to productivity; not just to raising the minimum wage. It is very important that labour understands that. It is very important that we get labour to understand that they have to do more than get more. They have to give more. Yes, we see labour leaders from time to time on the television saying, if the person is abusing sick leave or whatever you just have to write them up and so on, but businesses are not police organizations. You want to trust your employees; you want to treat them with goodwill. I listen to these people talk their stuff and then I wonder how many unions actively support action against people who do abuse sick leave. I suspect it is a far smaller number, because when you do take action, they are the first ones to come and defend them.

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So, I think that there needs to be a maturation of the logic of the labour movement. I am not calling them infantile in any way, but what I am saying is that if they are going to play a positive role, they need to engage and understand what is reasonable to ask for. I think that there is very important work to be done to balance the interest in our country here today.

The second thing I want to say about that is that we have to avoid this anti-business bias. I have been in here for a number of years and I hear people all the time talking about business as if business is just going to exploit people; all business people are corrupt and so on, and it is not true at all. In fact, business drives competitiveness. So I think that we have to encourage business.

One of the ways of doing that—the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development was saying that they are going to refocus the URP to assist people in agriculture and so on, but he should make some of those people available to business also, because there are certain sectors in the economy that are suffering for people, and cannot get them, because they are all sucked up by URP and CEPEP. I do not think that is a sustainable model at all for us.

SEN. PROF. PATRICK WATSON (*in the Chair*): 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. B. Ali*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Mr. Vice-President, thank you. I would not take more than five minutes. I just want to respond to something Sen. The Hon. King had said earlier about the private sector's interest in going downstream, and the private sector may not have the interest in taking on some of these opportunities and so on. What I would say is—and as we heard even the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs this morning—that it has been very difficult to get into some of these downstream places.

The private sector has been crowded out, but as soon as you open the doors to a Unipet, for example, they jump in and run with it. People have real extreme difficulties in getting into some sectors of the economy and, particularly, the energy sector. So, I would not rule out the local private sector as yet. I think that the conditions need to be right. The private sector will go where the profit is. I have seen private sector people trying for years to get a gas price and cannot get it. So if that is the way we manage the affairs of the State then do not expect to

see a lot of private sector attention in the sector. But now we see the winds of change are blowing. We have a transparent approach to things and hopefully that would change.

In terms of the strategic industries that we are picking—I saw on pages 20 and 21 of the budget statement we picked a number of industries. What I want to say there is, of course, none of those things on their own can sustain our economy, and we know that. What we ought to do is try to figure out what it is we want to do and in doing that we should avoid the mistakes made a few years ago when there was a consultancy done by a group called: *On the Frontier*. I think the Inter-American Bank here in Trinidad helped pay for that study. They spent limited time here and whichever people they spoke to they put those people's industries as the strategic ones and, *viola*, we have seven or eight strategic industries. There was no research in it whatsoever. None! I know; I was there.

We just absorbed that without chewing. We just swallowed it right down and that came out as our seven or eight strategic industries. So we need to make sure that we put some intellectual horsepower into the analysis of these things. The way to do it is not just to have a centre of excellence headed by an individual. If that is what is contemplated, I do not agree. I think what you need to have are centres of excellence that are headed by councils with at least four or five persons. That is how you are going to build a cluster; that is how you are going to drive for cluster logic.

Finally, just a point on transparency. I was very pleased to hear the Minister say that she was going to put us again on track for the EITI. It is something that I feel very strongly about. In this regard as well, I noted in the budget, I did not get real volumes; I got revenue, but I did not get volumes. What do we think our oil production volumes are going to be? I think it is important for us to put that forward.

I also think that we should push efficiency in the state enterprise system. It was not mentioned here, but state enterprises are notoriously inefficient. There are many MBA graduates and so on them. So they produce nice reports for Parliament, but the bottom line is they hemorrhage money in some instances, and we need a very significant push in the state enterprise sector. I do not think it is right anymore to say that state enterprises and the State, the Government itself, should be second-rate employers. I think it is time to demolish that particular dichotomy.

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In that regard, I would also encourage tripple-bottom line reporting where you have banks—I see Republic Bank has declared \$787 million in profit, and we are very glad for them, they are making money. But how much money are they donating? How much money are they giving? What are they doing in the communities? I know they advertise what they are doing. They probably spend as much money on ads as they do in actual giving. I am not talking about Republic Bank alone, but I am talking about a number of large agencies and organizations on the island that I think need to be a lot more transparent with regard to what they are doing or attempting to do.

What I would say in summary is that we are not where we want to be in productivity terms. While we have started the process or re-orienting our economy, unless we address the fundamental productivity questions and questions related to our basic institutions, public trust in our institutional framework and in the political class, I think we are going to have problems.

I do think that taking it on the whole, this is a very good start and I commend it entirely. At least we have an idea of where the Government is going and we are seeing some steps in a different direction, hopefully in the right direction as we go forward.

I want to congratulate the Government for putting that forward, and to say that you could write the best of intentions, if you do not do what you write down, nothing is going to happen, and you will be here another five or six years from now wondering why our competitive rank is where it is. So I encourage you to execute, implement and to innovate, even in how you implement.

Mr. Presiding Officer, with those words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

SEN. PROF. PATRICK WATSON (*in the Chair*): Hon. Senators, it is 12.57 pm, we will now take our lunch break and resume at 13.57 p.m. or 1.57 p.m. The sitting is now suspended until 1.57 p.m.

12.57 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.59 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[**MADAM VICE-PRESIDENT** *in the Chair*]

Madam Vice-President: Before we begin, just a short announcement. Seeing that we had our lunch break at a different time, our tea break will be at 5.00 p.m., instead of the usual 4.30 p.m.

Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds: Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. In your absence, we had a wonderful contribution from the Independent Sen. Dr. Balgobin and I feel it is necessary to place on record, my own personal admiration for his contribution. I think it rendered pride to Trinidad and Tobago, because as I listened to all of the Independent Senators for that matter, it reflects the wisdom of the choices made by His Excellency, and it speaks well to Trinidad and Tobago. I want to congratulate all of them so far, that I have heard in this debate.

The hon. Senator, however, made the observation that our colleagues on the other side, all at least, wore the national symbol of the flag. [*Desk thumping*] He expressed pride of that. I simply want to observe for his benefit that when things are obvious, words and symbols are not entirely necessary. We of the PNM, have demonstrated our nationalism and patriotism for over 50 years in this country and we do not necessarily have at all times to wear any symbol. The country and the world are fully aware of our patriotism and nationalism. However, since the hon. Senator found that it was so nice of the Senators on the other side, I noted that not all of them on the other side are indeed wearing it. If it was as good as he observed, I observed that he too, the Independent Senator was not wearing one himself. I have taken the trouble to get you one and I hope you make very good use of it. [*Laughter*] It is at your disposal as soon as you are ready.

More than that, I have observed Sen. Nan Ramgoolam without one. I have one for her as well. [*Laughter*] I have observed that Sen. Lynette Abraham— [*Interruption*] No, this is the one for the Independent Senator. This is the one for Sen. Nan Ramgoolam. [*Pins were displayed*] I have one for Sen. Lynette Abraham. Sen. Shane Mohammed did not have one, and I have one for him. [*Laughter*] Sen. Ravi Ratiram did not have one, I have one for him. I see my friend, Sen. Abdulah, wearing it sheepishly, almost inside of his pocket and, of course, I have one for—I observed a moment ago that Sen. Mary King did not have hers. She slipped it on a second ago. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Panday: So you have an extra one then?

Sen. F. Hinds: I have. But notwithstanding—and talking about being nationalistic and patriotic, I heard the very Independent Sen. Dr. Balgobin make the point that a lot of work went into the Vision 2020 project. A blueprint for development for this nation by 2020, and I noted over the years, since its inauguration and its application to Trinidad and Tobago, that our friends on the other side took objection to it. They rejected it. They castigated it. They relegated it to the bin. Up to yesterday, one of my friends on the other side said that it was anathema to this perfect Vision 2020—I think our friend, Sen. Therese Baptiste-

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Cornelis. So I hope that they would have listened to the Independent Senator when he spoke about it, because we offered it to this nation in the spirit of patriotism, in the spirit of nationalism and we did not reject it. So it is okay to wear the flag, but you must not talk it, you must do it. [*Desk thumping*]

Vision 2020 was not a PNM thing. It was a government thing for the advancement of Trinidad and Tobago. So you see why I do not need any flag. It is in my spirit. By virtue of my membership in the PNM, I must be nationalistic. I must be non-racial because we stand on the philosophy of interracial solidarity, and I want to say this before I continue. While the Senator was speaking, it occurred to me that a lot of very good things for this nation were afflicted, sadly adversely affected, by racial considerations in our land. A lot of very good things get caught up in the contradiction, the issue of race, and that is why we stand on interracial solidarity and do so proudly. May I continue?

Madam Vice-President, the Finance Minister is a very nice and likable fellow. He presented his budget a few days ago and perhaps because he is a nice fellow, and perhaps because many people in this country do not have a sense of recall or the ability to connect issues or the ability to analyze the very intricate budget documents, the supporting documents, a lot of people commented favourably on the budget, they thought it was all a very good thing and that feeling of niceness and goodness went on for days in this country. Until the intervention of Dr Keith Rowley, the Leader of the Opposition, who on September 14, 2010, responded to the budget presentation, and when he intervened, he did so on a platform of historical memory and understanding of this nation and its development path from the People's National Movement. We wrote and presented more budgets to this country than any other political party since 1956. We know budgets!

In fact, it was former President, Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson, who presented from the PNM's platform, our first independence budget in 1963, as our Minister of Finance. Just in case any of them wanted to know why 1963, it was the budget of 1962 that was presented in April of that year, the few months before we became independent. We know of budgets. So with that historical memory and that proud and strong tradition behind him, and with Dr. Rowley's own eye for detail and with his clinical analysis, all backed by the support that he received from all the PNM and all the people who want to see Trinidad and Tobago go well, that kind of solidarity, we constructed a powerful response and presented it on that day. What is new? What is new, Madam Vice-President, about the budget that has been presented by the Minister of Finance?

One of the new things about it is this—and it has been articulated already by my friend, Sen. Al-Rawi—it is one of the largest budgets in the history of this country. Interesting, because after coming to Parliament condemning spending and profligacy on the part of the PNM—and that is a word we have to analyze carefully in future—and even in bad economic times as they claim, still the largest in terms of expenditure. That is one of the new things about it. Loud on expenditure, \$49 billion; silent on revenue. One of the other so-called new things is that they held consultations with the people. Clearly, they did not consult with the credit unions because the credit unions are the loudest voices in the society, having invested \$604 million in Colonial Life collectively. They are the loudest voices against a major plank of that budget, but they talk about consultation. Did they consult with the people at NIB, who will now expect citizens who are in receipt of NIB pensions to come forward and say, "We want parity with those who did not contribute to one as they are promised \$3,000."

Did they consult—as I asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs—with the people of La Brea, with the many young people who would have gone to universities, to pursue learning along particular lines in preparation for the coming of the aluminium smelter? Would they have consulted with the people who expected and who began jobs before they shut down that \$400 million investment, with an investor in their face? Shut it down, leaving a gaping hole and no immediate answer. Fluffy talk about possibilities for the shipbuilding, and when I asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs this morning, she ducked and ran like the Minister of Finance. Did they consult with Caricom as they told us that we will import duty free solar energy products? She told us that she feels confident that Barbados will agree. We must wait to see. If that does not happen, they will go to COTED. We will wait to see.

I want to suggest in this early stage, in complete agreement with my friend, Sen. Anand Ramlogan, the Attorney General, that the budget, like the Minister of Finance himself, lacks umph. What the Opposition Leader and our colleagues in the other place did over the last few days, was to strip away the fluff and the niceness to reduce that budget to its naked simplicity, so that the public, including you, Madam Vice-President, as a citizen of this Republic, would see the gaps and the holes there are as they promised us that they will take us forward.

I want to place on record, my very sincere congratulations to my Leader, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the People's National Movement, for doing the PNM and the country very proud. [*Desk thumping*] And in the debate in the other place, I want to place on record for all to hear, the contribution after the

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Leader's contribution that stood out for me, was the one by the Member for La Brea as he was so analytical, beautiful in the description of the facts, the history and the projection of the issues around Alutrint. You heard from the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, all the noise and the "manima"—I hope *Hansard* could get that; it is colloquialism—about the ecological arguments of smelter, you do not hear them again. They are talking about economic viability. That is what they are talking about.

Sen. Panday: In addition to?

Sen. F. Hinds: The PNM voted for the budget in the other place. Unlike the UNC, for years they voted against the budget. For years they have abstained. We voted for it and we did that for two reasons. One, because we acknowledged—Johnny come lately, you know. They have only just come. While they put a face and a spin on it, most of what the bureaucrats and the technocrats in the various Ministries and enterprises would have shared with them are tracks that we laid and they ran on. [*Desk thumping*] So we understand that. The other reason we voted for it is because we want the people of Trinidad and Tobago to receive their salaries. We want the services in health and in education to be made available to the people. We would not be reckless enough to vote against it, unless we had very good reason.

So while we place on record our criticism and our concerns, we were quite prepared as a responsible Opposition to vote for it. We do not know what we will do here. Most likely we will, but that is the way we operate. We are not about to oppose for the sake of opposition in this country. We have already said through our Leader, "If de ting good, we good with it, if it foolish and it doh make no sense, and if it is not in the public's interest, we will say so and we will be steadfast in our objection to it." That is how the PNM is intent on operating, but they—I know a man called Ferdie Ferreira, a walking encyclopedia on the history of this country. He describes them as the traditional Opposition and he is so right.

Madam Vice-President, they opposed independence, they opposed republicanism, they opposed constitutional reform, they opposed Point Lisas Industrial Development, they opposed LNG, they opposed the property tax, they opposed the TTRA, and they opposed everything that has been good for Trinidad and Tobago, everything good for this country.

Madam Vice-President, if you really take a close, sober and serious look at the history of this platform called Trinidad and Tobago, you must agree with me that the history of this country cannot be written accurately without the contribution of the People's National Movement.

2.15 p.m.

You must agree with me, Madam Vice-President. You must agree with me. [Crosstalk] You must agree with me, Madam Vice-President, [Crosstalk] that we, [Crosstalk] we, [Crosstalk] we, [Crosstalk] we built this country, [Crosstalk] we structured this economy, we built the institutions, we the People's National Movement, but when you listen to them you will swear that the PNM did nothing and I want to tell them, [Crosstalk] I want to tell them, [Crosstalk] I want to tell them, [Crosstalk] that all governments that have come to government in this country after the PNM found a wonderful track on which to run. [Desk thumping] All that was required was an adjustment here, an adjustment there, yet all they do is criticize.

They spent all their time criticizing the PNM. You would swear—But I want to tell them, you do not build a house from the roof. They have to have a foundation, [Desk thumping] they “have to have house” and you do not—you cannot paint a house if none exists. So be as good painters as you can be. If there is a little leak in a tile in the roof, go ahead and fix it [Crosstalk] and enjoy the occupation thereof. We the PNM built a nation. The UNC is only capable of building a hut.

I propose to allocate my very limited time to some of these budget measures as they relate to crime and security and a very important question of confidence. My friend, Sen. Al-Rawi, dealt with it, but, as you know, confidence is critical to economic activity and economic development, the concept of confidence. It has grown on me. I am not an economist, I am a lawyer, [Crosstalk] but I am better able to understand the importance of the concept of confidence in all of this, [Crosstalk] so you will bear with me, Madam Vice-President, when I demonstrate how their conduct results in a lack, a diminution, a degeneration, if you prefer, in confidence and that can have an impact on economic circumstances as they exist or at least as they intend for them to exist.

Investor confidence, borrower confidence, consumer confidence, all very, very important because if people do not borrow, as Sen. Ramkhelawan, an economist and finance expert tells us, plenty liquidity, no bankable projects, nobody wants to invest, we have some problems. So I want to spend a little time dealing with the question of confidence, so bear with me, Madam Vice-President.

Madam Vice-President: As long as you are relevant.

Sen. F. Hinds: Oh yes, always would be, gracious as you are, Madam Vice-President.

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The first thing that affected my confidence is, early in the morning, the Prime Minister of this country decided that she must say thanks to a major investor in the UNC's elections effort and contract him as a Cabinet Minister, given the fact that he held portfolios in other organizations elsewhere. We raised an issue over it as a breach of ethics for us as parliamentarians. The hon. Attorney General sought legal opinions. I had to tell them here today, it was never a question of law. It was always a question of ethics. He sought an expensive legal opinion which told him what we knew all along, and they continued to breach the code of ethics.

That same Minister stands in breach of a court order in this country and would not pay some money to the Soca Warriors who they owe; [*Desk thumping*] and the Prime Minister is aware of this. She says absolutely nothing.

Madam Vice-President: Senator, Senator, I think yesterday at the start, yesterday at the end and today in the middle I am going to ask that your relevance in this contribution, Senator, be much more reasonable than that. If there is anything that the Minister of Works and Transport or the Prime Minister herself has to do in your contribution and it is relevant to the budget debate, then you may proceed, but, if it does not, please make your point.

Sen. F. Hinds: Much obliged. [*Crosstalk*] We are seeking investments from all over the world, including Norway. When it is splashed across a Norway newspaper that a Cabinet Minister was involved in a ticket scandal in Norway or in the world and he is a Cabinet Minister, potential investors from Norway could not have confidence in the economy and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago where a stable government is important for investment and they would not come. They will not get the revenues to finance the expenditure that they plan in the budget.

Madam Vice-President: I will ask, do you have any documents at present that you will lay, concerning the investments from Norway?

Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, that would be impossible to provide.

Madam Vice-President: All right, so until—you do not have such documentation, then I would advise strongly that you proceed with your contribution on the budget debate. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Hinds: We heard at length from Sen. Dr. Balgobin about the corruption index and competitiveness and I am simply submitting that that sort of thing adversely affects our competitiveness and possibly pushes us high up the totem pole in respect of corruption index. That is what I am saying. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, the Police Service now has its own head in the budget documents because it now has its own budget. Legislation oversaw that.

Sen. Panday: “PNM never do that.”

Sen. F. Hinds: But Mr. James Philbert, the recently humiliated and dismissed former Police Commissioner, will not be there to administer the budget that the police would have gotten for the first time because the Attorney General threatened that he would be fired before he actually was. We told the Prime Minister that it would be quite improper because we budgeted for money for the service commissions here too and for the Police Service Commission, and part of the budget for the Police Service Commission will pay the Chairman of the Police Service Commission—

Sen. Baptiste-Cornelis: Point of order 35(2):

“Reference shall not be made to any matter on which a judicial decision is pending, in such a way as might, in the opinion of the Chair, prejudice the interests of parties thereto.”

Sen. F. Hinds: Judicial matter? Please? Madam Vice-President, may I continue unperturbed?

Sen. Ramlogan: On a point of order, Madam Vice-President, may I clarify for my honourable friend—

Sen. Al-Rawi: Point of order, number?

Sen. Ramlogan: It is Order 35(2), the matter of Minister Warner, firstly, with respect to that payment issue, is before the courts. It is before the Court of Appeal. Reference was made to that and it is improper and wrong.

The second matter with respect to Commissioner Philbert, perhaps my learned friend has not read the newspapers recently but in the Sunday newspapers the Commissioner of Police has, in fact, retained Senior Counsel Dana Seetahal and they have issued a pre-action letter so the matter is, in fact, before the courts. The pre-reaction practice protocol—

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is not true.

