SENATE

Monday, September 23, 2013

The Senate met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. PRESIDENT in the Chair]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie and to Sen. Anthony Vieira, who are both out of the country. We will deal with the question of swearing in the new Senators later in these proceedings.

SESSIONAL SELECT COMMITTEES

(APPOINTMENT OF)

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, in accordance with Standing Order 64 of the Senate, I wish to announce the appointment of the following Sessional Select Committees for the fourth Session 2013/2014 of the Tenth Parliament.

Standing Orders Committee

Mr. Timothy Hamel-Smith Chairman
Mr. Anand Ramlogan SC Member
Mr. Devant Maharaj Member
Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh Member
Mrs. Helen Drayton Member

House Committee

Mr. Ganga Singh Chairman
Mr. Kevin Ramnarine Member
Ms. Marlene Coudray Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds Member
Dr. Rolph Balgobin Member

Committee of Privileges

Mr. Timothy Hamel-Smith Chairman
Mr. Devant Maharaj Member
Mr. Vasant Bharath Member
Miss Pennelope Beckles Member
Mr. Subhas Ramkhelawan Member
Sessional Select Committees

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Statutory Instruments Committee

Mr. Timothy Hamel-Smith  
Mr. Emmanuel George  
Mrs. Raziah Ahmed  
Miss Pennelope Beckles  
Mr. Elton Prescott SC

Chairman  
Member  
Member  
Member  
Member

CONDOLENCES  
(BRIG. JOSEPH THEODORE)

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, you will no doubt recall that there was the passing of Brig. General Joseph Theodore, a former member of national security and a Member of this Senate. We are taking the opportunity, now, to pay tribute to Brig. General Joseph Theodore. Minister of National Security.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Mr. President. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to a great man, Brig. General Joseph Theodore.

Brig. Theodore dedicated his career to the military and service to his country. He actually served his country as a military officer and then he moved into another level being the Minister of National Security. In fact, just a few weeks ago, Mr. President, he was interested to come again and see what he can do to help our country where I was actually supposed to offer him the position as my special advisor because he spoke to me, and showed his willingness to contribute in some way. [Interruption]

Sen. Hinds: He recognized your difficulties.
Hon. Senator: Oh gosh, man.
Sen. Singh: Bad manners.
Hon. Senator: The truth.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: He had many military career highlights, the most being that he was the Commanding Officer of the First Battalion, Trinidad and Tobago Regiment, the commanding officer of the Regiment itself, the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff and then the Chief of Defence Staff from 1990—1991.

He also had many key ministerial achievements: establishing the E999 Rapid Response System, implementing the automated fingerprinting system, establishing the highway patrol system and many others, where because of his professionalism, his leadership, I think it is safe to say that he was arguably one of the most successful Ministers of National Security [Desk thumping] in the last few decades.
Being able to lock crime to such an extent, based on his leadership and the policies that he had implemented, we were able to have the murder rate below 100 at one time. If I can accomplish half of what Brig. Theodore had accomplished, I would succeed in my mission itself, Mr. President.

Brig. Theodore was a role model. I think many people would admit the same. It was a privilege for me to have followed in his footsteps in many ways, being a commissioned officer in the defence force, being a graduate from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, being Minister of National Security now, and last and definitely not least, just like Brig. General Joseph Theodore, he also went to the best school in Trinidad and Tobago, St. Mary’s College. [Desk thumping] Thank you very much.

Brig. Theodore was the holder of many medals, Mr. President, from the Medal of Merit, (Gold), the anti-terrorist medal, the efficiency medal, the Queen’s Medal and many others.

I recall when I was a recruit, when I joined the defence force, I had my first inspection and Brig. Theodore, as the Chief of Defence Staff, he walked passed me, stopped, and actually came back, and just a little bit of dust on my boot, and well I started to panic, but I realized the class of the man, of paying attention to detail and being a professional.

I recall during the attempted coup, the following morning shots were being fired in the back of Camp Ogden. I was a young officer—second lieutenant or something—and Brig. Theodore then said, “Griffith, go down in the back, in the river, and clear out that enemy”. Well, Mr. President, I started looking around to see if there was any other Griffith that he was speaking about; well it had to be that it was me. But it showed the leadership of the man few people would question, when it is he made a decision, it was based on analytical thought process and knowing exactly what was required.