Sen. Ramlogan: The pre-action practice protocol direction forms part of the Civil Proceeding Rules of Court and it is the first step in litigation. It is part of the rules of court. So both matters are, therefore, in litigation as it were and I would ask that references to those matters be not made here. It would be improper and wrong. Perhaps my learned friend can be reminded that this is a budget debate.

Madam Vice-President: I thank the Attorney General for bringing to bear the attention or information that many of us may not be privy to, and, if he has sought clarification on behalf of the Government, then I would ask you to be guided accordingly.

Sen. F. Hinds: I would disregard that really, you know, Madam Vice-President and to proceed only to say, if they are so ashamed of their conduct do not do it. Do not do it. Conduct themselves in the proper manner and they would not have to hear anything inside or outside the Parliament. That is all the citizens would expect, but let me proceed.

Right in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago of which we are part, the Member for St. Joseph launches a vitriolic attack on the Chief Justice of this country and the headlines of all the papers—

Sen. Panday: On a point of order, Madam Vice-President, a point of order. On a point of order, 35(5)—on a point of order.

Sen. F. Hinds: What is the point of order?

Sen. Panday: 35(5). You get your Standing Orders and read it. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Hinds: You have to tell us what it is. You have to tell us what it is!

Sen. Panday: “No Senator shall impute improper motives to any Member of either Chamber.”

Sen. F. Hinds: Impute improper motives?

Sen. Panday: Yes.

Sen. F. Hinds: Improper motives?

Sen. Panday: Yes.

Sen. F. Hinds: Look! Improper behaviour on the part of the UNC. Because, Madam Vice-President, it led the Chief Justice to tell this country that what was said, if it were said outside, it is a contempt. It is a contempt—

Madam Vice-President: Senator—

Sen. F. Hinds:—and the Prime Minister of this country—

Madam Vice-President:—Senator, I am not in a position to say what the Speaker of the House did or did not do or should or should not have done in the Lower House. That action was done in the Lower House. I am to be guided

accordingly. I will not make a mistake in this House. I will not do the same thing as if there was an error. Please confine your contribution to the budget debate rather than the action and character of another Member, be it of this House or of the Lower House.

Sen. F. Hinds: I want to point out very quickly, part of the allocation in this budget was directed to the Ministry of Justice, through which the salary of the Minister of Justice, and Member for St. Joseph, who is part of this Parliament, is paid, and because he is a public officer and a parliamentarian, speaking in this budget debate, the public is entitled, Madam Vice-President, to expect better of him and the Government whom they pay. [*Desk thumping*]

This Parliament ought never, I am simply saying, to be used to carry on personal vendettas against public officers [*Desk thumping*] and to bring this Parliament into disrepute. And therefore, Madam Vice-President, as I move on, I disagree with this headline which says he should apologize or resign. It should not be left to him. He should, with a decent Prime Minister, be fired! That is what I am saying. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Panday: Madam Vice-President, again, “with a decent Prime Minister”—35(5).

Sen. F. Hinds: With a decent Prime Minister. Is she not decent?

Sen. Panday: You are imputing improper motives to the Prime Minister.

Sen. F. Hinds: I called the Prime Minister decent and that is improper? Well tell me what she is.

Sen. Ramlogan: “You know, I now see why Manning say he is an apprentice, yuh know.”

Sen. F. Hinds: Tell me!

Sen. Panday: You are imputing improper motives—

Sen. F. Hinds: By using—

Madam Vice-President: Senators. Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds, you are certainly agitating a normally conservative and well-behaved Senate. I would ask—it is now 2.27. Your 45 minutes would be up in just a few minutes and as yet the Senate has to be—has to appreciate your contribution towards the debate, so I am going to ask you for about the third time, please confine your contribution to the budget debate.

Sen. F. Hinds: Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President, and I am always mindful of that fact, always mindful, except I want to say that we allocate money to the Judiciary and yesterday we saw corruption charges against a citizen, a former Minister of this Government, dismissed—a waste of public money.

Sen. Panday: By a PNM [*Inaudible*].

Sen. F. Hinds: And why were they dismissed? Because it is now within the purview of the Director of Public Prosecutions that a member of the Cabinet and Government of this country, along with a journalist from CCN, they are alleged to have concocted a story against that Minister. I want to tell the Prime Minister when I get a moment that the money that we have spent and wasted in this regard she needs to find out who is the Cabinet Minister who concocted a story. Yesterday the DPP went to court and dismissed all the charges against a former Minister of Government on the basis of that conspiracy—

Sen. Panday: Will you give way? Will you give way?

Sen. F. Hinds:—and concoction. No, I am not giving way. And therefore—

Sen. Panday: A PNM counsel removed the charges against him.

Sen. F. Hinds:—and therefore, [*Crosstalk*] and therefore, Mr. Dansam Dhansook is now telling the DPP on oath that he was coerced by a certain journalist from CCN and a member of the Cabinet, the current Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. They conspired and concocted false charges. For five years a former Minister suffered. They used that to help to bring down the PNM government on the basis of corruption and I would like to tell the Prime Minister—

Hon. Senators: Budget, budget.

Sen. F. Hinds:—she needs to pay some attention to that. Budget. “We talking budget.” And I am prepared to tell her who that Minister is—

Hon. Senators: Tell them.

Sen. F. Hinds:—unless he has the courage to stand in the Senate and say who he is. [*Crosstalk*]

2.30 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, we budgeted for a new Commissioner of Police. His salary is 120-something thousand dollars a month. That is in the estimates on Head 64. Cannot get more budget than that. He came into town yesterday, I am told, this new Commissioner. The Minister of National Security is somewhere out

of the country on private business, I am told; nowhere to be found. Yesterday, a major platform in crime fighting and intelligence gathering, the Special Anti-crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, was announced to be downsized and its director fired. All because—

Sen. Panday: Why did you not bring legislation to protect it?

Sen. F. Hinds: —all because somebody told the Prime Minister that they were spying on her. The Minister of National Security and the Commissioner of Police told us that crime statistics show that crime has gone down; and we have the Minister in the Ministry of National Security here. While the Commissioner was saying so, there was a virtual shoot-out outside the Point Fortin Police Station, while he was in the press conference. Right outside the Point Fortin Police Station. Since the Minister spoke in the budget debate in the other place and said that crime statistics—well, we had about 12 murders. We always try to tell them that crime is a moving target and you cannot boast about it.

Madam Vice-President, on the question of confidence, very quickly, I conclude by saying that it is hard to have confidence in circumstances such as these; and only yesterday in this debate, the Minister of Health, and Sen. Shane Mohammed and others, repeated an allegation that the Leader of the Opposition called the nation's children "duncy". I am amazed at their childishness and the willing way in which they repeat this.

Sen. Panday: Whose childishness?

Sen. F. Hinds: So, for the record, Madam Vice-President, with your leave, I want to quote the *Hansard* of September 14, 2010, and to quote for you exactly—because every one of them, from Prime Minister to the last joined UNC member; from captain to cook, repeated this untruth. Let me put on the record here what the Member for Diego Martin West said in the other place so that they would stop their childish utterances and they would disabuse themselves of that; and that they would cleave to the truth rather than cleave to their usual liking for dishonesty and untruth.

Sen. Panday: Madam Vice-President, 35(5). We cling to dishonesty. Watch yourself.

Sen. F. Hinds: Okay. Let me quote. The Member says:

“If there was any doubt that we should not take the Minister seriously, all that doubt was dispelled when he sought to allay our fears by confirming that Trinidad and Tobago's purchase was not done with HP America or HP Russia,

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where they are facing criminal charges, but they were done with HP Latin America where bribery and influencing bids do not take place and HP Latin America, the Minister tells us, do not get involved in bribery, peddling influence or engaging in bid-rigging. Latin America, Mr. Speaker; Latin America. We did business with Latin America and the Minister is telling us that we are protected from criminal conduct of HP in America or Russia. On this explanation, the Minister of Education has a laptop for you. He thinks you are a ‘duncy-head’ first former.”

[*Interruption*] [*Desk thumping*]

He said that the Minister thinks that you, Mr. Speaker, are a “duncy head” first former. Does that mean all first formers are “duncy head”? Then you—
[*Interruption*]

Madam Vice-President: Senator and Members, I have the complete contribution to the debate on the Appropriation Bill by Dr. Rowley. I would ask that all Members, if they are quoting, that they do quote correctly. There is a reference to your contribution in the singular. It is actually in the plural.

Sen. F. Hinds: What is that? Tell me, Madam Vice-President.

Sen. Panday: You do not speak to the Vice-President like that.

Madam Vice-President: With the leave of the Senate, I would like to read, as the hon. Member—

Sen. F. Hinds: I hope I will get injury time.

Madam Vice-President: Yes, you certainly will.

Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, before you do, I have a question—

Sen. Panday: The Vice-President is on her legs.

Madam Vice-President: That is why I ask for leave of the Senate, simply because as the Acting President, we need to be careful when we are quoting. This is the actual contribution that was given to me by *Hansard*.

Sen. Panday: Just read it out.

Madam Vice-President: Yes. And so, if we are reading, I would ask that you read exactly as you see; verbatim.

Sen. Panday: Verbatim.

Madam Vice-President: Verbatim. It is not in the singular. It is in the plural.

Sen. F. Hinds: What is in the plural?

Madam Vice-President: So I am going to read; for the benefit of the integrity of *Hansard*, I would ask that you allow me. It says here:

“On this explanation, the Minister of Education has a laptop for you. He thinks you are ‘duncy head’ first formers.” [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Panday: Shame! Shame!

Sen. F. Hinds: Does that, Madam Vice-President, even if—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: Yes. Yes.

Sen. F. Hinds: Look it here.

Hon. Senators: Yes.

Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, even so, does that mean that someone has suggested in this that all—[*Interruption*] You all are ridiculous!

Sen. Panday: Standing Order 35(5). Madam Vice-President, we are ridiculous?

Sen. F. Hinds: Ridiculous!

Sen. Panday: Point of order 35(5). He is saying we are ridiculous. [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, let me continue. But it does not surprise me, you know. For two years, they carried on a lie over a teacup scandal in this country. It is normal with them. It does not surprise me. They lied to pensioners and promised \$3,000. They said it was age 60. They were dishonest on that and untrue. They are now saying it was a misprint. They got one of their friends to come and say, “It was my fault,” in the advertising company. Now he is saying again, it is not his; it was somebody else’s.

Sen. Ramlogan: The budget. The budget.

Sen. F. Hinds: Budget, yes. It is pensions. Pensions I am talking about. You all cannot help yourselves. [*Laughter*] To date, they have not appointed state boards as yet. All we hear from them, well, the Minister kept saying “balances”, and another Minister said “palances”; but like a movie from Jack Palance, all we hear is “Coming soon; coming soon”. State boards not yet appointed. You know why? Because they are fighting among themselves for the spoils of office. The COP wants certain positions; the UNC wants certain board positions, and they are fighting among themselves. [*Interruption*] Whether it is MSJ, COP, UNC, TOP or bottom, they are fighting among themselves.

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Madam Vice-President, the Minister of Finance projects growth for the next fiscal year at 2 per cent, yet we have heard a thousand times on this side, here and in the other place, no clear indication—even from the Independent Bench—no clear statement, direction or indication, as to how we are going to get there.

He actually said that he expects miracles, because when he was confronted with the fact that the lands and buildings taxes in its old incarnation on the old valuation, on the old rates—when he was confronted with the fact that they yielded about \$71 million, and was expected to yield about \$71 million, and he budgeted for \$173 million, the Minister of Finance, in his usual, I would say, fluffy way, told us that he expects miracles, because of the goodwill that is now taking place in the country. That is arrears in lands and buildings taxes, and the people will suddenly feel good enough to pay up. That \$100 million represents what he is expecting. That is why I tell you, all they are able to do is build a hut, and they cannot take away that fact.

Sen. Panday: Brian Lara Stadium.

Sen. F. Hinds: So, it is a pie in the sky. He is hoping. A former Minister of Finance and former Minister of Trade and Industry and Member of Parliament, Ken Valley, would always say to us, “Economic progress and growth do not come by happenstance. There are things that you must do and things that you must not do.” [*Interruption*]

Let me tell them a little bit. What are the facts? In 2009, there was negative growth, 3.5 per cent. I am talking budget. Do not disturb me. [*Laughter*] There was growth. In 2010, positive growth; 2.5 per cent. As we have already demonstrated, notwithstanding the global meltdown on financial circumstances, Trinidad and Tobago fared very well. We were able to arrest the decline and to see growth. We project 2 per cent growth in the next fiscal year. All of this in the midst of global economic crisis.

It means, I want to tell my friends on the other side, something positive, something good, something strong was happening a long time before you came to Government. That reminds me of the old saying very quickly, “Africa’s history did not begin with slavery; nor did India’s history begin with indentureship.” It was happening a long time before. I want you to understand that. Long before this put-together hapless coalition.

Sen. Panday: That gave you 29/12?

Sen. F. Hinds: We proposed, Madam Vice-President, five major highways in this country so you will get more access to different parts of the country, therefore, more economic activity; employment during the construction phase, and all of that. The purchase of the materials involved; economic activity.

We proposed and engaged in the development of the infrastructure of this country, including the tall buildings that they criticize. But you know, during the time of construction of those buildings, ordinary people could not happily find a mason or welder anywhere in this city. All of the labour was absorbed, notwithstanding the presence of the Chinese in this country. And, by the way, the first importation of Chinese labourers in this country in recent time was done by the UNC under a man called “John Humphrey”, a former Minister of Works. It was not new when the PNM brought Chinese here, but many people in this country do not know that.

The whole idea with those buildings was, you were a tenant paying millions of dollars in rent, and you become the landlord and you do not pay that. It is a saving for the taxpayer of this country. It builds your national self-esteem. You own this; you own that. All for the better. I am not talking about overspending; I am not talking about corruption. Those are separate matters.

That is why, one day, I want to analyze the concept of profligacy, because nobody could tell you that some of the projects were not necessary. It might have gone badly because of mismanagement or weak systems, just like Clico. The Minister of Finance talks about weak management institutions and supervisory capacity, but that does not mean that Clico’s existence was inherently bad, or the construction of the Tarouba Stadium was inherently bad—

Sen. Panday: What? What?

Sen. F. Hinds: —or that the construction of the Scarborough Hospital was inherently bad; or the Hall of Justice.

Hon. Senators: No, no.

Sen. F. Hinds: Nobody could tell you that. So we have to be careful as we operate. It is about how the thing is managed, and those are separate issues. Nobody could tell you that to get a team to investigate things in a so-called A-team is inherently bad, but when you pick your friends and your colleagues, that is a totally different thing.

Sen. Panday: You ever know about a Minister whose husband and brother are getting legal work?

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Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, we are very proud of the development that we have engendered in this country. And while we were doing that, all they talk about and they bad-mouth our country—just as how their colleague, the Minister of Justice, bad-mouthed the Chief Justice and performed or manifested a contempt against the Judiciary, which would send him to jail if he was outside of this Parliament—and the Prime Minister said nothing. She said it is exuberance and enthusiasm. She absolved it. She, too, the Prime Minister, should come under focus for accepting that. Serious constitutional challenge to the Judiciary. No problem.

While we were doing all of that, we carried on a very vibrant school feeding programme; school textbooks programme; the help loan facility for those who could not afford it; free transportation for the students; free primary, secondary, and tertiary education, notwithstanding the important points made by the Members of the Independent Bench in terms of how those are managed. And, of course, if you got a first class degree, you were free to proceed for a master's degree or PhD at full expense for the State. All of that was done while we were developing this country and developing its institutions. All of the youth programmes.

2.45 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, do not talk about housing. The CCC, MILAT, MYPART, the PNM made a serious contribution to the well-being and development of this country. Electrification programmes through public utilities—we put lights where there were none. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Panday: "Like dey put one on your head too." [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

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. F. Hinds: I was boasting about the contribution the proud PNM made.

Sen. Panday: Especially the millions of dollars in bogus scholarships! Boast about that!

Sen. F. Hinds: Milk subsidies, rice subsidies, and not in the East-West Corridor, you know, but in the hinterland and country districts, people they said that they represented.

Sen. Panday: "Allyuh close down de rice mill!"

Sen. F. Hinds: If you analyze budgetary allocations you would see that the PNM consistently spent more on subsidies and transfers than any UNC or NAR governments; reality. [*Crosstalk*] That explains circumstances are different, my friend Sen. Bharath, that is why you could still budget \$49 billion today. I told you before that I saw a budgetary allocation from 1960 for \$30,000 to do some work on the Lady Young Road, but times have changed.

By way of reorienting the economy, we proposed the eTecK Park at Tamana; work has been done. They relegated it, they castigated it. We wanted to create our own Silicon Valley for the benefit of the people of this country. There are no limits to the prospects in terms of information technology, and we support that.

We proposed the aluminium smelter; they criticized it, but offered no replacement. Henceforth, we would have a problem, but to date things have been very good. As at June, unemployment was still 5.3 per cent; today it is 9.7 per cent. I heard the Governor say that he was worried about it. [*Interruption*] Okay, it is 6.7 per cent. [*Crosstalk*] As at June, we had 12.7 months import cover, when the accepted import cover is three months. Trinidad and Tobago had 12.7 months as at June. That did not happen overnight; good management in globally troubling times.

Madam Vice-President, US \$8.7 billion in reserves; Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, US \$3 billion; debt ratio, 38.5 per cent; in some countries, 110 per cent or 115 per cent. Inflation as at June, 9.5 per cent, today 14 per cent, not a word from Sen. Abdulah, who organized protests in this country when inflation got to 10 per cent, now he has been bought and taken and took and he is quiet. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Abdulah: Madam Vice-President, I wish to identify the Standing Orders. I do not think there should be any suggestion—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Panday: Standing Order 35(5)!

Sen. F. Hinds: I will rephrase it; he has since been co-opted into the Government and has now gone silent; 14 per cent inflation and not a word from Sen. Abdulah. Madam Vice-President, let me address you before I plead Standing Order 35.

Madam Vice-President, 2009 deficit, \$6.68 billion, now \$3.86 billion, a reducing deficit; we are on the road to recovery. It did not happen by chance, but the management of the economy from here on would be the challenge. The ratings by the international agencies, whether it is Standard & Poor's or Moody's were

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favourable up to June. We must wait to see what happens in the future. And they talk about laptops; almost every citizen in this country has one. [*Crosstalk*] That might not be so; it might be a little exaggerated, but far more than would happen in many other countries. Cellphones, what about that? There are some people who are mining three and four cellphones at a time. Cars—it is normal to go to people's homes and see two or three cars in their garages. You talk about “bling”, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago “bling” more than anybody else. If they do not know what “bling” means, they just have to look at the Minister of Health and they would understand. [*Laughter*]

Trinidad and Tobago has had its attack of diseases from time to time, but basically we have managed these very well, but if you listened to the Minister of Health, you would think that we are overrun by all the old diseases and we have done nothing in this country. But that is how they are, that is how they speak. Some of them had the gumption, the temerity, to look at people in this country and say that under the PNM for the last eight years, people are worse off.

Even Sen. Panday looks pretty and handsome, notwithstanding his iniquity, [*Laughter*] well fed; look at my friend, Sen. Ramnarine, plump, jolly and well fed. [*Laughter*] Then they bad-mouth Trinidad and Tobago up and down the place. Trinidad and Tobago has done very well and you should be applauding yourselves, if not the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] But they have a history of breaking promises, breaking contracts, breaking agreements, whether it was the aluminium smelter at a cost of over \$400,000, they broke that.

The PNM made a promise to the people that their investments in Clico would be guaranteed, they were paying interest. They came out of the blue and broke that; they now have to confront elderly people who invested their gratuity and all their money in that. You all are doing very well. [*Crosstalk*] The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), they entered into that regional agreement and then backed out on it. We agreed to the negotiation committee for public servants salaries, the PSNC, they have disbanded that; they just said to the police, "Look \$1,000", to please Mr. Ramesar and his friends; now the fire service saying, "What about my thousand?" The prison service is saying that, and justifiably so; the defence force and everybody else; is madness and mayhem. No wonder, Madam Vice-President, when the army band played, "Is Carnival time again" at the launch of this Parliament, I knew it was a message they were sending. Since they came to government is “mas”, “Jab Jab”, "Pierot Grenade", all kinds of things, trouble. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Panday: You are a midnight robber!

Sen. F. Hinds: They breached the Crowne Plaza agreement; they went back on their word in respect of the death penalty. They promised old people \$3,000 at 60 years, they went back on that. They made one other promise to the arts and culture fraternity that they would pay \$2 million as the first place and they agreed prices for second and third; I hope they do not break that promise. They are well known for breaking their promises; they cannot be trusted.

As I wind to a conclusion, having spoken in this budget debate, Trinidad and Tobago reminds me today of a child whose father, the PNM, left for a short while.

Hon. Senators: Abandoned! Abused! [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. F. Hinds: He left an incompetent, incapable mother to look after affairs. [*Crosstalk*] It is terribly unfortunate, and now the child is exposed to abuse, drunkenness; they are not managing the budget for the family properly, so the child and the family are at risk. The father recognizes this, so it will not be very long before he returns home and reassumes his rightful place as head of the home to ensure that the child and the family make it safely thereafter. [*Desk thumping*]

I thank you.

Sen. Dr. James Armstrong: Madam Vice-President, I make my intervention today with a brief quote from Arthur Lewis, because I think it would place into context what I have to say about the budget.

In 1966, Lewis indicated that in preparing a budget and planning, a government will come into power and promise everybody schools, hospitals, water supply, electricity, roads, houses, jobs and all good things of life. Undaunted by finding that the Treasury is empty and that taxes bring in only 9 per cent of the national income, it proceeds to prepare a plan. A distinction between an indicative and a controlling plan is important. The plan made in communist countries are documents of authorization; they tell each industrial unit what it must produce and how much to invest. A development plan, on the other hand, not unlike a manifesto—he did not say that, but I am indicating that—authorizes nothing. Even public expenditure is authorized, not by the plan but only by the annual budget passed in the Parliament. Therefore, I think we need to attach a great deal of significance to this budget as a statutory document which would guide development as we proceed over the next year.

In reviewing the budget, I also tried to craft a development objective. I saw a number of indicators in the budget that would assist in doing that. The budget, for instance, spoke about the fact that energy resources are finite, that the mineral

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resources belong to every citizen, that every citizen must legitimately expect to partake in the opportunities that resources can provide, that no one should be left behind, people must achieve their maximum potential, that we must prioritize spending, build new momentum, strengthen the regulatory bodies and that Government must work for the people. He says, serve the people, serve the people, serve the people. It also wants to turn the economy around.

In doing that, Madam Vice-President, it also talks about removing uncertainties. That is the first thing I would like to talk about, removing uncertainties. In this regard, I would mention briefly the Clico matter in which a lot of uncertainty still exists.

3.00 p.m.

We have found that a number of pensioners, a number of companies have actually invested in what turned out to be a significant disaster. The Minister indicated—and it is in the budget—that his approach to this would be actually to pay \$75,000, and that over a 20-year period you would get notes that you could redeem.

One of the difficulties I have with this is that if you had actually invested \$75,000, you would be clear. However, if you had invested significantly more than that, which many people have, you would still have a significant problem. I was quite pleased to hear the Minister say that in due course there would be some review of this and some attempt would be made to try to redress this dilemma. It is one of the things that I would like to urge should be done pretty soon.

Another uncertainty has to do with Alutrint, which has been discussed significantly over the past few days in this place and in the other place. I listened very carefully to the representative for La Brea and his very passionate plea that this should be reconsidered. Madam Vice-President, the representative for La Brea, in his contribution in the other place, also made reference to a book which he said supported the smelter in La Brea. I should disclose that the book referred to, as Sen. the Hon. Mary King indicated yesterday, was actually articles presented at a symposium. I have the book here, edited by Sankat and Others, and I should disclose that I was responsible for writing Chapter 3 in that book. I did not in my chapter support the smelter and I still do not at this particular time.

The reason I did not conclude that a smelter was required was because I found there was some confusion in terms of exactly how to address the objective of development for that particular area. What do I mean by that? What I heard the people say is: Look, we want development; we want upliftment; we want

opportunities. I think that is what should have been addressed. Someone translated that into a smelter and said: Okay, if you want development; if you want to uplift the community; if you want to alleviate poverty, take a smelter.

Given that limited information, I could not, from a technical point of view, support a smelter. I felt that the way in which you address a development objective at the community level, the regional level, such as that, is that you first ask yourself if there are other alternatives and opportunities and I was not satisfied that question was addressed.

I also felt, at that time, that the information which the representative brought to the Chamber recently was considerably less than we have today. While I still do not support the idea that perhaps a smelter is the most appropriate investment, I would recommend strongly, in keeping with this whole idea of new politics, that the representative for La Brea should be engaged firstly on meeting the objectives or on addressing the objectives.

If it is a depressed area and you are not going along with the smelter—because that is my contention; I am not saying that a smelter is the most appropriate; in fact, I am not even trying to identify or suggest what it should be; but it should be something—if it is not this, then what else should it be. I think that is the sort of discussion that should really be taking place in trying to arrive at some sort of development intervention that would address the objectives to which the representative spoke.

He also mentioned, which was quite interesting, that smelters have been developed elsewhere and made reference to an award for a smelter, I believe in Bahrain by UNEP, which is one of the sister agencies that I worked for, and I found that revelation to be quite interesting.

Therefore, I urge the Government—given all the discussion that has taken place, listening to the Leader of the Opposition who also made a revelation that there has already been significant investments in this regard, that going back to what was indicated in the budget and the fact that you want “to turn the economy around; no one should be left behind; new politics” and so on—that there should be dialogue. So, as far as a smelter is concerned, as I said, I did not support it, but I certainly would wish to have a second look at it.

I turn now to the rapid rail. It was actually discontinued by this Government and it is a decision that I certainly would support. Again, I felt that the trade-offs were not considered sufficiently. But having said that, Madam Vice-President, I also hasten to add that there is a problem in terms of access into Port of Spain. In

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fact, I believe that the whole idea of the rapid rail was an unforced error. It is really a problem that we created.

Because of the concentration of so many things in Port of Spain; because of the increase of the density of construction within a small area in our capital city, that created, or gave rise to or demanded that we needed access to transportation. Whether it should be a rapid rail or some other type of development is what was not considered adequately.

While I agree that the rapid rail, looking at the trade-offs, was not the most appropriate approach, I think we have a problem that is going to impact negatively on our economy because transport cost is significant in trying to build or expand an economy and it is something that has to be addressed. I felt that while we get rid of the rapid rail or it is not supported, there were not sufficient indicators in the budget to address how we would deal with alternatives.

I said in my last intervention in this Chamber that it is not a secret that, as a development planner, I am extremely disappointed with what has happened in Port of Spain. Cities are organisms, but Port of Spain is what we would call in the profession biocidic—has a linear metabolism. It sucks from the rest of the country. Cities are the engines of growth and, therefore, I urge that some consideration be given to looking at the infrastructure or lack thereof that hinders our progress and development as far as transport is concerned.

Sen. George indicated yesterday something I was not aware of, again related to infrastructure, the fact that with the density we have created in the city, that it is now difficult even to get rid of the amount of waste that would be generated by such a rapid increase in the density we have.

I am urging that some further consideration be given to that. Yes, we are getting rid of the rapid rail, but the question then is, notwithstanding the fast ferries we have between Port of Spain and San Fernando, that will not in my view solve the problem. I would like the budget and the development plan to look into that some more.

On page 12, there is reference to contractors. The construction industry has almost been decimated. We have lost a considerable number of jobs and employment in that area. It is no secret that the contractors are owed somewhere between \$1.5 billion and \$5 billion and there is some uncertainty as to how this will be addressed. I was not quite satisfied how this was dealt with in the budget from the point of view: one, of giving recognition to the fact that—and I believe I said this in my last contribution; and I need to reemphasize that—if you want to

move an economy along as quickly as possible, the construction sector is one area in which this can be done because of several linkages to manufacturing and to poverty alleviation and so on.

Laptops, on page 16: I strongly support the idea of distributing laptops to Form 1 students, but I have some concerns about that and my colleague, Sen. Dr. Balgobin, addressed some of these this morning. It is not simply to distribute computers as if we are giving gifts, but a computer really is an input to something else.

3.15 p.m.

In other words, there is something that we are trying to achieve, which has to do with education, being technology savvy, accessing information in the world and really bringing our students to the cutting edge. The fear that I have is that there are several logistical problems that have not as yet been considered and a number of these have been raised. I think that these need to be addressed. The more important concern that I have is a fear that it may very well leave several students behind.

I would like to explain what I mean by that. It is one thing to assume that all students are at the level where they can use a computer while there are some students who cannot even read and write. Therefore, what we need to address would be those problems, so that by the time we get to the question of how you use a computer properly to achieve the real objective that we are after, those who are already at that level would have moved ahead, while others are left behind.

In other words, what I am trying to say is that there is another problem that we need to be also addressing. It is like saying: "Well look, all students age 11 must go to high school" and we put them in a high school. But it does not necessarily mean that we have answered the question or that we have really evaluated or assessed whether they have reached the level or acquired the level of education to move from elementary to secondary school. Therefore, giving a laptop is not simply all that we have to do. We have to ensure that the teachers are there in the schools; the software, in terms of what it is we really want them to do, to learn; and what outputs we need from it. Those things are not yet in place and I believe that they have to be addressed.

Similarly, GATE, on page 21, I have noticed that the highest budget allocation for instance went to education and training, \$8.3 billion. GATE, to me is a very laudable endeavour. The problem is, again, I believe it is going to leave a lot of people behind, simply because, by spending that much money, I am sure that

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GATE is taking a significant portion of that \$8.3 billion. Again, my colleague spoke about certain aspects of it this morning. But we do have, in this country, several communities that have been neglected in which the elementary and the secondary school education have been deficient in several ways. Even when it has been adequate in some way, because of other kinds of social problems, it is not a level playing field.

Therefore, if we are going to take \$8.3 million and take a large portion of that and say: “Okay, we are going to fund tertiary level education, those people who are at the appropriate level will be able to access tertiary education because of the skewed situation in which several have already been left behind, and are not going to benefit significantly.” Therefore, again, I am suggesting that the allocation, with respect to education and training—I was trying to find some of the details as to how it will be broken down—should be frontloaded. In other words, a lot of the money allocated to education and training, I would like to see a significant amount of that money going to fix the problem at the elementary and secondary level, so that more people can then benefit from GATE.

The other question I want to ask about GATE—I said it is a laudable idea if we can afford it, fine: Can we really afford it, given all that we have been hearing? Is it sustainable? Should it be some type of revolving fund, which would allow anyone who requires an education at that level to access that education, but at the same time bearing some responsibility for some of the costs for that education, so that other generations coming behind, other students, have a revolving fund that they would also be able to access for similar assistance? However, if it is felt that we are affluent enough to do that without any consequences, then I have no particular objections against it, but I fear that at some point the bubble is going to burst and when that happens or if it happens, it means that a whole lot of people would have been left out, again because it is skewed in a certain way right now, where we are not addressing the problems at the lower level of the educational cycle and this is creating a problem. We need to fix the problem first, or at the same time on a parallel track and, perhaps allocating a lot more money to address that problem and to alleviate the problems from the “get go”.

I want to mention a bit about Tobago. My colleague, Sen. Dr. Wheeler already addressed several problems in that regard. I found that the budget really did not explain a lot about what is going to happen in Tobago. Indeed, I believe that reference should have been made to the fact that there is a development plan for Tobago, prepared by the THA. I believe it might have been a four-year plan, so it should be coming to the end of the particular cycle. But I believe that some

reference should have been made to that plan and further clarification given to the moneys that would be used by various Ministries and spent in Tobago. That was not very clear to me. It was sort of dealt with in passing.

I also want to again mention the business of land in Tobago and the alienation of land in Tobago. My position is that it is preferable that Tobagonians should have some sort of equity in land and in development as a development strategy. I saw mention made, for instance, to some sort of tourism development project. That is fine. I appreciate the fact that additional rooms are required in Tobago.

What I would like to, however, ask the Minister is: What level of consultation took place with the Tobago House of Assembly in that regard; and whether in those discussions any consideration was given to the possibility of equity in the tourism sector in Tobago? What I mean by that is, as we talk about tourism as a sector and trying to approach economic development in Tobago, whether it is possible, as had been done in certain parts of Jamaica, if you are going to do a tourism development plan, that it could be arranged in such a way that Tobagonians are able to invest in that plan? So that Tobagonians simply do not become workers in the house, but own a part of the house and also whether there could be that approach to those types of developments? This is something I know is possible, because I know we did it in Jamaica under a strata plan arrangement, where several hotels and guest houses of a higher quality, I am not talking simply about a bed and breakfast level type of operation, but major developments of a much higher level, in which it was designed and financed in such a way that opportunities were given for locals to participate. That should apply generally to developments in any community.

I was very pleased to see in the budget that UWI, UTT and COSTAATT would also be establishing a campus in Tobago, because for quite some time now, as you may be aware, Tobagonians wishing to access higher education really had to leave and come to Trinidad or go elsewhere. I think this would go a long way to really address that deficiency in Tobago.

I want to turn now to the business of land in general and housing in particular on page 17 of the budget. I think that there is really need for a new housing policy in Trinidad and Tobago. I think we need to look at the rental markets, homeownerships, private sector involvement, as well as units in and around Port of Spain. For instance, One Woodbrook Place, which many people have looked at as a possible model, is fine but, to me, that model is really one that is self-contained and does not easily lend itself to the type of housing that I would like to see developing in Port of Spain or elsewhere. Certainly, it is outside of the market

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that I am thinking about. We have people with incomes in this country, and although it was increased recently, who cannot access shelter. Therefore, I think that the Government needs to accelerate the delivery of housing or housing solutions, but we need to have some definitive policy on how we are going to approach this problem.

3.30 p.m.

On page 17, reference was made to the LSA. There is an indication that 6,400 persons sought regularization. With respect to squatting, I believe that the LSA really should be working itself out of a job; out of a portfolio. Again, the situation with land in this country is critical, and we can no longer accommodate the squatting that is taking place. I must commend the Government for taking quick action with respect to the Cashew Gardens invasion. But I do not think that we can continue to allow for this wanton and ad hoc approach to how we develop land in general.

As we know, at least, one study at UWI indicated—I believe I mentioned this in my last contribution—that we have only about 10 per cent of developable land in Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, we have to look at the whole business again of densities and the proper use of land.

On page 23, in dealing with land, I want to address the whole business of agriculture. It talked about improving food production; it talked about making agriculture profitable, but the question is: If we are serious about agriculture, where are we going to plant this food if, again, we do not address this problem of how we deal with land? I do not see that we can achieve the objectives that we have in the budget with respect to agriculture if we do not have land.

Of course, one might say well, we do not have land, but as an island state, we also have access to the sea. With the Law of the Sea Convention and the seabed authority and so on, we know that this had given us a larger area that we can use with respect to fishing and so on, but that has not been addressed in the budget. We have looked at agriculture, but with respect to land-based agriculture and food production. I do not think that we have considered sufficiently the whole business of fishing as part of what we might be able to do with respect to agriculture. So I really think that if we are serious about agriculture, we have to be serious about land. I think we have to make better use of our marine environment.

Land-use planning is a serious concern as well. All the things that we talked about in this budget, there is some spatial context. For instance, in recent times, we have seen settlements are actually located in areas that are flooding. That is

nothing that we did not know. We knew that a very long time ago; people were actually building houses in flood plain areas. That has been going on for a long time, unregulated.

We talked about water conservation. We have a problem now of disasters on the hillsides; houses falling down and washing away. We are talking about industrial parks, recreational facilities, commerce and transport, and all of these things must take place in a spatial context. I want to emphasize that we still do not have a national physical development plan. I know that Sen. The Hon. Mary King made reference to this yesterday.

The Senator also talked about strengthening the Town and Country Planning Division, and I was very heartened by that. In so doing, I think we also need to look at the legislative arrangements and the institutional arrangements. Reference was made to the Planning and Development of Land Bill, as in the manifesto—the Minister mentioned it yesterday that this is going to be considered. I would like to alert the Minister that that draft Bill is actually about 10 years old, and it might be more appropriate to look at what changes could be made as quickly as possible in the existing legislation, so as to give some teeth to the Town and Country Planning Division and, perhaps, the local authorities and so on so that we can address some of the problems that we are faced with immediately, because it would probably take quite some time to revisit that Bill, which I am not sure is still appropriate for the circumstances today.

I am not sure that we have worked out as yet what model we really want for the Town and Country Planning Division or for planning; whether the ministerial model or the corporate model. In my view, it will take some time for that legislation to be looked at, to be revised and to go through the process. I would suggest that, perhaps, we look at the possibility of tinkering with the existing legislation.

The other concern that I have with respect to that has to do really with what I would call a dual approach to planning in Trinidad and Tobago right now. We do have planning taking place in the Town and Country Planning Division. I am aware of the fact that for some time now spatial planning has also been going on in the Ministry of Local Government, and to me that is a prescription for confusion. I am not against planning taking place in local government, but it has to be within a national context otherwise the Government is going to be faced with a situation where municipal plans or local level plans are prepared and they will place certain demands on the central government, because there has been no oversight. So, you are going to have perhaps about 14 plans making demands for

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similar kinds of things and that they are not rationalized. Again, that is a prescription for confusion. I think that would come out in the legislation once it is addressed: What kind of institutional arrangements are required to really deal with land-use planning and development in general.

This would also give indicators to the private sector, because it has to be a statutory planning in due course. So the private sector and the population can know exactly how you have translated your policies in a spatial context and exactly what can be anticipated.

Madam Vice-President, I want to move now to the income expenditure gap—revenue of \$41.2 billion; expenditure of \$49 billion; and a deficit of \$7.7 billion. It was mentioned that 30 per cent of the deficit would be raised through domestic sources. What I was looking for is some further explanation with respect to meeting the deficit. It was not clear to me in the document exactly how this would be addressed. I certainly would appreciate some information as to how the Minister of Finance really intends to deal with this in general.

Of course, I understand that there would have to be deficit financing. I do not have a problem with that, but it is simply that I think we ought to know how it is going to be done and what the implications are in the future.

Procurement: It was mentioned that a White Paper had been laid. In this regard, I think that we have to hasten to really deal with the legislative requirements with respect to procurement, particularly noting that we need to take into consideration a number of the recommendations coming out of the Uff Commission, and the draft pieces of legislation that we have. So, I was very pleased to see that some action was being taken.