We were very confident when he was the Chief of Defence Staff. I think, the country was very confident when he was Minister of National Security. He was a great leader. He was a great soldier, a great father figure, a great parent and he was a great friend. I ask that we all remember him for what he has achieved, and may we remember his family in our prayers. Thank you, Mr. President. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President: Sen. Deyalsingh.

Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me an opportunity to pay tribute to a former parliamentarian, Brig. Joseph Theodore.
Obviously, Sen. Gary Griffith would have had personal experience with the gentleman so he could have spoken from that angle. My angle this morning is to pay tribute to a hero, and in small island societies like ours, we are lucky in Trinidad and Tobago that we have had many heroes over the years, whether it be in sport, culture, and now we pay tribute to a hero in a dual field, in his military field, and in his field as a parliamentarian.

As Sen. Sandy said—ah, Griffith said, sorry—he was one of the first to attend the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. But why do I stand here and say that Brig. Joseph Theodore was a hero? Was it because of his overall role as commanding officer during the 1990 coup? Was it because of his dedication to country and dedication to duty? All those attributes, all those roles make him a hero, but if I had to pick out one aspect of Brig. Joseph Theodore’s life as a hero, and I am sure as a former St. Mary’s student, like myself, like Sen. Gary Griffith, I think it has to do with his role as a cadet. When you look back at those days, Mr. President, the Cadet Force in this country, of which Brig. Joseph Theodore was a member, really moulded young men and taught them valuable life lessons which made them productive members of society.

Brig. Joseph Theodore, unfortunately, passed away a month too early because he was supposed to be inducted into the St. Mary’s hall of fame, I think, next month, and I think, that induction will take on even more added significance now.

I was one of the presenters at the very first induction for the St. Mary’s College Hall of Fame back in those days with Sir Ellis Clarke as inductees and so on. So, Senator, former Minister Joseph Theodore will find his place among the inductees of St. Mary’s College.

But let us not forget his role as a parliamentarian because he was also a parliamentarian, and that is why I say he is a hero, not only because of his military exploits and dedication to country and duty, but he was also Minister of National Security from 1995—2000, during the Fifth Republican Parliament, and his maiden contribution was in the Immigration Bill 1994. He went on to make contributions in 24 successive Bills. He served on three committees.

So, in paying tribute to him, we condole with his surviving children, we, the People’s National Movement, and I am sure I speak for my colleagues across the floor on the Government Bench, and no doubt the Independent Bench will pay their own tributes. We pay tribute this morning to a gentleman, a hero, a patriot, a husband and a father. Mr. President, may the soul of Brig. Joseph Theodore rest in peace. [Desk thumping]
Mr. President: Sen. Prescott.

Sen. Elton Prescott SC: Thank you very much, Mr. President. On behalf of the Independent Bench, I rise to pay tribute to Brig. Joseph Theodore and to mark his passing with a modesty that is really out of place at this time because we are indeed speaking about one of those persons who belong within the pantheon of heroes of Trinidad and Tobago.

On July 20, 2013, I spoke at a function on an occasion when former students of Queen’s Royal College and St. Mary’s College came together, that is to say, they were all members of the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force, to celebrate 100 years of the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force in Trinidad and Tobago, and to launch a book which looked at all of those years of service to Trinidad and Tobago, and as one would have expected Joseph Theodore was featured in that book—is featured in that book.

I recall that among the things that were made known is that he had joined the cadet force at St. Mary’s College in the pre-independence years, and had gone on to Sandhurst sometime—well, I think I am moving ahead—had gone on to serve in the West India Regiment after his training at Sandhurst, and then returned to Trinidad in the post-independence years, when he took up his position at the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment.

10.45 a.m.

He and quite a number of them, I think it was 12 or 14 were regarded as the pioneers, because out of that cadre of adult officers, senior officers, there were many who rose to the top in the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment.

There is not much that could be said for his academic career because as we have heard already from two speakers, he really attended St. Mary’s College, and that did not augur well for his future as an academic. [Laughter] Queen’s Royal College happened to be at the time, and for many years thereafter, the place where you ought to come from if you are going to be a leader in this country. [Crosstalk] Leadership in this country as you know in the 1960s and 70s was born and nurtured in that place, Joseph Theodore happened to be different and happened to relate—another of his colleagues, Major General Ralph Brown would claim the same path to fame, so that I will pass on.