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. B. Ali*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: Madam Vice-President, thank you and also to my colleagues. Just to finish off on procurement, it is something that I would like to urge that should be accelerated, because the procurement regime is extremely important for our competitiveness; for our development; for taking into consideration some sort of rational approach to how we engage or purchase the services, equipment and so on that we need, and how we actually take into

consideration the procurement that could be done also at the local level or within the local environment. I am referring here really to services such as consultancy services and a number of the professions that we have bypassed, and a lot of our manufacturers and so on will certainly benefit from this.

The budget also talks about poverty alleviation and that again I was quite happy to see. However, what I think we need to do is to come up with some indicators, not only with respect to poverty alleviation, but really in general within the budget. What I mean by that really is that we need to really measure. We keep talking about poverty alleviation and addressing conditions of the poor—as I said, the budget talked about equity; turning the economy around; no one should be left behind—how do we know really when we are making progress or what progress is being made if there are no indicators? In fact, that is one of the problems we ran into—Sen. Dr. Balgobin talked about that this morning, the Vision 2020 sub-committee that dealt with communities and he also made reference to Sen. Ramgoolam who headed that committee. As she would recall, I was one of the faithfuls serving on that committee.

One of the problems that we ran into really was that we did not have sufficient indicators. This is something I think the Ministry of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs will have to deal with, to measure any progress that was being made with respect to poverty alleviation. We heard yesterday about communities. The Minister of Public Utilities talked about going to communities where people are getting water only two days a week. Where are those communities? Where are they located?

3.45 p.m.

Can we prepare a template for this country that shows us exactly: Who is getting water; how many days a week they are getting water; who has access to what types of schools; what is the pass rate, the failure? Plot it. Who has access to health facilities; what is the radius; where are the crime spots? I want us to come up with these indicators and plot them, so that over the country we can then see exactly where we need to make interventions. So with respect to poverty alleviation, I think we have to invest a lot more in the communities where poverty is the highest.

Today, Madam Vice-President, the Prime Minister of this country is actually participating in a significant meeting that is taking place at the UN in New York, having to do with the Millennium Development Goals and this is what I would like to conclude my contribution on.

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Those goals by and large really address poverty alleviation and the 197 countries that signed onto that; Trinidad and Tobago is one of those countries, and I would like to conclude really by going through the eight MDGs:

1. eradication of extreme poverty and hunger;
2. to achieve universal primary education;
3. provide gender equity and empower women;
4. to reduce child mortality;
5. improve maternal health;
6. combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
7. ensure environmental sustainability; and
8. develop a global partnership for development.

What I am suggesting is that we develop these indicators which would then demonstrate to us, if this budget and our planning are really doing what we wanted to do, that we can then begin to monitor, evaluate and measure the progress that we are making towards a number of the things that we have in this document. Otherwise, I do not think that we are going to be able to tell what progress is being made and what we need to emphasize.

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

Madam Vice-President: Senators, I believe the Acting Prime Minister is to address the Senate. [*Desk thumping*]

The Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol Mc Leod): Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President of the Senate. Congratulations on your acting appointment, from one actor to another. [*Laughter*]

Madam Vice-President, it is a great privilege I consider it, to consult with the very distinguished Members of the Senate at this time as we deliberate on the Finance Minister's package to address our service to Trinidad and Tobago, 2010/2011. It is with the greatest respect that I submit some other views and perspectives for the consideration of hon. Members of the Senate, as you deliberate on the budget proposals presented by the Minister of Finance.

This first People's Partnership budget is undoubtedly one of change and choice. It is an attempt to lay a new foundation on which to build such

infrastructure as to facilitate a sustainable socio-economic development of our country. The budget offers hope. Hope for a better life to a people who had become disillusioned with empty promises. It affords the people of Trinidad and Tobago the opportunity to make choices that will improve the quality of their lives. The budget provides the platform for moving towards a stronger and more resilient economy, from a situation adversely affected by the decline in the global economic and financial system which declines were exacerbated locally by an irresponsible egomania that preoccupied the last administration.

It is disappointing that representatives of the last administration brought nothing to the debate in the other place, from which I come. They have so far suggested nothing to assist in changing the fundamentals to the problems that they have inflicted on this country. But we know that we can depend on sound reasoning of other hon. Members and Senators in this Chamber, some of which I have heard. The People's Partnership Government of which labour, sane and committed, is an essential pillar, we know that with the combination of entrepreneurs taking risks on the one hand, and workers performing with commitment and distinction on the other, that we will unleash the creativity, innovation, knowledge, skills and risk taking that will together, all of them, propel our economy forward.

The Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development has commenced a process of engagement with the social partners, with the view to understanding better and appreciating greater, the needs of the labour sector and to obtain their input into development of a decent work policy and programme of action for Trinidad and Tobago.

To date, I have met twice with representatives of workers' organizations and I propose to host discussions with the employers and Government representatives in due course. The issues raised in these conversations so far, will factor into the development of my Ministry's five-year strategic plan and re-organization of its operations to better serve our stakeholders.

In the other place, I sought to enlighten Members as to the delicate nature of the issue of the national minimum wage about which Sen. Dr. Lester Henry would be very familiar.

If this People's Partnership Government could have done more at this time in our present PNM depleted circumstances, of course, more would be done. The PNM did nothing. They did absolutely nothing. Sen. Dr. Lester Henry contributed, and he has sought to tarnish that contribution by becoming PNM. The PNM

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exposed its uncaring for the poor and vulnerable in society. They concentrated on tall buildings, elaborate edifices and denied social infrastructure. That is what happened. They behaved like the proverbial licentious farmer—I like to speak about this one—who would have gone on the Friday and the Saturday nights, widely spreading his seeds, and then on Sunday morning, runs to church, sitting in the front pew, praying for a crop failure.

Madam Vice-President, permit me to address some of the major issues arising from the budget 2011 within my portfolio. I first want to deal with the minimum wage and to say again, as I said in the other place, that the setting of the minimum wage is a delicate balancing act which requires detailed analysis. To do it otherwise, is to be irresponsible. Neither do we support the decision of the last administration to suffer the vulnerable and unrepresented minimum wage earners as they suffered them, and if they were mindful of the plight of the minimum wage earner, they would have implemented the \$10 an hour that they promised in 2003.

In 2003, they said that over a five-year period, the minimum wage would move to \$10, that the minimum wage earners did not seek. The Minimum Wages Board after doing its own analysis, submitted worthwhile recommendations in 2008, the year when according to the 2003 promise, the minimum wage ought to have been at \$10. But as my old parents would have said, "corbeaux jawbone", nothing. And it is against that background that one must condemn the PNM as having absolutely no moral authority to criticize the measures proposed by the People's Partnership. [*Desk thumping*]

They did nothing, and they did nothing at a time when the resources would have more easily facilitated the application of an increase in the minimum wage.

4.00 p.m.

Setting that minimum wage is an action that requires on the one hand a level that needs to be high enough to secure a socially accepted standard of living and on the other hand not to be so high as to risk the creation of unemployment among low-income workers and keep any effects on inflation under control. A moderately set minimum wage rate will impact more on the earnings of low-wage workers than on the levels of employment as it tends to reduce inequalities and not reduce abject poverty—reduce inequalities of earnings and not reduce abject poverty.

The intention of this Government is to set a minimum wage, as has already been indicated, that constitutes a decent wage. We are not satisfied that we have

reached there yet, but, it is a balancing act, as I said. Indeed, at a legislated \$9 per hour minimum wage, I am informed that there were quite a few employers who were paying their employees below that number, some of them \$6 an hour, but there had also been—may I use the word, progressive—a few more progressive employers, who were paying their employees above \$9.

In our own little survey, before coming up with a number that in the interim we have asked people to accept, we were informed by those employers who were paying more than \$9 an hour that if we were to risk going at too high a number they may be forced to maintain a margin that they had set by going above \$9—are you understanding me, Madam Vice-President—and it might put them in a difficult situation.

Now, a Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development who must take the high ground above partisan interest must see the requirements of the small employer as he would look after the interest of the small, unprotected and vulnerable employee. It is a difficult task, especially coming from where I have come. It has been a difficult task but I think, precisely because of my having come from where I have come, I am expected to be up to the task and I think that I am discharging those responsibilities very maturely and in the interest of all concerned. [*Desk thumping*]

The intention of this Government is to set a minimum wage that constitutes a decent wage and that balances for both the needs of employees and employers. In practice, the level at which the minimum wage is set is about fairness, it is about decent work, it is about the value of that work and it is about the opportunities that work provides. So it will bother a sensitive mind, perhaps, like mine, when those of us who are expected to demonstrate a higher level of responsibility because we present ourselves as leaders to people who sometimes do not know and understand otherwise—yes, when others like Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds go to Piggott's Corner and talk about this Government having promised a \$20 minimum wage and that we are now betraying the people and that progressive labour was a part in making that promise and now progressive labour is abandoning those to whom they made these promises, I consider that irresponsible because nobody in this People's Partnership Government promised a minimum wage of \$20 per hour. Not that we would not like those workers to receive \$20 per hour, but we never made that promise.

What we have said in our manifesto is that we would review the minimum wage and make any appropriate adjustment within our ability so to do. That is what we said. I was very conscious that the Minimum Wages Board

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recommended \$13.50 but they certainly recommended \$13.50 at the incidence of our being better positioned to implement \$13.50. We could not do that now without further review and analysis, both of the ability of the employer and the requirements, because of inflation and higher living costs and so on, that affect the employee.

It is important too that the minimum wage earner must know that the labour movement, leaders of the trade unions, understanding the struggles of the unions and knowing too that it is a policy of many of our employers—48 years after national independence, many of our employers wish to deny workers the right to join trade unions and be represented by trade unions. If we were to irresponsibly apply a rate of pay for the ununionized, the unprotected, and that rate of pay equates with or is above the rate of pay established in some signed, collective agreements, then we will be eroding the *raison d'être* of the trade unions. And I will not promise any minimum wage earner that he or she will get a rate of pay that equates with what people have struggled for and that they have in their collective agreements.

On the other hand, or instead of that, I shall encourage the minimum wage earners, if they want to struggle to get to where they ought to be, they must join unions. We are moving to so amend the Industrial Relations Act that it becomes easier for workers, all workers, to become members of trade unions and we would increase [*Desk thumping*]—we will implement such measures as to bring to justice any employer who is found guilty of denying workers the right to join unions of their choice.

Madam Vice-President, the People's Partnership gave a commitment to begin a review of that within 120 days of our coming into office and I think it is this Saturday—[*Crosstalk*]—or Friday—we would have come to day 120. So that we are well within all that we have promised and we are discharging those promises. We have held true to that promise to date.

We must remember that in light of the current economic uncertainties at the national and international levels arising from the global economic and financial crisis, the review needs to be meticulous and comprehensive. By the 30th of this month the Minimum Wages Board established pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the Minimum Wages Act, and that is part of this mechanism to review, will receive their letters of appointment. It is essentially going to be the same persons who sat on the last Minimum Wages Board. I am sorry that Dr. Lester Henry chose to be not with us. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] But we will make it so interesting that you will be prepared to leave that and come back.

Why \$100 instead of \$12.50? Hmm? I wanted to emphasize, Madam Vice-President, that there were some calling for \$120 a day and there were others whose proposals would have put us at \$106 per day and I thought that I should emphasize the daily rate but conscious enough that we are talking in terms of an hourly rate. It was easy to do the arithmetic. There was no sleight-of-hand intended in that.

Madam Vice-President, the Unemployment Relief Programme. This one has been a point of much discussion and controversy over the years and I need only emphasize that the Unemployment Relief Programme is going to be converted from a voter's bank that the PNM established and we will have an Unemployment Relief Programme that will do just that, provide some relief to the unemployed who qualify for such relief regardless of their party affiliation. [*Desk thumping*] Yes, regardless of their party affiliation.

Now, I heard the Minister of Works and Transport talk about something else, you know, Madam Vice-President. He was talking about some people's indebtedness to certain institutions in the country. I think that is what I heard. Is that what you are referring to? [*Crosstalk*] Yes, there will be fairness but, you know, to introduce that, Madam Vice-President, is going to take quite an effort to "mash up" some institutions that the PNM built in the URP [*Desk thumping*] including the existence of those whom we will describe as not having warm bodies.

Hon. Senator: The ghost gang.

Hon. E. McLeod: "Uh-huh. Yep." A budget of \$382 million, that is the last one, a budget of \$403 million as proposed in this one, and there are those who see an opportunity to enrich themselves by all kinds of nefarious means; and you try to address the situation, you try to correct it, and then you get all kinds of messages; you get texts, you get letters and so on, threatening to put out your light.

4.15 p.m.

They say, for instance—and this is what I have met—that 18-to 25-year-old young people are excluded from the programme, and that they ought to be diverted to other programmes of a developmental nature and, perhaps, nothing is wrong with that. You go to MuST; you go to YAPA; you go to HYPE. It is about 17 different programmes. But tell me, which one of them will adequately train and develop a young man or a young woman, in three months to be what? An electrician? An auto-mechanic? A bricklayer? A mason? A carpenter? Which

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one of those programmes? And I am not suggesting that we get rid of those programmes, you know. We have to examine those programmes and make them viable; make them—what is the word, Senator?

Sen. Karim: Marketable.

Hon. E. McLeod: Make them more marketable, and so on. And I am sure that we will find great benefit in our going back with a bit of modernization to the kind of apprentice training programmes that we have seen and that have contributed to building the engineering core and other skill vocations.

While they sought to shut out the 18 to 25, they continue to employ those who are pensioners; 65 and older. This administration has determined that we will review the exclusion in the policy of 18 to 25, but we will definitely not include at all, anybody who is aged 65 and in receipt of a pension continuing in the programme. [*Desk thumping*] It cannot be. It ought not to be.

So every 65 and above person who is in receipt of a pension—our pension of \$3,000 a month—each one of them, we are going to bring some other person; some younger person instead. Make room for those who really qualify for the thing. And the objective is to have the programme bring value to the money that is being expended.

And so, we have already begun to talk with certain other interests. The farmers approached us and said that it is expensive, too expensive for them, to acquire the labour that they require to sufficiently grow food so that we can reduce our food import bill. Those farmers who did not have the benefit of their family members helping them on the farm have really been in some difficult situations, Madam Vice-President.

We have already begun to discuss with some of them, like the pineapple growers, for instance, in Tableland. They cultivate some 800 acres of land, and they heard what we were saying on the campaign, and they approached us, and discussions are well advanced to our having a memorandum of understanding, I think, which will see us committing—the URP committing—to providing some 480 workers at rates of pay to which the farmer will contribute, and the URP will also contribute, thereby making it cheaper for the farmer to cultivate and produce whatever he is engaged in.

That will have the effect of the consumer enjoying a reduction in the price of the particular produce; and it will also bring a qualitative change to the URP, as we do some new imaging so that the URP worker no longer feels ashamed to be in the

URP, and having to beg for a “10-days” every so many fortnights, and so on. With this particular programme that we are about to enter, you may have the URP worker who is among that 480 number doing as many as, perhaps nine months. The rotation then is different from the one that currently exists, and which has been compromised very, very seriously by those who went before us.

There are very many individual elements within the existing programme that need to be examined, and there is potential for growth that needs to be explored and re-organized. I hold firm, Madam Vice-President, to the view that the programme should be marked by transparency, respect, dignity and equity. Every community—and I wish to say this to La Brea in particular, that has been complaining about being shut out, we decided that we will not proceed with the aluminium smelter, and a number of “La Breans” who were employed in those projects there have been complaining about being discriminated against, being left out, and so on.

A number of them sought to assure me that they are not PNM and I said that that has nothing to do with it. That you are unemployed; that you have no other means to go by; that you are hungry, as some of them have complained, is enough qualification for you to get an opportunity to “get a food” too, like other people. [*Desk thumping*] At the same time, we are not ashamed to say that we are also seeking to satisfy the needs of those persons who walked up and down the national community with us, so that today we can have a 29-seat People’s Partnership Government in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] So that every community, on the basis of equity, shall have access to the benefits of the programme.

On the topic of unemployment, Madam Vice-President, it would be remiss of me not to address the unemployment issue. At the end of the first quarter of 2010, the unemployment rate stood at 6.7 per cent, up by 1.7 percentage points for the comparative period in 2009. We recognize that the global economic downturn which propelled a decline in energy prices has affected private sector employment. This has not been unique to Trinidad. The ILO estimates that unemployment is up by more than 30 million worldwide, since 2007. The increase in unemployment in advanced economies has been particularly severe, but the crisis also has hit emerging markets and developing economies as well.

Madam Vice-President, you know, had it not been for organizations like the Oilfields Workers Trade Union (OWTU), today, we would be in a worse position insofar as unemployment is concerned if we did not intervene in 2005 when that international cement giant, CEMEX, sought to take over Trinidad Cement Limited.

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The OWTU, which I had the distinct honour and privilege to lead, called on our Minister of Trade and Industry asking him to intervene, because we had struggled to take Trinidad Cement Limited, in 1973/74, away from Rugby, when they started to run down the industry here in Trinidad because of the global scenario in which they played an important game.

We struggled, literally keeping that company—its physical infrastructure, keeping it together, as we would say, “by spit and rubber band”. People had to forego necessary and important wage increases as we built that company, and then later on, the Government withdrew itself, holding only what they called a golden share and allowing the private sector, essentially, to take over that company, the local private sector.

Nothing was bad about that, but giant CEMEX, holding 20 per cent of the shares in TCL—and not just TCL, but Arawak Cement in Barbados and Caribbean Cement in Jamaica—they decided; they made a bid to take it over, and our Minister of Trade and Industry said that if he had a share in that company, he, too, was going to sell it.

Madam Vice-President, we called on the Prime Minister at the time. There was a meeting in Guyana—Heads of Caricom—and there was no response to our call, from our Prime Minister. We called other people. We called the Prime Minister of Barbados and we found a sympathetic ear; and then we called the leadership of the Barbados Workers Union that represent the workers at Arawak; and we called the union representing the workers at Caribbean Cement in Jamaica.

We sent a message to the Prime Minister of Jamaica at that time, Patterson, and there was a confluence of ideas and positions with regard to our revising the call made in 1926 by our earlier labour leaders, that we must be setting up our West Indian territories, come together, establish our economic niche, create our political space and plant up Guyana for food to feed the rest of the Caribbean, and put all of that on a pillar that Trinidad’s oil will constitute, and so forth.

The OWTU, so that it can get in the shareholders’ meeting, bought up shares. Immediately, we bought shares, Madam Vice-President, and we went to the shareholders meeting with a voice. We mobilized our pension funds investments, wherever we had those investments, so long as those pension funds had themselves invested in TCL. We went there, and with discipline, but with serious determination, we converted all who wanted to sell into patriotic nationals of Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the Caribbean, and we sent CEMEX on their way.

Had CEMEX taken over TCL, when CEMEX had their difficulties two years ago, they would have shutdown Trinidad Cement Limited; they would have shutdown Arawak Cement in Barbados; and they would have shut down Caribbean Cement in Jamaica; all because of the short-sightedness of those whom we had elected to the Executive in the affairs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The OWTU forever, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Vice-President, the workers' unions forever; all the time!

4.30 p.m.

As the People's Partnership Government seeks to steer this country onto a path of sustainable economic growth, we anticipate that unemployment levels will decline. This will be achieved through our focus in promoting decent work, developing sustainable small and micro enterprise and developing markets for indigenous Trinidad and Tobago produce. We have to set about doing that now; enough time has gone. We will undertake these actions in consultation with our social partners.