His years as commanding officer in the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment and then later as Chief of Defence Staff, have already been chronicled. There is much to be said for his contribution in 1990 to the peace of the society, the fact that
bloodshed was muted, in short, it could have been much worse, has been attributed to his knowledge of his forces, his understanding of the Trinidad and Tobago citizenry and no doubt his mature years, so that we were able to bring an end to that period without great loss or greater loss, pardon me.

If, as we know, his success as Minister of National Security is to be measured, I would make bold to say that such successes are only measured by the fact that you are able to complete a term in office. Of late, we have not been having those many successes among Ministers of National Security. He completed a full term and I would prefer to say that that is the measure of his success rather than the number of murders that were avoided because one could hardly take credit for that.

But this is a tribute to Brig. Theodore. I can only hope that the good Lord would have found good reason to take him at this time and will find use for him wherever men of that stature are asked to reside after they left this sublunary plane. I understand from reading the newspaper that he maintained almost an unbreakable bond with his family, and so to his family members I would wish to offer the condolences of the Independent Bench and my own personal condolences, and may God rest his soul. Thank you very much. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President: I would like to join with Senators who preceded me in offering tribute to the former Brig. General Joseph Theodore. Those of us who have indicated that he was a hero, is something that I particularly would like to endorse. Certainly it is in times of crisis that one knows where individuals stand, and at that point Brig. General Joseph Theodore stood out. He stood out in his wisdom and in his compassion which not only in times of crisis, but it was part of the fiber of the man in his day to day affairs that made sure that when the crisis occurred he had the stamina, the power and the will to do what was right, because certainly he was a compassionate man, a gentleman and a dedicated person who loved his country, a courageous soldier who committed his life to the advancement of his country.

I will therefore ask the Clerk to send a suitable letter of condolence to his wife and family and to pass on the tributes that have occurred in this Senate today in his honour. We now ask that you stand for a minute of silence in tribute to Brig. General Joseph Theodore.

The Senate stood.

SENATOR’S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T., SC:
Senator’s Appointment  Monday, September 23, 2013

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, O.R.T.T., S.C., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T., SC
President.

TO: DR. AYSHA B. EDWARDS

WHEREAS Senator Anthony D. Vieira is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, AYSHA B. EDWARDS, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 23rd September, 2013 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Anthony D. Vieira.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann’s, this 20th day of September, 2013.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Dr. Aysha B. Edwards took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

Mr. President: Hon. Senator, there is one more announcement I intend to make later in the proceedings today.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual Report of Taurus Services Limited for the year 2012 [The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai)]

PLANNING AND FACILITATION OF DEVELOPMENT BILL, 2013

An Act relating to the planning and development of land and to repeal and replace the Town and Country Planning Act, Chap. 35:01. [The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development]; read the first time.
URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING
PROFESSION BILL, 2013

An Act to establish a Council for Urban and Regional Planners and to provide for the regulation of the urban and regional planning profession and other matters incidental thereto. [The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development]; read the first time.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES
(APPOINTMENT OF)

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President, I beg to move the following Motion:

Be it resolved that this Senate agree to the following appointments:

1. On the Public Accounts Committee:
   Mrs. Raziah Ahmed in lieu of Mr. Jamal Mohammed.
   Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir in lieu of Mrs. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight.

2. On the Joint Select Committee established to inquire into and report to Parliament on Ministries (Group 1) and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises falling under their purview:
   Mr. Gerald Hadeed in lieu of Mrs. Christlyn Moore.
   Mr. Elton Prescott SC in lieu of Mrs. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight.
   Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir in lieu of Prof. Harold Ramkissoon.

3. On the Joint Select Committee appointed to inquire into and report to Parliament on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions:
   Mr. Anthony Vieira in lieu of Mr. Elton Prescott SC.

4. On the Joint Select Committee established to inquire into and report to Parliament on Ministries (Group 2) and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises falling under their purview:
   Mrs. Raziah Ahmed in lieu of Mrs. Lyndira Oudit.

5. And on the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Accommodation:
   Mr. H. R. Ian Roach in lieu of Dr. James Armstrong.

Question put and agreed to.
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 20, 2013]:
That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. President: Those who spoke on the last occasion, on Friday, September 20, 2013: Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai, Minister of Finance and the Economy, mover of the Motion; Sen. Dr. Lester Henry; Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan; Sen. The Hon. Vasant Bharath, Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment and Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy; Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh; Sen. Helen Drayton; Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development; Sen. Dr. Victor Wheeler; Sen. The Hon. Embau Moheni, Minister of State in the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration; and Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir.