I am pleased to point out that our Government's strategy for restoring higher levels of employment is in keeping with the policy guidelines of the Global Jobs Pact adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) constituents in June 2009. What is being advocated is a decent work response to the global economic and financial crisis and its consequent recessionary effects.

For too long the workers of our country have been treated as second class citizens. The People's Partnership Government gave its commitment to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that it would place workers at the centre of development, as we seek to build a productive nation. Workers are ready.

It is no secret that I have dedicated most of my own working life, over 30 years, fighting for workers' rights. As I told the workers' representatives at the consultation which I hosted last month to obtain their views on the labour sector, my principle position on ensuring that workers get their just due, has not changed and will never change. [*Desk thumping*] So for those who wish to go to Piggott's Corner and elsewhere to cast aspersions over my credibility as the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, I have just a few words for them: Let my reputation, as a fighter for workers' rights, speak for itself. [*Interruption*]

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

Motion made, That the hon. Minister's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. S. Panday*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Madam President, I thank my colleagues on both sides of the House.

The various initiatives being pursued by this Government in relation to the working population are aimed at ensuring that decent work is realized. Ensuring that our men and women can obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, is one of our top priorities. To this end, my Ministry has commenced the process of developing a decent work policy and programme of action for Trinidad and Tobago.

The need for a proper legislative framework to protect the more than 590,600 persons employed in Trinidad and Tobago, and those who will join the labour market, is very apparent. The People's Partnership Government, in keeping to its word of modernizing our labour laws, has begun the process of making our labour laws more relevant to today's working people. We have started the consultative process with workers organizations and we will follow a similar exercise with employers to obtain a better understanding of the legislative and other issues affecting them.

I am pleased to inform Members of the Senate that Cabinet last week agreed to the repeal of that very archaic piece of legislation, the Masters and Servants Ordinance, Chap. 22:05. [*Desk thumping*] This ordinance is no longer relevant currently; indeed, it was never relevant to industrial relations and employment law in Trinidad and Tobago, as is evident from its reference to parties to an employment contract such as master, servant, and wages as money or other things paid or contracted to be paid, delivered or given as a recompense, a reward or remuneration for any labour or other service done or to be done.

Our law of contract and the development of industrial relations practice and principles have long overtaken the relationship and obligations imposed by this ordinance. We will continue to work with fervour in revising and updating key labour laws, such as the Industrial Relations Act, the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Cooperative Societies Act, to name but a few.

There is no doubt that within the four months in which this Government has taken the helm of leadership in partnering with our people, we have shown that

we are not about paying lip service, but we are set on achieving tangible results in the labour sector and other sectors of the economy.

Let me turn to productivity and competitiveness. Decent work assumes productive work; productive workers translate into profitable and competitive enterprises and competitive enterprises are the building blocks of competitive economies. I, therefore, take my responsibility of improving the productivity of the labour force very seriously. Let me hasten, however, to say that cheap labour does not a competitive economy make. If we were to deny workers their wages and their various fringe benefits, if they were to agree to work for free, we still would not be able to compete with economies like China, the US and many others in North America and Europe. Why? It does not have as much to do with wages and salaries as it has to do with organization, systems and management.

The results of the recently released Global Competitiveness Report 2010/2011, showed that Trinidad and Tobago is ranked 84 out of 139 countries, a few steps up from its 2009/2010 ranking of 86. If we consider that the 2009/2010 rank was based on a smaller number of countries, 133, we can deduce that our competitiveness has not improved under the former administration's most recent term.

In delving deeper into the details, we can see from one of the 12 pillars on which the competitiveness index is based, that of labour market efficiency, that our ranking is quite low in respect of a number of areas, including pay and productivity; 115 out of 139, and this is cause for concern.

Raising the overall level of competitiveness depends largely on making the labour force more productive. It is, therefore, not a surprise that poor work ethic—and here is a trade unionist saying this; once a trade unionist in my view and with my kind of blood, always a trade unionist, Dr. Henry—and even poorer management systems, are identified in the Global Competitiveness Report as the second most problematic factor for doing business in Trinidad and Tobago; the first being that of corruption, crime and theft, about which the PNM became infamous.

Changing the existing culture and work ethic of our workers require a consistent and focused approach. Productivity needs to be placed in front and centre of our development efforts and needs the explicit support of all the social partners.

Steps are currently being taken to reconstitute the multipartite National Productivity Council which is mandated to develop and implement a public awareness programme, specifically designed to build greater productivity, quality awareness and consciousness amongst the public and to inculcate new values and attitudes in this country, regarding productivity for Trinidad and Tobago.

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Over the next year, my Ministry, in collaboration with the National Productivity Council, proposes to undertake a number of initiatives to enhance productivity in Trinidad and Tobago, including such initiatives as the conduct of a baseline study to assess current levels of awareness and to provide a key set of productivity indicators and implementation of a public awareness programme. This programme will seek to increase and heighten knowledge and understanding of the link between productivity, quality improvement and success in an organization and examination of international best practices in productivity centres and councils. This will involve, no doubt, visits to productivity councils and centres established in other countries to obtain first-hand information, which will assist in developing a model for productivity that would be appropriate in our local context. It will not be any foreign trip; it will not be any joyride. There were so many trips made by the last administration, joyrides, and they came back as they went, nothing, certainly not in their heads. These initiatives are complementary to the work expected of the Economic Development Board and the Competitiveness and Innovation Council.

Creating an innovative and productive society requires a highly skilled and flexible workforce. This depends on the provision of high quality levels of training and retraining. The Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies is considered by this Government as an important tertiary institution specializing in labour studies. We intend to maintain the identity of this institution and to keep it as a specialized institution, separate from other tertiary institutions. [*Desk thumping*] Through physical upgrade and institutional strengthening, we will continue to position the college to meet the needs of students locally, regionally and internationally.

It is my intention also, Madam Vice-President, that once the OSH Authority really gets going, we shall see some important changes taking place with regard to attitudes at the workplace. We struggled for this OSH legislation. I went to the Ministry in June and I met a Ministry in which the OSH agency was functioning without an OSH authority. The legislation makes for the authority and the agency. My predecessor in the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development was sitting on his hands, it seems, at best, and supporting the anti-OSH proponents on the PNM side now in imminent political oblivion, at worst.

4.45 p.m.

Yes, that was the reality. I am not exaggerating. We struggled for important health and safety standards to be established. Since 1974, the OWTU was fighting that and it was the UNC government—1995/2000—that first brought legislation to

the Parliament and the PNM fought against it. It was in 2004 that we got the OSH Act in place and it was watered down. We were made to compromise. There were elements in the labour movement that were prepared to sell out anything, including our resources to the head of UDeCott, Hart.

So that it was not in their interests to have the OSH authority and the OSH agency really do its work. I recall the pressure which the trade union movement had to place on the PNM administration to get this law enacted in the face of increasing occupational accidents, injuries, fatalities, due to a lack of acceptable occupational standards.

Although the OSH Act proved to be a significant milestone in advancing Trinidad and Tobago in the international arena with regard to the protection of decent work, in particular, health and safety in the workplace, when I assumed office I encountered that situation about which I just spoke. It is my intention, once the authority is functioning—and efforts are being made to ensure that it functions; the board is going to be in place; the authority, and so on—it is my intention to undertake a comprehensive review of the OSH agency, including making necessary amendments to the OSH legislation, especially with regard to the statute of limitations in that Act. It says that after two years you could not take action against any guilty party, any perpetrator, any negligent party that might be responsible for the death of a worker. The Caroni bridge, do you remember that one? The report is still in the hands of somebody. It has not been made public. Two years have gone and families have lost their single breadwinner and so on.

There are many more issues which I should like to address here. I want to thank you very much for your support and encouragement and on the basis of how I was received in this Senate I know that I can be quite a regular visitor. So I will have more to say—[*Desk thumping*]

Thank you very much.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I think we do truly appreciate the presence of the Acting Prime Minister and his contribution to this debate. This is what I consider his maiden contribution in the Senate. Well done. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senators, it is now 4.48 p.m. and we will take the tea break and resume at 5.30 p.m. The sitting is now suspended until 5.30 p.m.

4.48 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[Sen. PROF. PATRICK WATSON *in the Chair*]

Sen. Elton Prescott SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Presiding Officer. [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, my colleagues. May I start off by congratulating the lady Vice-President, if I may put it that way, on her management of the business of this House so far, on the occasion of the debate on the Appropriation Bill. May I also take this opportunity, in his absence, to congratulate the Minister of Finance, and I am sure it would not be inappropriate to add to that, congratulations to yourself and to the hon. Minister, Mary King who, from all reports, have been party to the preparation of the budget. If I am wrong, nonetheless, my congratulations to all of you.

But more importantly, I wish to start by saying that I have listened to the presentation by the Minister of Finance and I am happy to say that in my view it is a laudable budget, in that it seeks to provide for the populace the incentives to become creative, to indulge in entrepreneurship and it establishes credible pillars for all of us that could determine how the society could be transformed. Naturally, reading between the lines, there would be some need for those of us who are listening to work at it. It is not going to be achieved by some miracle. But, equally, I suspect that the Government of the People's Partnership is inclined to say to us, "Let there be less governance; you get on with your lives and we will facilitate." And it is that, amongst all my other expectations that I trust is the primary objective of this new Government.

I offer also my congratulations to those Members who have spoken on this budget. For the most part there has been a conscious effort to keep their eyes focused on the ball, so to speak, so that issues that have not been pertinent to the budget have seldom crept into the debate.

Members have studiously, it would appear, avoided the temptation to engage in ad hominem attacks, most of them. Members have spoken on policies and therefore enlightened both the membership of this House and the general public, and we have had a permissible standard of repartee on all sides in the House. The temptation, therefore, has been avoided to be seduced by the allurements of power and to engage in defamatory or scurrilous attacks on others in other places, in particular, those that are vulnerable.

For that, I offer my congratulations to the Members on all sides of the House because there clearly is a temptation when you have gone into office—and it is not a symptom of newness, as some people suggest—there is that tendency to wield the power early even before you have grown accustomed and in the course

of doing it, to infringe the rights of others, to attack those who cannot or do not have the opportunity to defend themselves in this House. This House has managed so far to avoid it, and for those reasons it ought to congratulate itself. In short, there is no ground for seeking to ambush the vulnerable from this House. There is no reason to be firing any volleys at anybody anywhere and so I need it to be reported in *Hansard* that the power to fire volleys does not exist in this Senate, but exists elsewhere.

Loose lips, you see, are known to sink ships. When I wrote it, my mind ran immediately to partnerships, but I think I should stick to the well tried and trusted truism: Loose lips sink ships, and there are Members of the other place who may have omitted that lesson in their getting to where they are today. And so, if any message should come out of this House, it is that no one here has the power to fire any volleys at any office, any institution anywhere in the country. The Constitution exists to protect our institutions because those institutions protect us and I trust, therefore, that the message would have reached the ears that I hope it would have reached. If it does not; in the event that it does not, permit me to read from the Standing Orders and to get off this point. Standing Order 35(8) of this House reads as follows:

"The conduct of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Members of the Senate or the House of Representatives, or of Judges or other persons engaged in the administration of justice shall not be raised except upon a substantive motion moved for the purpose; and in any amendment, question to a Minister, or debate on a motion with any other subject, any reference to the conduct of any such person as aforesaid shall be out of order."

I started off by offering my congratulations to the Members of this House for avoiding the infringement of that very Standing Order and I shall now leave that position and move forward.

I should like, in the rest of my contribution, to seek to bring to the attention of the powers that be, the plight of the vulnerable in the society and I have identified two of those groups for special mention, if you may. In the budget presentation, if you would permit me, at page 5, we find there clearly set out, a statement—if you would bear with me—to this effect. I am reading from page 4:

"We believe that the best indicator of national development is a fairer distribution of income that ensures that no one is left behind.

We believe that the key role of Government is to catalyse economic growth, and provide opportunities to allow our people to achieve their maximum potential."

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It is on that commitment to a fairer distribution of income that I begin my contribution in respect of one of the vulnerable groups in the society. In this very document you would note that certain steps have been taken; increases in the minimum pension to public servants up to a sum of \$3,000. Some 28,000 persons are to benefit from it; an additional \$280 million. This is set out at page 40 of the Budget Statement. I make the observation because the magic figure of \$3,000 appears there. It is under the rubric: "Increase in Minimum Pension to Public Servants." It says retired public officers, their minimum pension will be increased to \$3,000 per month.

"This measure will benefit 28,000 people and will cost an additional \$280 million. It will also require amendments to legislation governing such individuals including the Prison Service Act, the Police Service Act and the Teachers' Pensions Act."

What would it cost this nation to consider the position of retired judges in the society? Retired judges are themselves, by reason of their office, retired public servants. They belong to an elite group and there are many who do not subscribe to elitism within the society, but I am a firm believer in it. I think our society needs and benefits from having its exemplars and its elites and I am sure in my mind that judges belong among the elite in the society and there could be absolutely no reason if retired public servants—pensioners—have access to pensions in the vicinity of \$3,000, that there should be any retired judge who should not himself or herself receive that benefit.

The fact is that there are retired judges out there who are not themselves in receipt of substantial pensions. They have the additional burden, having left the bench, of being confined to not being able to practise their profession for a period of 10 years, after having left the bench. So that it would suggest to us immediately that between the ages of 65 and 75, no retired judge has the capacity to go out there and earn an income, certainly not in the profession he has practised all his life.

There is a Retired Judges' Association and I have been able to glean from discussions I have had with retired judges, that there really is a dire need for their position to be looked at. Indeed, one of the statements made in the other place sometime ago by a Member then, who has since gone on to higher things, suggests that the retired judges are now living hand-to-mouth and that is, indeed, the fact. They have brought their plight to the attention of all those who matter in the society; to the many Presidents and Prime Ministers that we have had since prior to 1981.

In 1981, you may recall, the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, I remember him waving his hand in the air and saying he is going to give some kind of special allowance to these judges because judges had managed to reach his ear and to have made a sufficient noise, demanding—and I am sure politely and respectfully—that they should be treated in a different way; that people would be brought up to a certain level.

But even then, that was a special allowance for judges who were in office, not judges who had retired. I am told that you have judges whose pensions range between \$3,000 and \$12,000 per month. The longer they have served, the smaller the pension, naturally, because it is tied to the period at which they retired from the bench. And \$3,000 appears to have been accepted now in the national psyche as being the lowest level of remuneration for quite a large number of people, granted that the minimum wage has now been fixed at \$12.50 and that should result in a smaller sum than \$3,000.

But the comparison itself is otiose. It really ought not to be necessary to say, when making comparisons of persons who are minimum wage earners, that included in those categories are retired judges. So I must persist with my plea to the powers that be, those who determine what moneys are going to be spent. How much more is it going to cost us? There are 21 retired judges at this time; one of them regrettably passed away during the course of this year. They have no lobbying group on their behalf; they have no constitutional access to the President or the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance or to the Houses of Parliament. They are required by social norms to be quiet and yet I imagine that you probably come across them, those who can still move around; those who are still mobile, in the supermarket.

5.45 p.m.

I imagine they are looking at the shelves and making comparisons like any other impoverished member of the society and putting things back on the shelves because it cannot be supported on a \$3,000 minimum pension.

If we begin to think—it requires a sea change in our thinking—that the terms and conditions of service of judges ought not to be limited to their service on the bench, but should be reflected in what transpires after they have left the bench, that the dignity associated with their office can be maintained if only by what is received from the State into their pockets.

The current pensions are inadequate, unreasonable and they are driving judges into penury. We hear stories of judges who are unable to move around, who are

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bedridden, who are incapable in some cases of communicating with each other; and these stories ought to bring some degree of empathy into our thinking.

I, therefore, bring to the attention of the Government and those opposite to seek to treat with these pensioners in a manner befitting the dignity of their prior office; seek to amend the relevant legislation—it ought not to meet with disapproval in any House of the Parliament.

Finally—and I am told that this is true—their spouses, there is one who gets as low as \$400 per month. This is a widow. I imagine that she too, if she can make it to the supermarket, probably does not get past the first lane. Four hundred dollars per month sounds like small money to me, like gas money in my case, and I drive a saloon car.

Electricity bills, no doubt, apply equally to widows of judges as they apply to spouses of Prime Ministers and spouses of Ministers in this House. Presumably, no more needs to be said on this issue.

Would you permit me to move to the second area of vulnerable people I wish to highlight and bring to the attention of this Senate? These people are the people in rural areas. I come from a rural area; I grew up in Toco and I go there, proudly, as often as I can. I know that although there is an abundance of poverty in Toco and in the communities on the North Coast, these people are not impoverished in their spirit. They are not impoverished in the pride that they feel about themselves. They do not want overweening governance; they want to be facilitated by Government so that things can get done.

So there is provision in the budget. May I just turn to it? It is in the text *Social Sector Investment Programme, 2011*. I refer to a passage at page 29, paragraph 5:

"Decentralization of the Delivery of Social Services.

The Decentralization of the delivery of social services is intended to provide an integrated 'one stop shop approach' that seeks to improve the quality of services delivered, as well as increase the level of access to social services clients.

Following Cabinet's approval of a Framework Document for the Decentralisation of the Delivery of Social Services in 2008, the first centre, in Sangre Grande is now expected to commence operations in September 2010"—which should be in the next few days.

The Arima Social Services Centre was also officially commissioned on May 19th, 2010. The new facility provides services from the following offices of the Ministry of the People and Social Development—TCCPT, National Family Services, Community Mediation, and Poverty Reduction Programme. The facility is intended to cater to citizens in Arima and environs and from areas as far as Blanchisseuse/La Fillette, Talparo and Valencia."

I know that neither Toco nor Matelot is included in the environs of Arima and I am absolutely certain that we will hear the first centre which goes up in Sangre Grande in September 2010 is meant to cover Toco and those other areas of the North Coast of which I speak. It must be clear to all—and people are now inclined to go to Toco on weekends—that these communities are far too remote from Sangre Grande to get any real benefit out of being included in the reach of the social services delivery to be located in Sangre Grande.

I am seeking to bring to the national attention that the 'one-stop shop' approach can only truly be effective if it were expanded to be established in one of those areas between Rampanalgas and Matelot, another social services centre.

Those services that are required are the services that other people have grown accustomed to. There are no emergency fire services in those areas. One only has to think of the ridiculous suggestion that you call the fire service from Matelot when you are in trouble. No bucket brigade could ever be effective in those areas. I do not know what people do, but the fire service can be seen from time to time racing from Sangre Grande to Toco or Matelot, presumably so that they could report that when they got there the house was well alight and they were able to contain the fire and ensure that no neighbours were affected. It ought not to be happening in 2010.

From what I have been told, Senators come from rural areas to a large extent so they ought to understand the plight. It will not cost us a great deal more, presumably, if those who determine how the revenues are to be spent should look at the provision of those services in that area.

Health services. Granted that there is a health centre in Toco and it is manned; but we may well consider enhancing the provision of services, in particular in the matter of health, in these areas. As it turns out, the majority of the population in the rural communities is the older people. The young people tend to emigrate for reasons of commerce because they wish to educate themselves. They cannot afford to live in those areas anymore. Agriculture, which used to be the mainstay, simply is no longer attractive to those who are aware of what is available in the big cities.

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So it is those who are resident there who need ready access, convenient access to health centres; health centres that are well manned and provisioned with the best services. It is no good talking to us about CDAP, if it is going to be featured in the business of this new Government. It is no good saying they can get the medication free, if they have to go into Sangre Grande to get it. It simply is not on. This is made worse because transport in those areas is atrocious.

We know that transport has been in the centre of things since May 2010 in the mind of the relevant Minister and I trust that, therefore, he, too, will find it necessary to bring to his priority listing the plight of those vulnerable people in those areas.

Can you imagine that there is no banking service in that 28-mile stretch between Sangre Grande and Toco? There is an ATM machine in one of the villages and beyond that, from Cumana to Matelot, no other.

There is something referred to in this budget about direct deposits of pension and the irony is that it is meant to increase the accessibility and convenience of the very people it is meant to benefit, the pensioners, but presumably, if you deposit it in their accounts, you are imposing on them the burden, and we almost call it a duty or tax, of having to go to it.

If this Government did not have access to banking, I would be wasting my time raising the point here, but I know that one of the state enterprises is well into banking and it seems to me that a word to those who conduct the business of that bank could lead to an expansion of the service. I am absolutely certain also, because I cannot be categorical about anything else, that there must be certain banking restrictions on going to rural areas and establishing banks; but if there are people there who earn income, it appears it must be of some interest to bankers that they should find them and provide service to them; and I place on record that there is a hole that needs to be filled.

In the budget also, I noted that senior activity centres have been established. They are erupting all over the country, but they have not reached that area; an area whose population is primarily, substantially people who may be regarded as seniors. The senior activity centre is a worthy project. It is worthy of emulation and being sustained by this Government, and I trust that it would be. My purpose is to ask those with the means to do so, to extend the offer of a senior activity centre to the people in the rural areas.

One need not spend too much time on regaling others with the value of the senior activity centres, but they really provide a place of communion to those who

are mobile within the society. One does not say that you have to establish swimming pools because there are activities that seniors can become engaged in that do not require it. It enhances the work that is offered at the senior activities centres, but in practical terms there is enough water surrounding those areas to provide the same facility to the seniors in those areas. It only takes a little thought.

[MADAM VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

I now bring to your attention that among the activities being provided are those targeted conditional cash transfer programmes, which are meant to empower people in the society and, if indeed it is not yet on the schedule of the Minister of Finance, I should encourage the Minister of Social Services, wherever that resides at this time, to consider making these available in those areas so that they are more accessible to people who live there.

I noted for the first time in the budget presentation, references to growth poles. It is presented as though it is something that economists should know about, so I would, therefore, not attempt to offer any learned treatise of what it means. I will just read it from the text. It says at page 28:

"Trinidad and Tobago needs to expand its economic space both within the economy and outside it. Hence we will develop five poles for expansion in the medium term using a cluster development approach."

6.00 p.m.

It says at page 29:

"The fourth growth pole involves developing the North-Coast. We all know how difficult it is to access Maracas Bay through the North Coast Road. Currently, it takes approximately 45 minutes to get from Santa Cruz to Maracas Bay. Furthermore, landslips on the North Coast Road are a major deterrent to persons wishing to access this scenic route for pleasure or business. As a result we will do a business plan for a new: 'Connective Development Project'. This project would create an underground tunnel from Maracas Valley to Maracas Bay, to enable quicker access to the North Coast."

If I had not read it, one would have been inclined to think that a reference to development in the North Coast would have gone beyond Maracas and certainly would have expanded to Matelot, Sans Souci or Grande Riviere, or some one of those scenic places along that stretch, which we access. We all think of it. I do not suppose Maracas Bay will accept the comparison, but Toco is many times more beautiful and its citizens are many times more hospitable and ready to receive our citizens.

To have limited the fourth growth pole, be it medium term or otherwise, to a focus on Maracas Bay and access to Maracas Bay does not address the plight of those who live elsewhere. Maybe I am using the word plight wrongly because I think I have said before, the people of Toco do not consider themselves impoverished, so they did not come into this situation by saying: “We are in need, please deliver”. They are saying: “Facilitate us”. If you are going to think of a fourth growth pole developing the North Coast, remember the geography suggests that we are in the North Coast and there are many young people who can be persuaded to stay in Toco, to develop Toco and to develop themselves economically, if the growth pole idea was expanded so that they come in the cluster for development in that area. Therefore, such things as infrastructural development in sports, the free trade zone idea which is posited in the budget, may well be of benefit to those people.

Look across the North Coast, if there is need for access to waterways, I suspect that you will find that there are waterways in that area, which can ferry you into the greater ports, Port of Spain being the first of those. People from Toco jump on a boat and go to Tobago overnight, party and come back. We know that there is enough maritime activity possible in that area. If you grasp the concept of the free trade zone, there are enough people who are living in the area who are willing to work, and who can well benefit from the idea of free trade zones being established in the North Coast. By North Coast, I mean that area beyond Maracas Bay, which regrettably the budget seems to have focused on to the exclusion of all others.

In her contribution, Sen. Drayton spoke of building sustainable rural communities. I would want to endorse that idea, in particular to those communities which I have mentioned. There is no need to seek to establish mega farms in the North Coast. There are private farmers who have been languishing because the allurements of big bucks in CEPEP and URP has taken them away from Toco and it is only regarded as big bucks because comparatively that is what it is. Work on the cocoa estates and citrus fields in Toco simply cannot pay \$12.50 per hour, but the idea was expressed here today by the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, that we can, by way of a partnership, establish on private farms a cohort of URP workers. I imagine the farmer will pay some contribution towards getting the service out there. When you do it that way, you preserve the dignity of the people in the rural communities; those who hold their dignity and their independence at a high standard. It is a matter of pride to them that they are able to fend for themselves and the services, if they are provided to them permit them to do so.

Excessive government is not what is required, the State as a catalyst, a partner in development, is what I am urging. I am urging the Minister of Finance to take seriously on board that consideration in driving down into the details of the budget in fiscal 2010/2011.

May I do one other thing? It appears from the *Daily Express* yesterday, I think reference was made to it in today's newspapers, that there are conversations going on in the public domain, which bring the Judiciary into the glare of publicity once again in a manner that is, at the very least distasteful. I am trusting that someone somewhere will introduce good sense. It appears from what is reported that the Prime Minister has said that she too has seen the need to say to the Judiciary, apologetically, I trust that you will allow your wisdom and maturity to prevail. I would like to extend that and say, there should be reciprocity in what is required, so that we can return or achieve the notion of civility in our treatment of each other.

Today, we received the contribution of the Acting Prime Minister in his capacity as Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and he predicted that there will be a review of certain pieces of industrial relations legislation: the Industrial Relations Act, the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, Workmen's Compensation Act and I am quite certain he mentioned a fourth. I am a practitioner in that area and I have heard the many lobbyists who say that they are now outdated and not relevant to present circumstances. Accepting that the voice of the people ought to be heard, I look forward to one thing and one thing only, that there will be some very wide consultation on what is required if these pieces of legislation are to be removed from the books. Their history suggests that they were introduced to bring about and maintain stability in industrial relations. All of us know what it is like to be in an unstable industrial relations situation. You do not have to be more than 40 years old to know. If you go back to 1965, if you were in a state of adulthood, you would remember the strikes we used to have; those that sought to cripple, because it was regarded as war between workers and employers when things went wrong.

I am trusting that, in the fullness of time, and in the short term, there will be an opportunity for public discussion on what is required to bring industrial relations to yet another level and I look forward to that transpiring.

Permit me one more sortie before I sit down. We have talked about the pensions for senior citizens and I had made a very minor intervention when the Bill was being debated. I think we ought to bring to the attention of the hon. Attorney General, that there is a chance that in applying the Act to eligible senior

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citizens, there may be opportunities to treat unequally certain senior citizens. I say that because the mathematics of the Schedule to the Act suggests that some people can receive pensions as low as \$3,000 and some could receive pensions as high as \$4,000 and the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago protects the individual, his right to equality of treatment from any public authority in the exercise of any function. If, in the distribution of pensions, the relevant Minister—who, by the way, has the authority to make changes to the Schedule, in the distribution of pensions; what stands in the Schedule now as law—permits one senior citizen to receive more or less than another, there is a great chance that we are going to be in breach of the Constitution and that could be brought to a halt now. So, I would urge the hon. Attorney General to take another look at the Act and make a determination that would avoid those inequalities.

Madam Vice-President, I thank you very much for the opportunity to have contributed to this debate.

Sen. David Abdulah: Madam Vice-President, as this is the first occasion that I have the honour and opportunity to speak in this Senate, let me first of all say that it is indeed an honour to be a Member of this Senate and in this regard I want to thank the political leader of the People's Partnership and the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, for appointing me to this position. I also want to say that—and I hope some of the hon. Members opposite are hearing—I am exceptionally proud to be a Member of the People's Partnership Government, which government is comprised of five partners: the United National Congress; the Congress of the People; the Movement for Social Justice; the Tobago Organization of the People and the National Joint Action Committee. I also want to say I have full confidence in you, Madam Vice-President, in the discharge of your responsibilities in chairing the proceedings of this Senate.

I want to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for the presentation of budget 2011. This is, as many have already commented, the first time in many a year, that this country, Trinidad and Tobago and its citizens can see opportunities for moving forward and for the transformation of the economy and social relations in our country; a fact that a number of Members of this Senate, particularly on the Independent Bench, have spoken to and themselves expressed their congratulations. We take very positively and sincerely the expressions that they have made in objectively analyzing the budget, soberly reflecting on what has been presented and recognizing both the challenges which the country faces and which the Government faces, as well as the steps forward, which the Minister of Finance has clearly taken in facing the issues and turning the economy around.

I recall a pre-budget forum which I attended, organized by one of the parties in our partnership and I was asked at the end to give a quick comment. I indicated that I did not expect, and I am certain no citizen could truthfully expect, that this budget would have solved all the problems of Trinidad and Tobago, having regard to the tremendous and horrific mess that the last administration left the country and economy in, but that this budget—the expectation certainly was—would have laid the foundation for the transformation, because it is on the basis of the foundation of this budget that we can move forward to resolving the many problems in our economy.

6.15 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, I certainly feel that this expectation has been fulfilled. Once again, I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance in this regard. [*Desk thumping*]

Contrary to what a number of Senators opposite have said—in a sense they have been contradictory. On the one hand they have said the budget is not a good budget, and on the other hand they say that this is a continuation of the PNM policies. So, one obviously would suggest, if one dealt in logic, which I suppose escapes some of my friends opposite, that if it was a bad budget and a PNM budget then all the PNM budgets were bad.

Let us be quite realistic and honest. This budget is not a PNM budget. For many years, I anchored a particular broadcast of the budget on radio. I had the distinct pleasure of sitting in another part of this Chamber listening to budgets over quite a few years. As we were listening, members of the media, would say, but did we not hear that last year, and then somebody would say yes, and, we heard it the year before. And we all know—the number of times the Point Fortin Hospital was promised; the five highways were promised; all of the petrochemical plants that were identified; the Scarborough Hospital and the list is very long with all of the promises, almost as if the writers of those budgets simply took out their laptops or went to their hard drive, if they had a hard drive, or they took out their flash drive and plugged it in and just cut and paste from last year to this year and to the following year. That was what the PNM budgets were, essentially a rehash.

Could you imagine, therefore—and this makes the distinction why this budget is so different from the PNM's budget—in September 2010, the Minister of Finance, whoever that person may have been in the PNM, getting up and reading a budget statement. What would we have heard? We would have heard smelter for sure; we would have heard rapid rail for sure; we would have heard

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endorsements—ringing endorsement of UDeCott for sure; we would have heard all of the mega projects for sure—boasting about Tarouba and all those things as if they were grand achievements and the summits as if they were magnificent events as earth shattering diplomatic occasions and so on; we would have heard the Revenue Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for sure; we would have heard property tax as defined by the property tax legislation that was passed by the Parliament in December, 2009.

Significantly, while there is a change in the political leadership of the PNM—the Member for San Fernando East is not the leader of the Opposition—in terms of the party leader, there is no change in the policies of those opposite. [*Desk thumping*] All the Members opposite have defended even today the Revenue Authority, property tax, Alutrint and the rapid rail project. They have defended every single policy of the administration that lost the election overwhelmingly on May 24, 2010.

So this budget is different in very important ways to those presented in the past by the PNM, and that suggests and shows that the policies of the People's Partnership Government are very different from the policies of the People's National Movement.

I want to also make the point for the public to know that even though they may try to rebrand themselves, it is the same old PNM with the same old philosophy and the same policies that have failed, and which the country has overwhelmingly rejected on May 24, 2010.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister in the Ministry of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Subhas Panday): Thank you very much, hon. Senator. Madam Vice-President, in accordance with Standing Order 9(8), I beg to move that the Senate continue to sit until 10.00 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2011) BILL

Sen. D. Abdulah: Madam Vice-President, thank you. If it was a PNM budget, we would have had absolutely no increase in the minimum wage, because as the hon. Acting Prime Minister said, very clearly, in this Senate earlier today, since 2008 the Minimum Wages Board had recommended an increase and nothing was done. Therefore, it was quite surprising to me to have heard Sen. Dr. Lester Henry say yesterday and I quote that “if the partnership wanted to do something for the

lower strata of society, one of the major ways in which you can help the lower end is to raise the minimum wage.” First of all, he is suggesting as if nothing has been done which—of course, he was speaking in the wrong tense—something was done.

He went on to say because they—those at the lower end of the strata—“do not have access to stocks and bonds and investment properties all over the place as the upper echelon. The lower strata depends on wages for their subsistence almost exclusively.”

He is right, which is precisely why the minimum wage was increased by this People's Partnership Government. It is precisely because those on the other side are not concerned and did not want to do anything for the lower strata in society that they did not seek to increase the minimum wage for five years between 2003—2008 and, in fact, up to 2010. So, his statement here, though he did not understand it, is really an indictment on the party which he represents.

I also want to say that we would have had no Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies today had the PNM been there, because it would have been gobbled up by UTT. I would come to UTT a little later on in a particular way.

In fact, you would be aware that I was chairman of the board of the Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies, and we had to fight for the college to remain where it is at Valsayn, because there are those who wanted the college to move to Wallerfield. I remember a particular meeting at which a Minister asked the question: Chairman why do you want a school on such valuable real estate? One cannot impute improper motives, so I would not go on to say what my conclusion was with respect to why that Minister had a concern about valuable real estate being used for a school and, more particularly, for a labour college. Suffice it to say, we were able to keep the college at Valsayn and build it. We built the facilities there.

If it was a PNM budget, there would be no increase in the allocation to Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies, because you see the PNM had no commitment to the labour movement. In this People's Partnership budget, the increase in the recurrent expenditure for Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies is some \$3 million. There is also a commitment in the PSIP to complete works at the college for additional classrooms and laboratory facilities and so on.

If it was a PNM budget, there would have been no commitment to settle outstanding public sector negotiations. The Minister of Finance gave that clear

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undertaking in the budget statement on September 08, 2010 that public sector negotiations would be settled.

In fact, if it was a PNM government, there would still be a public sector negotiating committee, which public sector negotiating committee—and for the benefit of Sen. Hinds who does not understand industrial relations—in fact, is a fetter on the free collective bargaining process. Many may view this as almost an obstacle and a wrong in terms of our own commitments under the ILO to free collective bargaining. The People's Partnership Government has removed that fetter and, therefore, has provided for free collective bargaining.

If it was a PNM budget, there would have been no decrease in interest rates at the ADB for the farmers of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] If it was a PNM budget, there would have been no commitment to the reform of labour legislation, as the hon. Acting Prime Minister indicated with the removal of the Masters and Servants Act. I am aware that very soon there are going to be amendments to the Maternity Benefits Act to provide for additional leave benefits in keeping with the manifesto promise of the People's Partnership. [*Desk thumping*]

With respect to labour legislation, let me just say, I listened very carefully to Sen. Prescott SC and his concern which was quite validly expressed about the need for widespread consultation with respect to the reform of labour legislation. The hon. Minister did say that he is going to have very widespread consultation.

However, let me make the point that in 1965 when the Industrial Stabilization Act was passed by the People's National Government, there was absolutely no consultation. It was passed when there was a limited state of emergency imposed in the country when CLR James was under house arrest. It was passed through the Houses of Parliament in one day and assented to by the then Governor General who was watching cricket in the Oval, and it was carried for him to sign. That was the context in which it was done. Dr. Williams who piloted the legislation said in his autobiography that this was the most important achievement of his government, and that piece of legislation, the ISA banned strikes completely and removed the rights of workers and so on.

In June 1972 when the Industrial Relations Act was passed, there was a state of emergency in effect; there was absolutely no consultation in the country and, further to that the leader, the then leader of the Oilfield Workers Trade Union and other labour union leaders like George Weeks and others were in political detention. I want to make the point that those pieces of legislation were passed in conditions of attack and repression on the labour movement and were designed

for particular ends. So, we are committed to consultation to advance and create a progressive regime of labour legislation in Trinidad and Tobago where there can be proper balance and so on.

With respect to the PNM, had they been there, 1,500 or 2,000 workers would have already been sent home from Petrotrin. I want to say that—the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs very eloquently described what happened with land production and oil production in Trinidad and Tobago over the last few years—the problem of oil production is significantly a function of the problems at Petrotrin, because Petrotrin very misguidedly engaged in huge mega projects to upgrade the refinery, including GTL—and some of these issues are now in litigation, so I would go on no further—which have not been completed. They are over budget; they have run up massive debts at significant cost, not only to the company but, ultimately, to the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago; and no investment was done in exploration and production. It is very clear and anyone with an iota of understanding of an integrated oil company will know that investment must take place upstream in terms of production, because the more you have your own crude, the better your refinery margins and, therefore, the more profitable your company, and Petrotrin neglected that.

I want to say that the governing structure of Petrotrin under the PNM government was a governing structure similar to that of UDeCott, where it was the executive chairman at UDeCott; executive chairman at Petrotrin; executive chairman at UTT; and executive chairman at the Estate Management Development Company which operated the former Caroni (1975) Limited Lands and so on. It was a case of all the king's men—all of these men with very close connections to the centre of the executive power in the country, and it led to terrible mismanagement and most likely, corruption.

6.30 p.m.

Certainly, in UDeCott, that is clear and the forensic audit which we called for as a labour movement before and, we now have as a result of the People's Partnership Government's forensic audits into all of these companies and so on, to uncover exactly what went wrong with the resources, the patrimony and the taxpayers' money of Trinidad and Tobago.

I recall in this regard, Madam Vice-President, and I think it might have been the late Lloyd Best, who in reference to another situation when somebody said, "Well, you know, the chief is not a thief, it is only those around him who is a thief," said "you cannot have 40 thieves without an Ali Baba". I will leave that where it is.

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Madam Vice-President, there is a clear lack of vision on the other side. I recall being a member of the Vision 2020 core committee and chair of the labour and social security sub-committee of 2020, and Sen. Dr. Balgobin was right when he said that a lot of good work was done in that process by the committees. But something happened after that, and what was then touted by the government at the time as 2020, and what was the work of the committees that involved many citizens in this country, was chalk and cheese. The committees did work, developed reports and so on, and the then government did something else. They did their own thing which bore no relationship whatsoever with the work of those sub-committees. [*Desk thumping*] Absolutely no reflection.

I remember in 2003/2004, we produced an interim report. We did not do a final report because by that time I recognized that this thing was going to be politically manipulated and turned into something other than that, I was not going to waste my time to write a final report. But in the labour and social security interim report, we articulated a proposal, for example, to create an old age pension fund. This was in the time of 2004, when revenues were rising very, very rapidly, when GDP was rising very rapidly. Had we created an old age pension fund at that time, a lot of the issues and debates around old age pension today, would not take place because we would have created a fund, perhaps now of some \$10 billion or \$12 billion which could have taken care of all of the concerns, including the concern of Sen. Prescott, SC with respect to former judges, which I think is a very major issue and so on. We could have been taking care of all of those issues had there been prudence, but instead the other side decided to fritter it away in so many other areas.