Members wishing to join the debate at this time may do so now.

11.00 a.m.

Mr. President: The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine): Mr. President, it is an honour to address this Chamber on the provisions of the 2014 national budget as they concern the energy sector and other critical issues related to the energy sector. My contribution today will be a mixture of history, energy and politics, and all three, of course, are interwoven.

Mr. President, the energy sector is the mainstay of our economy. It has been that way for the past 40 years. The energy sector accounts for 40 per cent of real GDP, 80—90 per cent of foreign direct investment, 69 per cent of exports measured in terms of value, and 50 per cent of government revenue, inclusive of moneys collected under the Petroleum Taxes Act and moneys paid as corporation tax by NGC, Atlantic LNG and firms at Point Lisas.

Trinidad and Tobago accounts for 17 per cent of all the volumes of oil and natural gas produced by BP globally, and in the case of British Gas, it is 12 per cent. It accounts for 42 per cent of the methanol that is produced by the Methanex Corporation of Canada and 60 per cent of the global output of ammonia for PotashCorp, or PCS, as it is known in Trinidad and Tobago.
It is the energy sector that has contributed to the US $5 billion that now sits in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. Our country is also the sixth largest exporter of liquefied natural gas in the world. These are some facts, Mr. President, that give an idea of the role of Trinidad and Tobago in the global energy business. It is, indeed, very significant.

Mr. President, almost 40 years ago next month, October 06, 1973 to be precise, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, a day known as “Yom Kippur”. That incident became known as Yom Kippur War. In retaliation for American support for Israel, the oil-producing nations of the Middle East instituted an oil embargo on the West. The result, Mr. President, was a quadrupling of international oil prices from 1973—1974, with oil prices moving from US $3.29 per barrel (Dr. Mahabir) to US $11.58 per barrel, in the space of a few months.

The events of late 1973 caused the then Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, to address the nation on three separate occasions in early 1974 on the international energy crisis. That war, and the subsequent Arab oil embargo, ushered in a period that we in this country refer to as “the oil boom”. The irony, of course, Mr. President, is that 40 years later not much has changed in the Middle East. Egypt is in turmoil and Syria is in the throes of a civil war.

The difference today, however, is that OPEC is no longer the force that it was in 1973. In fact, Mr. President, growth in global oil production is coming from non-OPEC countries, such as Canada, the United States, Brazil and West African countries. Forty years ago, growth in demand was coming from the West, and growth in supply was coming from the East. That has now flipped. This has consequences for geopolitics and foreign policy.

Mr. President, I now turn to the Loran-Manatee issue. It is said that truth is the first casualty in war, and Sun Tzu said, “All warfare is based on deception”. Let me therefore present the facts as they relate to Loran-Manatee, as that story started, Mr. President, in 1974. 

Mr. President, in 1974, the then Minister of Petroleum and Mines, Errol Mahabir, a man who was almost the Prime Minister of this country—and he is listening to this speech this morning—addressed Parliament—and that was on September 27, 1974—and announced the outcome of a bid round. One of the blocks in that bid round was block 6, and it was awarded to a consortium of Tenneco and Texaco, two American companies. These were the first production sharing contracts granted by this country. Prior to that, Mr. President, we operated what is called the tax royalty system. That, of course, represented a change in energy policy.
I fast-forward to the year 1990. On April 18, 1990, former Prime Minister ANR Robinson signed a delimitation treaty with former Venezuelan President, Carlos Andres Perez.

**Hon. Senator:** Slow down. Slow down.

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** Article 7 of that treaty deals with “Unity of Deposits” and provides that the parties should seek to reach agreement as to the manner in which any hydrocarbon deposits that extend across the delimitation line should be exploited.

That treaty, Mr. President, established the maritime boundaries between this country and Venezuela. At the time the main issue was not oil and gas. The main issue was fishing. In 1993, Mr. President, the Government amended the block 6 production sharing contract by dividing it into block 6b and block 6d. These were awarded to BG, who by then had acquired Tenneco’s share of the block and to Texaco. In 2001, Chevron would acquire Texaco in a global takeover, and this is how Chevron came to be in block 6. So there are two contractors in block 6 today: BG and Chevron in a 50/50 equity split.