The other side is myopic so they cannot understand the Minister of Finance's decision as announced in the budget, to create a heritage city in east Port of Spain. At Piggott's Corner the other evening, the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, and I am quoting from the *Trinidad Guardian*, Thursday, September 16, 2010. He said that:

"When I heard Mr. Dookeran talking about creating in Port of Spain something like Old Havana, I know for sure he don't intend to do anything for the people of east Port of Spain on Duncan Street and Nelson Street..."

Madam Vice-President, they cannot understand something that is transformative. I wish to say, that the proposal the Minister of Finance has, in fact, it came from the Federation of Independent Trade Unions and NGOs, one hat of which I wear as its president. It has been a proposal which we have put forward to successive Ministers of Finance and they ignored it. The People's Partnership

Minister of Finance accepted it and recognized the value of it because it ties in with the idea of entrepreneurship and development, linking to our natural competitive advantage in the area of the creative imagination. Could we see for example—which the others do not have the vision to see—ourselves going into a recreated barrack yard in east Port of Spain and see what a calypso tent looked like in the 20s and 30s, with young men and women from east Port of Spain singing calypsos and when cruise ship tourists leave that tent, they buy CDs; or they go into another barrack yard where somebody is tuning a pan, and so excited by the sight of seeing a pan being tuned and hearing the music emanating from that piece of old iron perhaps, then buy a chrome tenor pan for whatever the market price is?

You see, there is no vision. I know for example, because on one of our protests on high food prices, I was sitting by the Cipriani statue and there came in some cruise ship passengers looking at the Cipriani statue. After they looked at it, they asked the tour guide who was standing there, what else is there to see in Port of Spain? Madam Vice-President, the poor young tour guide could not point them anywhere else, to see anything else of historical interest in Port of Spain. The cruise ship tourists do not want to see what they could see in Miami. They do not want to see tall buildings, they see that in Miami; they see bigger ones. They want to see something that is unique to the society of Trinidad and Tobago, and that is what the creation of east Port of Spain is, and can be, providing opportunities where people could go into a restaurant and eat our local food grown by our farmers—I am sure the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs will be very happy about that—cassava bread and so many other things. They can drink our local fruit juices. So, we therefore create a demand for products because within an economy, you have to have a whole process of creating demand and supplying it, with backward and forward linkages. But that escapes Sen. Hinds, because he is not an economist.

So that is what we are proposing. The PNM itself recognizes that they have done nothing for east Port of Spain, as none other than the Mayor of Port of Spain, as reported in the *Trinidad Express*, August 15, 2010, said:

"PNM caused the decay of east POS—

It is wrong. It is definitely wrong that after you have been responsible for the country for so long, the people of Laventille, 90 per cent of them are still using latrines. I find that wrong."

Madam Vice-President, I heard someone on the other side say that they built this country, they built a nation. What they have built is a nation where 90 per cent of

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the people in Laventille, according to the Mayor of Port Spain, are still using latrines.

Hon. Senators: Ooooh!

Sen. D. Abdulah: Is that building a nation; is that vision; is that development? Another person said that there is discrimination against the people of La Brea. I want to suggest that the people of Laventille should say that they are being discriminated against by the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] It is interesting that the Mayor of Port of Spain has said one thing and other Members of his party have said another. They want to suggest that there are differences in this People's Partnership. There are plenty differences on your side of the fence and you should examine yourselves.

You see, they cannot see the big picture, they cannot appreciate policies which are transformative because there is a deficiency in their way of understanding development. They think that tall buildings represent development. They had one growth pole, the energy sector. All the eggs in the basket of every PNM government from 1956 to now have been placed in one growth pole. Well, we have five growth poles. Those five growth poles, interestingly, reflect partnership, because we have five parties in this partnership. [*Desk thumping*] So not only are they myopic, they are also suffering from a lack of poles. All they could think about is compensating for the lack of poles, by erecting tall buildings in downtown Port of Spain. And putting all the eggs in that one basket or that one pole in the belief that that one pole will stand all the time and not fall. It is a mistaken view because when the price of commodities fell, that pole collapsed, and when that pole collapsed so did their government. Thank God, for May 24, 2010. [*Desk thumping*]

Those on that side have said that the Minister of Finance has provided no details in the budget. Madam Vice-President, I am sure that you would appreciate that our Ministers, speaking in this honourable Senate and those who have spoken in the other place, have provided very many details of the plans of the People's Partnership going forward. So we have provided the details because we have the details, but more than that, I want to say that you could look at a glass and see it as either being half full or half empty. So they see no details and say we have no plan.

I want to suggest that we should look at it in the other way, that where for example, the Minister of Finance identified as he did in his budget, the opening of new economic spaces and talked about the growth poles that really—I think Sen.

Prescott, SC recognized that in his contribution a moment ago, when he said that the Government is now offering and opening opportunities for people to participate. So, therefore, what we have is the opportunity for civil society, and by civil society I speak very broadly of the private sector, labour, NGOs, community organizations, and even our friends on the Opposition Bench and so on, that we all can participate in shaping and determining how those growth poles are going to function in a very real way. In other, words, citizens have the opportunity to say, well, if I live in the south-west peninsular and there is going to be a growth pole there, or if I live in east Port of Spain and there is going to be a growth pole, or in whatever area, Tobago and so on, I now can say to the Minister of Finance, to the Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs, to the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs, and to the People's Partnership Government generally, that these are the ideas that I have or that we have, as civil society, that can work in our communities. These are the resources that we can bring to the table, these are resources that we require from the Government, this is the way that we can together partner to build a nation, which has not been built to this day.

That is what we are saying in this budget, but the other side does not have that sense because for them planning is "commandist" this, planning is "I decide, you do as I say or else tough luck for you." That is what it has traditionally meant. So they cannot understand a budget that does not spell out every single detail because in their conception, a budget is done by a few of them because they know everything and they have all the answers, and that is what is hubris.

Senator, you do not seem to understand what it is. That is what it is, that "I have all the answers." Well, there is no hubris on this side. There will never be any hubris on this side because we begin on the premise that we do not have all the answers, that we are a partnership, that we are going to consult. [*Desk thumping*] So I want to invite colleagues in civil society to be part of the process of building this nation and to partner with us, and to help to identify the specifics that they recognize in their interest.

In that regard, Madam Vice-President, let me say that so committed were we that before the election date came on April 21, we presented a document in Fyzabad—interestingly, the 40th anniversary of the declaration of the state of emergency by a PNM government in 1970—we publicly put out to the country our declaration of principles and values, and on the explicit wish of the political leader of the People's Partnership, we included the preamble to the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

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That is important because, you see—and I just want to read one of the clauses. It says:

“Whereas the people of Trinidad and Tobago—

- (c) have asserted their belief in a democratic society in which all persons may, to the extent of their capacity, play some part in the institutions of the national life and thus develop and maintain due respect for lawfully constituted authority;”

We recognize that and that is why we are going to have consultations, why we are involved, why the process of developing this budget was far more consultative than any other before, and that is why we included that in our principles because we recognize that the only way citizens would develop and maintain due respect for lawfully constituted authority is if we involved them to the extent of their capacity in the institutions of national life.

You know, Madam Vice-President, some on the other side have made heavy weather of the fact that the Minister of Finance talked about turning the economy around and they said, well, the economy has already turned around. I want to refer to the *Review of the Economy*, page 23, where it said, and I quote, “Crude Oil and Condensate”:

“Over the period October 2009 to April 2010, production of crude and condensate amounted to 22.1 million barrels, representing a decline of 4.7 percent from the 23.2 million barrels produced during October 2008 to April 2009.”

Decline. If you decline surely you need to turn around.

Then on page 28 of the said document, Madam Vice-President, under the “Manufacturing Exports” subhead it says:

“Trinidad and Tobago’s manufacturers exported \$842.9 million in goods and articles during the first quarter of fiscal 2010, representing a decline of 43.6 percent from the \$1,493.8 million exported in the comparative fiscal 2009 period.”

Surely that has to be turned around. And then on page 30 of the *Review of the Economy* under “Services”:

“Output of the Services sector is expected to contract by 0.8 percent in 2010, which compares favourably to its contraction of 7.9 percent in 2009.”

What is said there is that the 2009 contraction was bigger than the 2010 contraction, but contraction nevertheless. So that certainly has to be turned around.

Sen. Hinds was talking about inflation and so on under this Government. Let me make the point that the inflation rate did not start kicking off under this Government in June. So that at page 33 of the *Review of the Economy* which indicated the trend of decline up to December 2009, it said:

“This trend was, however, sharply reversed during the first seven months of 2010...”

And, of course, the first five of those seven was under a People’s National Movement government.

It is precisely because, Madam Vice-President, that administration did nothing for agriculture during that period that we are now reaping the whirlwind in the last few months with headline inflation pushing up because of high food prices and the problems of agriculture. It is because the whole issue of water management was not addressed under the previous administration that farmers first of all suffered from drought and then from flooding during the course of 2010, which has pushed up food prices and therefore inflation.

I want to indicate that we cannot therefore ascribe responsibility or blame to this Government, which is why there is no protest led by me on this issue of inflation and high food prices, but from 2004 when we first raised this issue of high food prices and inflation, nothing was done by the last government for very many years and the fundamental issues of water management were never addressed. That is what this Government now has to deal with, which is why the Minister of Finance in his budget statement spoke to the issue of investment in a comprehensive water management programme, and I am sure that the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs will address that later on.

Sen. Dr. Lester Henry is not here and he spoke about us being neoliberal, but who other than the PNM liberalized this economy with free trade agreements such as the Economic Partnership Agreement, privatized Point Lisas during their period ’91 to ’95? They sold methanol, they sold ammonia plants, they sold urea plants, they sold the steel mill and they sold 51 per cent of the generation capacity of T&TEC, all in that period. Those were neoliberal policies, so do not come and tell us about any neoliberal policies. They downsized WASA at the time, they retrenched workers at PTSC and on the port and the unemployment rate went sky high.

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Which government gave the tax breaks, for example, to the top income earners in the country? The Senator talked about us wanting to give tax breaks, but which government gave tax breaks to the top income earners in the country but the last administration? The tax measures in the energy sector, as identified by the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs this morning, really are designed to stimulate output. It is not an off the top tax break where you just pay less taxes next year; it is on the basis of the investment that you are going to make in increasing output and production that tax relief will be forthcoming. So it is a very different thing from giving a tax break to the wealthy. So that the policies of this Government can in no way be described in the terminology that Sen. Dr. Henry sought to do.

I also want to suggest, Madam Vice-President, that this People's Partnership Government is very committed to building local capacity. Throughout the Minister of Finance's address and other Ministers and so on, we have heard the importance of building local capacity. It is very clear that the other side was not interested in building local capacity; in fact, they were destroying local capacity. In the construction sector they preferred contractors from outside, they preferred labour from outside to local labour and, in that regard, you know, there is this thing about Alutrint and, oh, there are no jobs for the people of La Brea.

While there obviously has been some impact, we must remind the national community that if the smelter was actually constructed, the vast majority of work on the construction project would not have been done by nationals of Trinidad and Tobago, it would have been done by the Chinese. [*Desk thumping*] So do not try to pull wool over people's eyes and fool people as they have traditionally done—cry wolf—that the people of La Brea would have gotten all those construction jobs. Not so. Those construction jobs would have been done by the Chinese and so on, the vast majority of them. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, there is a saying that you could fool some of the people some of the time but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time and therefore we on this side are very committed to building the capacity of this economy. We are not prepared to do as the other side. What was it, five hundred and something million dollars for external consultants for the rapid rail project, \$565 million for external consultants, and we have heard so many other million dollar consultancies for external consultants, Madam Vice-President, totally ignoring the capable professional cadre that resides here in Trinidad and Tobago. There seems to be a fetish on the other side to say that foreign is better and therefore one of the aspects of neoliberal policy and theory, and I do not know that—anyway, let me not go there.

One of the aspects of neoliberal policy and theory is an inculcation of foreign tastes and so on, a homogenization of tastes. It was in the last eight years that we have seen an explosion of the TGIs, the Ruby Tuesdays and all of those restaurants and other franchises that essentially encourage the consumption of foreign items. That is part of the neoliberal ideology. It is a homogenization of culture. I understand neoliberal ideology, I am sure, a lot deeper than some of the Senators on the other side, because I have written and spoken about it extensively over the last 20 years and struggled against it as well. I have put my own body on the line against it on picket lines and elsewhere in demonstrations and so on. So I understand it very clearly and we on this side are very committed to building local capacity and developing the production platform on the basis of our own innovation, our own creative capacity and ability.

I want to say as well, Madam Vice-President, with respect to Alutrint, that we put in our People's Partnership manifesto very, very clearly that we were not going to build the smelter. When the people of Trinidad and Tobago voted overwhelmingly on May 24—and we could put it the other way around—the government then said that it was for the smelter, and when the government then—the Prime Minister then—decided to call the election early before the time line offered by Sen. Al-Rawi with respect to five years of getting your feet wet, learning and then beginning to implement and so on, half-way through—

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

Motion made, That the hon. Senators speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. S. Panday*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. D. Abdulah: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*] Let me thank all the members of this Senate for allowing me the opportunity to say a few more words. I was making the point that when the then Prime Minister called election midway and therefore before, according to Sen. Al-Rawi's time lines of five years' ticket, before they got a chance to implement, what, in fact, he was doing was consulting the nation on the policies of his administration, including consulting the nation on the issue of Alutrint. When, therefore, overwhelmingly on May 24, 2010 the people of Trinidad and Tobago voted for the People's Partnership in that massive most democratic consultation possible, they voted for us and rejected the PNM; they, in fact, said they wanted no smelter. So consultation did take place on the issue of the smelter. That is democracy. That was consultation. That was the ultimate form of consultation that one could have.

Hon. Senator: Referendum.

Sen. D. Abdulah: Referendum—and to that, of course, we have committed. In fact, Madam Vice-President, as I have been reminded of the issue of referendum, we ourselves in our manifesto committed to a process of Constitution reform and also made a commitment with respect to introducing measures such as referendum on important issues, the right of recall, the issue of term limits and so on and fixed date for elections. It is interesting that one of the issues that the people spoke clearly on in that consultation on May 24 was also rejection of the constitutional proposals, the Manning Constitution proposals as they were popularly called at that time, which would have been Executive President and a tremendous consolidation of power in the hands of the Executive. My friends in the movement have suggested I do not use the word, “emasculatation”, because that is not gender neutral, but the undermining of other institutions of governance and putting all the power in the hands of the Executive President.

We, on the other hand, have gone in the opposite direction, Madam Vice-President. We are committed to Constitution reform, we are committed to deepening the democratic process and therefore to strengthening the governance of Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, one cannot help but comment on the issue of wearing the flag. I am glad for Sen. Hinds’ introduction of the issue in his contribution earlier today to enable me to make a comment about it, because it is very clear that our wearing of the national flag in Parliament and at other official activities and functions and occasions does signify that the symbol we uphold is the symbol of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, the flag.

The other side continues to wear their party symbol and that must, Madam Vice-President, suggest a certain divisiveness in the society. It is very clear to the People’s Partnership, and I am sure to many people in the country, that one of the problems we have had in Trinidad and Tobago is that we have not been able to unite all of our people in the process of building a nation. We have not.

7.00 p.m.

The reason for that, essentially, has been, in my respectful view, the fact that by wearing such a thing as the Balisier tie in the Parliament, the signal you are sending—not even subliminally, but openly and explicitly—is that, “We represent and will stand only for the interest of those who voted for us.” We, on the other hand, Madam Vice-President, have signalled something not subliminally, but very openly and explicitly, that we do intend to represent the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago in a fair and equitable manner by the wearing of the national flag. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Prof. Watson: Only the men wear it too. I do not see Penny and Shamfa wearing it. It is a boys' club.

Sen. D. Abdulah: It is a boys' club?

Sen. Prof. Watson: Yes.

Sen. D. Abdulah: I think in the other place, Madam Vice-President, maybe that is a different situation; but it is very important. It is a very important point, because you see, the whole idea, as Sen. Hinds wound up his contribution, that the father of the nation—the father, because he described the nation as the child. He has gone back to that notion of “Father of the Nation” now.

There was an honourable gentlemen who described himself as the father of the nation, so I am not too sure if when Sen. Hinds was referring to “father of the nation” he was referring to that particular individual, or he was referring to the new Leader of the Opposition and his new leader. I am confused. But quite apart from that, it was a terrible attempt to describe where we are in this country by then suggesting that we are in the hands of—what was the word he used? An irresponsible mother, I think he said. Suggesting that fathers are somehow responsible and mothers somehow are irresponsible. A very terrible signal.

But in all of this, language is very important, Madam Vice-President, and there are people who study language and take words and images and do analyses of what the underlying philosophy is from those words and the images that are created. It is very, very clear. “Duncy head first formers”; “father of the nation”; “irresponsible mothers”. That there is a philosophical underpinning to those on the other side, and wearing of the tie; all of which sum up by saying that they have not built a nation. [*Desk thumping*]

What they have done—yes, things have been done. We are not going to say that absolutely nothing was done. We are not Stalinists in the sense that we deny history. Things have been done, but they have certainly not built a nation, Madam Vice-President; and that is because their philosophy does not seek to be inclusive of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. What they are attempting to do in this budget is to, once again, create divisions where the People's Partnership is trying to bring people together.

So, “La Brea is discriminated against, but Couva is getting the benefits”. Subliminal messages are being sent that one section of the society is being discriminated against by the People's Partnership and another one is not; and I want to say that underlying that message is the issue of race.

Hon. Senators: Yes.

Sen. D. Abdulah: And we in the People's Partnership, as reflected by the Members of this honourable House; as reflected by the Members of the other place; as reflected by the fact that the Acting Prime Minister comes from the labour movement; reflected by all of those things; we on this side are very committed to the uniting of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago to build a nation. [*Desk thumping*]

We will resist all and any attempts at creating divisions in the society. So, the hon. Leader of the Opposition goes and says, "No help for people in east Port of Spain." What is the message that you are sending there? Members on the other side talk about UNC government, UNC-led; this, that and the other. We on this side will not allow anyone on the other side, either to divide us, [*Desk thumping*] or rather, nor will we allow the other side to divide Trinidad and Tobago, as they have traditionally done.

Let me just say, Madam Vice-President, as I begin to close, that we are not perfect. None of us have suggested that we are perfect. Our policies are not perfect; the budget is not perfect. If it were perfect, then we would be living in a utopia and we would be gods. We are not. We have heard the comments of the Members of the Independent Bench, if I could use that term loosely—because I know there is no formal bench, Madam Vice-President—and we have heard their very constructive contributions, the concerns they have identified, the issues which we want to look at, as well as the congratulations that they have offered for the budget.

We recognize that we are not perfect, but we do say that the people have elected us and we are prepared to fulfil our obligations to the citizens and people of this country; because in the words of the trade union movement, of which I am still very much an active member and leader, this country must go forward ever under the People's Partnership, and backward never under the People's National Movement.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Brilliant!

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, on this 8th sitting, Tuesday, September 21, allow me to congratulate Sen. David Abdulah on his maiden contribution in this sitting.