On August 12, 2003, the Governments of Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela signed an MoU concerning the procedure for the unitization of cross-border hydrocarbon reservoirs. Pursuant to this MoU, a joint steering committee was established. Mr. President, my research indicates that at no time did the PNM Government come to Parliament and report to the Parliament on that matter in 2003.

**Hon. Senator:** No accountability.

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** Mr. President, in 2007, the then Prime Minister Patrick Manning and the late President Hugo Chavez, signed the Framework Unitization Treaty. That was March 20, 2007. Again, Mr. President, my research indicates that at no time did the then PNM Government come to Parliament and report on this matter. It simply did not happen, Mr. President. [Desk thumping] Nothing was reported.

**Hon. Senator:** Shame!

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** It simply did not happen. Nothing was reported, or as the Venezuelans would say, Mr. President, “Nada”. [Laughter]

The Framework Treaty, Mr. President, was a template for unitization treaties for each individual reservoir. The treaty provides for the principles of unitized exploitation, determination; allocation of reserves; redetermination and metering. It also provides for the Joint Ministerial Commission which is made up of the Ministers of both countries and other senior technocrats.
On September 10, 2009, the Loran-Manatee field specific treaty was approved. On August 16, 2010, some two and a half months after the Government changed, the Loran-Manatee field specific treaty was signed in Caracas, and there was an exchange of instruments of ratification of the Framework Treaty. Article 4 of the Loran-Manatee field specific treaty distributes the volumes in the Loran-Manatee field into 73.06 per cent for Venezuela and 26.94 per cent for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, the 73.06 per cent of the field on the Venezuelan side, in their block 2, referred to as Loran, is the property of the Venezuelan people and it is their sovereign right to determine how it is to be monetized and where it is to be monetized.

Mr. President, the 26.94 per cent of the field on the Trinidadian side in our block 6 referred to as Manatee, is the property of Trinidad and Tobago and it is our sovereign right to determine how it is monetized and where to be monetized.

On July 01, 2013, Mr. President, I delivered a speech at the Second Gas Summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum in Moscow. In attendance were President Nicholas Maduro and Minister Rafael Ramirez, both of Venezuela. In my speech I said, and I quote:

“"I am of the view that a natural gas strategy is part of the solution to rising energy cost in the Caribbean and Latin America. This presents an opportunity for collaboration and partnership between GECF members, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela in the area of natural gas development especially as it relates to the development of the large natural gas reserves in the Plataforma Deltana area. In this way both our countries can partner to develop the natural gas market in the Caribbean and Latin America.”"

Five days later, Mr. President, on July 06, 2013, President Nicholas Maduro was in Port of Spain to attend the 34th Caricom Heads meeting in the Hilton Hotel. On the margins of that Caricom summit there was a bilateral between both Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. At that bilateral the Loran-Manatee issue was discussed as a matter of priority. Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, to her credit, noted that the matter has been around for some time—for a long time—and she asked President Maduro to intervene to help advance the process.

Mr. President, I pause at this time to give credit to the Prime Minister for the role she played in advancing this process. [Desk thumping]

President Maduro then and there committed to sending a high level team to Port of Spain on July 23, 2013. That team arrived on July 23, 2013, as promised, and met with officers of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for two days. The meeting constituted a meeting of the Joint Steering Committee. The Trinidad and Tobago side was led by Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, Selwyn Lashley and included Ambassador Gerard Thompson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Richard Jeremie, Chief Technical Officer, Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and Ms. Lisa Ann Fraser of the Attorney General’s office.

The agreement arrived at or referred to as “Agreed Minutes” was approved by the Cabinet and subsequently vetted by the Attorney General, as is the procedure with all international agreements and treaties, Mr. President. On September 11, 2013, the agreement was signed in Caracas by Minister Rafael Ramirez and myself. In attendance to witness that signing was: Permanent Secretary Selwyn Lashley; Ambassador Gerard Thompson; Ms. Louise Poy Wing, Senior State Counsel in the Ministry of Energy; Ms. Lisa Ann Fraser, attorney-at-law with the AG’s office; Marise Warner, an attorney at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Andrew Jupiter, advisor to the board of directors of the National Gas Company and His Excellency Anthony David Edgill, Trinidad and Tobago’s Ambassador to Venezuela.

Mr. President, I call these names out to, first of all, give credit to them—these public servants—for their hard work and to also let the Parliament and the country know that the agreement was not drafted by me in some dark room in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, the agreement signed on September 11, 2013 concerns the functional structure and governance of the Loran-Manatee Unit Area. This agreement between two sovereign States is now the subject of gross misunderstanding, misinformation and misconception. It has been mauled, mangled and maligned by the PNM and their men of the past. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, the events of the last two weeks, as far as this agreement is concerned, have the potential to damage this country’s relationship with Venezuela and its standing in the international energy community. I have said it and I will say it again: Men of the past will always oppose the future. [Desk thumping] Our future, Mr. President, may well have been sacrificed on the altar of political recklessness by people who aspire to once again hold high office in this country. I hope the speakers to come from the Opposition are not men of the past.

Mr. President, let me deal with the facts of the matter. Firstly, what did we agree to? The agreement concerned the functional structure and governance of the Loran-Manatee Unit Area. It establishes the unit operator and says that there shall
be three bodies. The first body is the directing committee, made up of representatives of both Governments and the four companies involved. The four companies being: Chevron, Trinidad and Tobago; Chevron Global; British Gas, Trinidad and Tobago and PDVSA, the Venezuelan state company. The second body is the investing committee, Mr. President, made up of the four companies just mentioned, and the third body is the executing entity, drawn from among the four companies.

11.15 a.m.

The directing committee makes recommendations to the Joint Ministerial Commission and has the authority over the operations of the investment committee and the executing committee. So, Mr. President, the Joint Ministerial Commission is supreme. The members of the directing committee right have their voting rights in accordance with their title to natural gas under the production sharing contracts, on our side in the case of block 6, and on the Venezuelan side in the case of block 2.

For the purposes of decision making, the percentage interest of the members of the directing committee were allocated in accordance with title to natural gas and that is determined by the two production sharing contracts, again, block 6 Trinidad and Tobago, and block 2 Venezuela. The voting rights are broken down as followings:

- Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 16.97 per cent;
- British Gas Trinidad and Tobago, 4.98 per cent;
- Chevron Trinidad and Tobago 4.98 per cent;
- Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 14.61 per cent;
- PDVSA, 35.65 per cent; and
- Chevron Global, 22.79 per cent.

If you add them all together, you will get 99.99 and there is some rounding because I used two decimal places.

This now bring me to the statements made by the latest energy expert in Trinidad and Tobago, the MP for Port of Spain South, that were reported, Mr. President, in the Newsday on September 19, 2013, by Clint Chan Tack. Incidentally—well, I will not say that. She is quoted to have said:

“We should have been able to exercise voting rights equal to at least the percentage of gas that belongs to us. If we have 26 percent, we’re supposed to have 26 percent voting rights.”
Well it is really 26.94. She goes on, Mr. President, as reported in Newsday:

“Howver, our Energy Minister has agreed with Venezuela that our voting rights with respect to the development and production of gas from the Loran/Manatee field be reduced to 17 percent,...”

Mr. President, how sad that the MP for Port of Spain South is an attorney-at-law; how sad that the MP for Port of Spain South, an attorney-at-law, would not have seen that the voting rights are computed in accordance with the title to natural gas under the Block 6 production sharing contract.

The natural gas won is shared—that is the concept of production sharing—between the Government and the two contractors, BGTT and Chevron. So, it is really 16.97, Government of Trinidad and Tobago, plus 4.98, BG Trinidad and Tobago, plus 4.98, Chevron Trinidad and Tobago, to give you the grand total of 26.94 and there is some rounding there. It is coming up to 26.93, but that is because we are using two decimal places. I hope this answers the misinformed allegation of the MP for Port of Spain South.

Mr. President, it is also said that given the two-thirds majority needed for decisions by the directing committee that we could be outvoted as Trinidad and Tobago has 16.97 per cent. There is, however, a right of veto that says that both Governments must agree on decisions of the directing committee. It there is a decision that we are not in agreement with we can veto that decision, and in like manner the Venezuelans can exercise a similar veto. That veto is in section 2.4.2 of the agreed Minutes and it reads:

“A two thirds (2/3) majority vote shall be required for final decisions of The Directing Committee, subject to”—Mr. President—“a right of veto exercisable by the Governments of Trinidad and Tobago or the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela if it considers that its sovereign interest may be affected.”