Sen. Ravi Ratiram: Madam Vice-President, our beloved Prime Minister has always advised us to place God in front and go bravely, and this is what I do as I begin my maiden contribution in this august House. [*Desk thumping*] I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for the opportunity that she has given to me to

serve this great nation. It is an opportunity which I accept with all humility. Indeed, Madam Vice-President, I can say that with complete candour, at this early stage of my life, I am most honoured to be given this opportunity to be addressing this venerable House. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, I wish to assure the hon. Prime Minister that the trust and confidence that she has bestowed upon me will not go in vain. I want to use this opportunity, Madam Vice-President, to congratulate you for presiding over this significant debate. It is an additional honour to be addressing you as I make my contribution into the archives of this House. As I do so, I intend to uphold the highest standards which every single citizen of our beloved nation has a right to expect from every Member of this House. Integrity, dedication, and compassion will be the cornerstones of my career within these hallowed halls.

Madam Vice-President, the Minister of Finance made history on September 08, 2010 with his budget presentation, and I congratulate the hon. Minister for his masterful delivery, of what is the most people-centric budget in many, many years. [*Desk thumping*] The 2010/2011 budget presentation marks a return to the principles of fiscal responsibility, developing human capital, and most importantly, good governance, which have been sadly lacking for the previous nine years. [*Desk thumping*]

As I mention the term “good governance”, I want to briefly edify the hon. Senators appointed by the PNM, the characteristics of this term; because you see, Madam Vice-President, they were in the government seat for the last nine years, and for that entire period, they failed to understand what good governance meant.

According to the United Nations Report on Good Governance, and I quote:

“Good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory; consensus-oriented; accountable; transparent; responsive; effective and efficient; equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account, and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in the decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and the future needs of our society.”

Madam Vice-President, this is what our People’s Partnership Government represents, as these are the principles that our hon. Prime Minister and all of us in the People’s Partnership stand for.

At this time, let me also use this opportunity to congratulate my colleagues for their sterling contributions. Let me also specifically congratulate the Members of

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the Opposition Bench for their efforts to oppose or criticize this budget. I am sure that way back when they were first formers, the same group of students who the Leader of the Opposition referred to as “duncy”, they were taught that it was always better to try and fail than to fail to try.

You see, Madam Vice-President, to criticize such a benevolent document is surely a challenge; especially to a team who does not understand the meaning of benevolent. So, I will assist them by saying it means kind, compassionate, caring, giving; and these are just some of the terms that can be used to summarize the 2010/2011 Budget.

However, if we attempt to review some of the previous budgets that they may be far too familiar with over the last nine years, they can easily be summarized as budgets which failed to ease the pain of the citizens; and in the words of our beloved Prime Minister, budgets that drove us down the road of disaster. She warned the PNM government not once, not twice, but on many occasions, year after year, of their reckless spending, mismanagement of the economy, and their unfulfilled promises. She attempted to remind them that a House built on sand will not stand, but they failed as usual—they failed to listen.

They brought a budget titled *Addressing the Basic Needs*; another classic masterpiece of unfulfilled promises. They laid another appropriation bill with the theme, *Ensuring our Future Survival*, yet our youths were being gunned down all over the country, and the murder rate soared to some new heights.

Madam Vice-President, with budgeting for over \$300 billion during their term in office, our population was screaming out in pain over the high levels of crime, crises—“criseses”—in the health sector and the education sector. High food prices; poverty; problems with infrastructure, such as bad roads; broken bridges; no access roads for farmers; flooding; poor drainage; traffic congestion; a poor supply, and in some cases, no supply of water, but they did not listen.

7.15 p.m.

As you heard for yourself, from the Minister of Public Utilities when he spoke about his tour through the south-western peninsula: 60 reasons not to vote for the PNM, as the old man shouted, “Sixty years of no water”; Palo Seco, Santa Flora, Los Iros, Erin, Union, La Brea, Rousillac, no water. The people protested, but they did not listen. Even in Gasparillo, Happy Hill, Caratal, Lightbourne, Poona, Tabaquite, Los Attos, Brasso Venado, you name the places throughout Central and South, no water, neglected roads, but, again they did not listen. It was as though a dark cloud had covered our sweet T&T, as the blood of our youths

flowed in the streets of Port of Spain and Laventille. It was a time when citizens lived in fear of the prevailing criminal elements, while gang leaders, bestowed with the elite title of "community leaders", enjoyed the luxury of being entertained and fine dining at Crowne Plaza by the PNM.

Innocent citizens were injured from a bombing explosion in our capital and the PNM Prime Minister claimed to have known who was behind it, a person with the alias of "Mr. Big". The former PM remained mute on who Mr. Big was, while our innocent citizens suffered. During the dark era of the PNM government, lawlessness was on the loose and we saw the introduction and growth of the kidnapping industry.

Citizens were shouting for help; they were holding up their hands, looking up to the sky and praying for deliverance from an uncaring administration. I recall a young Senator back then advising them to take up the hammer and nail up the robbers, nail up the kidnappers, nail up the criminals. He told them if they could not nail up the criminals, pass the hammer over to our party and we would nail them up. [*Desk thumping*] So they have done such, as today that Senator is now a Member of the People's Partnership, the hon. Minister of the People and Social Development, Dr. Glenn Ramadharsingh. I congratulate him on the excellent job he is doing to reach out to the citizens of this country to ensure that government services reach the people. This is another pillar of the People's Partnership Government.

As we move from the dark years of the PNM and their budgets of unfulfilled promises, I take us to Friday, May 16, 2010 at the Emerald Plaza in St. Augustine. For us to know where we are going, we have to know where we are. If we do not acknowledge where we came from, eventually we are going to get lost. This is why it is important in this budget debate for us to recap where we have come from and acknowledge where we are today.

As I take us back to Friday, May 16, at the Emerald Plaza, St. Augustine, where the political leader of the People's Partnership, our beloved Prime Minister asked, "Really, can you point to the calendar and say this is when freedom comes?" That was May 16, when she said, "This is when justice will be realized; this is when hope takes hold; this is when change finally arrives; this is when our nation stops being about one man and one group of people and once again become a nation by the people and for the people. May 24, 2010, was that auspicious day. It was the day our nation became for the people; it was the day that the wind of change struck across this land of ours; it was the day that justice was finally served; it was the day that an atmosphere of hope was created amongst the citizens of our beautiful country.

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May 24, 2010, marked the end of that dark era; it signalled the dawn of a new beginning, when the people of this beautiful land placed their trust and confidence in the integrity of a united force of a People's Partnership comprising leaders and members of the UNC, the COP, the TOP, the NJAC and the Movement for Social Justice. It was the day that our country became, as said by the great Martin Luther King, "Free at last, free at last"; we thank God that we were free at last. It was then that we in the People's Partnership were able to put in motion the policies that were stated in our manifesto. In just over three months, we were able to deliver a people oriented budget. This 2010/2011 budget represents that freedom, that justice, that hope, that our nation can turn the corner, depart from the PNM pathway and move forward with a new people centric focus.

At this time, I want to touch on the topic that surfaced on many occasions today, the Alutrint smelter plant. The previous administration embraced this project with open arms. On every street corner you could hear them spouting their concocted benefits of the Alutrint smelter. I am happy that my colleague, Sen. Abdulah, was able to educate and expose them and, hopefully, the message would reach out to the people of La Brea that they were being used and fooled to believe that there was this massive job opportunity waiting for them as we started the construction of the aluminium smelter. We heard it and it was recorded there in the EIA document, the Alutrint Environmental Impact Assessment, that over 1,400 Chinese workers would participate in the construction of this aluminium smelter plant. They were fooling the citizens and residents of La Brea to have them believe there were job opportunities waiting for them.

To hear them speak, you would think that the smelter was the best thing since sliced bread. There are two sides to every story and the side they did not want you to hear included some facts, such as the process produces a quantity of flouride waste, perfluorocarbons and hydrofluorides as gas, sodium and aluminium fluorides. Unless carefully controlled, these fluorides tend to be very toxic to vegetation around the plants. The smelting process produces significant emissions of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon, as pitch is baked to form the electrodes. The lining of the pot ends up contaminated with cyanide forming material. That is the spent potliners.

This is what they planned to unleash on the unsuspecting people of Trinidad and Tobago, spent potliners, cyanide, one of the most toxic wastes, right here in our small island. This is what they were going to inflict on us. None of this data was classified or difficult to obtain. It would take five minutes to locate it on the Internet, so we see that it was not a case of the former administration not knowing

any better. They knew exactly what they were going to let loose on us all, but, of course, none of them lived next to the proposed site, so it did not affect them personally.

As I mentioned earlier, and as Sen. George talked about water on the south-western peninsula, water is a big concern in the La Brea constituency, Palo Seco and Erin. The amount of water that this smelter was going to consume through its cooling and so forth, was a vast amount, approximately 500,000 gallons. The question is: When the smelting process would have started, if it was stopped, we would have had all sorts of clogging taking place. It would have been very difficult and costly to restart the process. So we would have had to keep the process ongoing. If there was a water shortage within the south-western peninsula, the question I would put to them to answer later is: Who would be given the priority, Alutrint or the residents of La Brea? For this smelter plant to continue running, the residents of La Brea would have had to thirst for water.

When the residents of the affected area had the gall to disagree with the PNM project, the former Prime Minister, not content with riding roughshod over the populace accused the protesters and environmentalists of being drug pushers. That was what he did. In essence, if you did not agree with the PNM you were going to be branded as drug lords. When the residents of La Brea recognized what was happening and decided to pitch a tent right outside the Alutrint site, when the former PM passed, he looked at the protesters and said that they did not look like they were from La Brea. I would like to understand what the Prime Minister meant by they did not look like they were from La Brea.

It reminds me of the contribution made by the Leader of the Opposition when he spoke about the URP. He said something to the effect about doubling up the gangs and then after the local government elections we were going to fire them if they did not look like PNM. What did the Leader of the Opposition mean by "if they did not look like PNM"? What did the former Prime Minister mean by saying that they did not look like they were from La Brea? The essence of that was if you did not agree with the PNM you were going to be branded a drug lord.

You may remember the full page ads taken out in several newspapers extolling the virtues of the aluminium smelter. It seems passing strange that none of these ads contained any of the information presented here. The question remains: What was there about this aluminium smelter that the public did not know, but seemed to obsess the former administration beyond all reason?

7.30 p.m.

The former regime wanted to spend \$22.5 billion on a rapid rail project that is clearly uneconomical to the public purse of this country. Again, I must ask the question: what did they know about the rapid rail project that they did not share with us? Certainly, there had to be some factor known only to the PNM since they ignored the will of the people, as usual; ridiculed the experts, as usual and proceeded at full speed with a mega project which had no financial, economic or social merit. What was it that held them so mesmerized by this project, \$22.5 billion?

Arising out of these and other mega projects, local contractors were owed \$7 billion for contracts done. It would be remiss if I did not ask the question: did foreign contractors on these projects experience similar difficulties in receiving payments? I must further enquire of the former administration: why did the Chinese connection, as represented by firms such as Shanghai Construction, Sunway, CH Development among others, seem to receive preferential treatment? I must confess that given the manner in which contracts were awarded without tender or any form of regulation by the former regime and the secretive nature of their dealings, I would not have been surprised had the PNM still been in power, to see the next PNM mega project, the Great Wall of Trinidad.

Retirement financing: This Government recognizes the need for there to be a greater emphasis placed on planning for retirement. That is why the hon. Minister of Finance has indicated that the Government is considering moving to a mandatory employment-based system funded by employees and employers and the introduction of individual saving incentives which will encourage savings for retirement in a tax effective manner and avoid penalizing those who choose to save for retirement. You see, one of the saddest spectacles in life is to see an old man or woman losing his or her self-respect or dignity during his or her winter years due to poor retirement planning or retirement financing. When an individual receives a salary, they are really receiving two payments. I am sure you all are wondering what those two payments are. One is for the person that that individual is today and the other is for the old person that he or she becomes some day.

This is where pension and retirement planning come in. It is designed to encourage the young man or young woman from not spending the old man or old woman's retirement income. The portion of the salary that belongs to the old person is given to that young person in trust that he or she will secure for their own retirement years ahead. The interest mechanism applied over a sufficient term, will ensure that the individual is able to maintain a relatively close approximation to their pre-retirement lifestyle and their standard of living.

At this time I want to touch on the laptops for our future leaders. Yes, this is how we, in the People's Partnership, look at our young scholars, as potential leaders of tomorrow's society; as young and brilliant Ashaish Mohammed, Priyanka Kissoonsingh and Charisse Alexander, who were the top three students in this year's SEA and are now in Form 1—they had to face the embarrassing assault of the Leader of the Opposition referring to Form 1 students as "duncy head" first formers.

It is truly sad and unfortunate that these young men and women are unable to respond to the Leader of the Opposition. They are unable to respond to the Leader of the Opposition's remarks and defend themselves. But, nevertheless, we in the People's Partnership will stand in their defence as we stand to defend all the people of sweet T&T from the ills of the PNM. I call on the Leader of the Opposition to issue a public apology to our future leaders who are now first formers. [*Desk thumping*]

We live in the information age. This is an indisputable fact. At the present time it is almost impossible to obtain a job without some degree of computer literacy. We see computerized cash registers; we see computerized ordering and we see Internet business and e-commerce. Five years from now the demand for computer literacy will be even greater. The People's Partnership has pledged to provide laptops for our school students. This will help them to jumpstart the acquisition of computer and internet skills which are becoming more and more necessary for employment. It will allow our students access to the huge mass of data that is the Internet.

These laptops will serve as a gateway to knowledge as the Government of the People's Partnership, led by our beloved Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, remains committed to transforming Trinidad and Tobago into a knowledge-based society. Having said this, I cannot, for the life of me, understand why any responsible thinking person would seek to deny this opportunity from our children. It is incomprehensible to me that any political party would actively seek to restrict the benefit of such a programme to only those whose families can afford to buy a laptop. Do the poor people not count? Are their children less worthy? I am at a loss to explain the PNM's opposition to supplying our children with laptops so that they may have greater opportunities. It is incomprehensible. Actually, it is reprehensible. That is why the fate of our nation's children can never, never be placed in the hands of the uncaring PNM. I say never again, Madam Vice-President; never again.

I go on. The list of examples of why we should never place the fate of our children and our people into the uncaring hands of the PNM is so long that I fear to examine them all would be a hopeless undertaking. Instead, let us forget about the

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examples for a moment; let us look instead at the philosophy behind these examples, for it is only then that we can place the last nine years in proper perspective. When one examines closely the PNM initiatives and social programme, a distinct pattern emerges. It is a pattern of dependency. You see, the PNM wants the people to come cap-in-hand to receive their handout; say "Thank you, Massa" and come running back for more when the pittance is done. That is the style; that is their philosophy; that is how they have always operated and taken care of their people: cap-in-hand, "Thank you, Massa". They want for the people to depend on them; be unable to survive without them and by creating this syndrome, exercise control over them; exercise control over their votes. That is the PNM, stripped of all rhetoric, all the window dressing and packaging. That is the PNM.

The People's Partnership seeks to encourage entrepreneurship and innovators. We encourage the growth and circulation of knowledge. We do not mind if you question us. We would not insult you or threaten you or label you as a drug dealer if you disagree with us. We want the people to become successful and that is why we have devoted so much of this budget into fostering growth of small and medium enterprises. We want to create opportunities; we want to create an environment where a person can have a dream, can pursue that dream, can make that dream a reality. We want our people to succeed. The more successful they are, the more independent of all political forces will they become. That is the difference. The PNM wants to tie you to them, to make you dependent; make you a slave of their system, whereas we, in the People's Partnership, want you to become independent; want you to grow; want you to experience that freedom that Martin Luther King spoke of; want to free you from the chain of the last nine years. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we create opportunity for all regardless of race, religion, political affiliation, geographic location and gender. These things make no difference to us, none whatsoever.

For a moment I want to touch on the diversification of the economy, because I am very confused by the contribution made by the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Dr. Keith Rowley and I want to quote Dr. Rowley here; it is on page 53 of the unrevised text I believe that Sen. Al-Rawi was speaking about diversification of the economy in his contribution so I want to direct what was said to the hon. Senator by his Leader and possibly he will explain it to me.

"The PNM's position on diversification of the economy is that we support the need to expand non-oil activity to increase earnings while taking care of — "

Sounding good so far:

“and also maintaining growth in the hydrocarbon sector.”

Okay.

“It is not an either/or situation.”

7.45 p.m.

“We believe we can do both. It is also our position that oil is not gas and gas is not aluminium or steel.”—Of course, gas is not aluminium—“Thus the creation of an aluminium industry in this country must be viewed as diversification away from oil and gas, even though gas is a component of the industrial process involving aluminium smelting.”

Madam Vice-President, when we speak about diversification—and I am sure Sen. Bharath can teach me a lot more about fiscal policy diversification—we are talking about moving away from the oil and gas industry; we are talking about revitalising agriculture, which is not dependent on oil and gas; we are talking about boosting tourism, which is not dependent on oil and gas, so that in the event the oil becomes depleted—because it is limited—and the natural gas is no more, there will be some sort of revenue generated from these industries.

Our Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs spoke earlier about diversification and in her explanation of diversification she spoke about moving away from an oil and gas energy base into alternative energy, solar energy and wind energy. You see, solar energy does not depend on oil and gas; wind does not depend on oil and gas; but here we have a doctor, the learned Leader of the Opposition talking about diversification away from oil and gas, even though gas is a component of the industrial process. What happens to the industrial process if the gas is finished? The aluminium industry collapses. The aluminium industry they were proposing to establish is highly dependent on the oil and gas sector.

As I come to the conclusion of my main contribution, it would be remiss of me if I did not acknowledge all those who have supported me during my years of political development: the University of the West Indies Movement, the Young Professionals Association, all the members of the People's Partnership, my colleagues at work, my friends, my parents, my family and, most importantly, our beloved Prime Minister and Almighty God. Madam Vice-President, even you have been of great inspiration and motivation to me, and to you all I will be eternally grateful. I thank you.

At this point, we have now become empowered by the strength and unity of the People's Partnership to make our mark for a better tomorrow and a brighter

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future for all our citizens. We have inherited an unholy mess, a travesty that strains the gullibility of even the most callous and cynical of people.

This budget is the first of many to come from the People's Partnership Government. In it we have attempted to right the wrongs, undo the damage and bandage the wounds left by the previous administration. It is a process that will consume much of our attention for some time. The systematic and traumatic violation of country will leave scars on every citizen who was forced to suffer through those long oppressive years.

Madam Vice-President, wounds heal, scars fade and faith can be renewed in time. The process will not be easy. There will be many long days and sleepless nights in our future. Our people and our society will recover under the care and guidance of the People's Partnership Government and the great leadership of our benevolent Prime Minister, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. The day will soon arrive when once more we can stride boldly into the glory of a new dawn.

I thank you.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I must say that I am truly humbled. From the very start of this sitting, in my short acting—as someone said, acting and acting; we all may be in Hollywood or Bollywood soon—I have had a number of Senators in their maiden contributions congratulate me. I accept in all sincerity the congratulations and best wishes in this acting position.

My congratulations on this Eighth Sitting, Tuesday, September 21, to Sen. Ratiram on his maiden contribution. Well said.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister in the Ministry of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Subhas Panday): Madam Vice-President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Wednesday, September 22, 2010 at 11.00 a.m., when we will continue this debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.53 p.m.