There is also a second veto embedded in the agreement that concerns the exploitation and development plan. This is at section 4.2 and it reads:

“The duties and responsibilities of the Executing Entity shall include:

(a) the submission of, within ninety (90) calendar days of its appointment, the Exploitation and Development Plan for the Loran-Manatee Unit Area for approval by the Joint Ministerial Commission;”—which includes both Ministers of Energy of Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

Mr. President, the sovereign interest of Trinidad and Tobago is protected at every stage in this agreement. [Desk thumping]
Sen. Singh: “Dey jus jealous.”

Sen. The Hon. K. Rammarine: Mr. President, over the years, positions have been advanced as to how and where natural gas should be gas monetized regarding this particular field. We have advanced that, at the very least, our gas or the 26.94 per cent should come to this country. The position of the Venezuelans has been that they will build a pipeline to Guairá, where their 73.06 per cent would be monetized. That is their gas; that is their property. We have also advanced a position that the Venezuelans may want to consider some of their gas coming to Trinidad and Tobago, given the proximity of this country to the Loran-Manatee field, and the well-developed gas transmission and processing infrastructure we have in this country.

There is to date no agreement on this matter. This will be the subject of that development plan I referred to. Positions have been advanced by both countries. There are also four companies involved and a key player in this entire process is Chevron which has a presence on both sides of the border. A report in the Business Guardian of September 19, 2013, provides in my view, a good picture of how the Venezuelans might be thinking at this time.

Mr. President, what we have done in progressing the bilateral cooperation on cross-border natural gas reserves, reminds me of a line by David Rudder in his classic calypso Rally Round the West Indies: “Little keys can open up mighty doors.” Our agreement which was so maligned, mangled, mauled and condemned by the PNM’s men of the past is that little key that can open a mighty door to the future. Men of the past, Mr. President, will always oppose the future, and great minds always face violent opposition from mediocre minds. It is not inconceivable that one day, in the not too distant future, our country with its world-class gas infrastructure and deep-water ports could be a processing hub for both oil and natural gas from around the region. That is not inconceivable at all, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I leave the Loran-Manatee issue now and I move to the energy sector. Our economy as the Minister of Finance and the Economy—and let me congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy on the delivery of his second budget. [Desk thumping] I thought it was an excellent delivery and an excellent budget. [Desk thumping] Our economy has grown now for four consecutive quarters, starting in the third quarter of 2012 and continuing to the second quarter of 2013. In the third quarter of 2012, the energy sector grew by 0.6 per cent. In the fourth quarter, there was flat growth as a consequence of maintenance works by BP on its Kapok platform and BG on its Dolphin platform. In the first quarter of this year, 2013, there was 0.5 per cent growth, and in the second quarter of this calendar year, 2013, there was 1.6 per cent growth in the energy sector.
Mr. President, the sector, like the economy, has again returned to growth after a period of contraction. In the *Review of the Economy*, page 64 in the table for GDP at constant prices, it shows that the energy sector contracted by 3.2 per cent in 2010, contracted by 3.9 per cent in 2011 and contracted by 1 per cent in 2012, and that we have returned to growth in 2013 at 0.5 per cent. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, I also disagree with Sen. Ramkhelawan’s assessment about economic stasis and being “caught like a manicou in lights”. We are, however, in support of his recommendations that we should go further downstream of methanol, using existing production to go to acetic acid and other products. However, we have been producing methanol in this country since 1984 and for a large part of that period, the productive capacity has been in the hands of private companies, one of them being Clico. Implementing that idea of Sen. Ramkhelawan will greatly depend on the resolution of matters involving Clico and MHTL. Government’s policy on the downstream is to go beyond methanol and ammonia and to focus on energy efficiency.

Mr. President, I now turn to natural gas. National gas output in 2013 has been steadied and has shown improvement over what obtained in 2012, and I will give the comparisons on a fiscal basis and a calendar basis. If we compare on a fiscal basis, October 2011 to July 2012, a ten-month period to the equivalent ten-month period October 2012 to July 2013, there has been a 1.6 per cent increase in natural gas output. On a calendar basis comparing the average for January 2012 to December 2012, to the average for the first seven months of this year, there has been a plus 3.4 per cent increase in natural gas output.

Production of natural gas in the last three years, starting in late 2010, was impacted by two factors, the first is maintenance. The maintenance was mainly related to the activities of BP and to a lesser extent BG. We must appreciate that the Macondo incident in April 2010 changed BP as a company and changed the way it did business. That had implications for BP’s operations in this country. As we speak, BP is doing maintenance on its Cassia hub and BG has just completed work on its Dolphin platform. Two major maintenance interventions that are ongoing—one has come to an end.

This plant maintenance, Mr. President, also includes maintenance work on Atlantic Train 3, which is currently down, and nine plants on the Point Lisas estate. These events were coordinated by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the NGC, the Point Lisas Energy Association and Atlantic. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy and the Central Bank were kept informed at every stage. The impact on natural gas production was significantly mitigated by the
efforts of BP to install a bypass system on the Cassia hub and by BG reducing the downtime on the Dolphin platform shutdown. I commend both companies for their efforts to mitigate the impact of these maintenance events. [Desk thumping]

The second factor is deliverability. The first one was maintenance, the second deliverability. The impact on deliverability was a consequence of the period of reduced investment by one major natural gas producer in this country. You see, Mr. President, oftentimes what happens in the energy sector today is not a consequence of what you did yesterday, or not even a consequence of what you did last year. If you have a heart attack today, Mr. President, it is not because of what you ate yesterday. There must have been a problem that has been compounding over time.

Mr. President, I am advised that in 2008 natural gas producers were called to a meeting in the Crowne Plaza by the then Minister of Energy and told that the Government was going to introduce supplemental petroleum tax on natural gas. For that company, in particular, the rate of SPT would have been 42 per cent, which would have come off their gross revenue line, as SPT comes off from the top. Historically, since its introduction in 1981, SPT or supplemental petroleum tax has only been applied in this country to oil as oil was seen as a high margin business and natural gas was seen as a low margin business or a lower margin business. That signal by the then Government resonated, I am told, all the way to the head offices of that company in London and the consequence was devastating for this country. That, in my regard, demonstrated a fundamental lack of understanding of the natural gas business. By the time the then Government yielded to good sense, it was too late and the damage had been done.

I am advised that this news caused the said company to withdraw interest in this country by way of investment. For three years, that is 2008—2011, that company literally went into a shell—and I am not referring to “Shell”. The company went into a shell; and Shell has, incidentally, now come back into Trinidad. I am happy to say, Mr. President, that this company has now regained confidence in this country and that we are now clawing back from that situation. [Desk thumping]

Many in the energy sector have called the period 2002—2010 the “lost decade” as far as upstream is concerned.

Sen. Singh: Where was Deyalsingh then?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: It was also a period of a colossal failure to attract investment into the deep water. I will repeat that. It was also a period of a colossal failure to attract investment into our deep water. In the last 18 months, Mr. President, this Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has signed six deep water production sharing contracts at a value of US $1.3 billion. [Desk thumping]
Sen. Singh: Repeat that. Repeat that for them.

Hon. Senator: Repeat, repeat.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: In the last 18 months, this Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has signed six deep water production sharing contracts with a value of at most US $1.3 billion.

Sen. Singh: That is delivery.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: That, Mr. President, compares to zero that was signed between 2002—2010 under three PNM Ministers of Energy.

Hon. Minister: How much?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: The Venezuelans might at this point in time say, nada.

Sen. Singh: No más! No más! Enough!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: No más.

11.30 a.m.

This is a fact, Mr. President. We are playing “catch up” in the energy sector after the lost decade engineered by men of the past. All the major oil and gas companies in the country are now engaged in aggressive exploration and development activity aimed at increasing gas production and their reserve base. In fact, I want to say that two years ago when I became Minister, BP, BG and BHP did not have the growth stories that they have today. The priority, Mr. President, when I came into office was to reinvent the upstream and to do so quickly because without the upstream, there is no Point Lisas and no LNG. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, it is the classic case of the cart and the horse; the upstream is the horse that pulls the cart. The PNM energy cabal of 2002—2010 did not understand the upstream. They were focused on the downstream with the aluminium smelter and in Petrotrin, they were focused on the GOP, the Gasoline Optimization Programme—[Interruption]

Sen. Singh: Tell us about that.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: And I think Mr. Hadeed will expand on that when he speaks and the GTL project.

Sen. Hinds: He has to expand on CNMG.

Sen. George: “Geh dem some lessons!”

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: All three were colossal failures which have left Petrotrin with a huge debt burden.
Sen. Singh: How much is that debt burden?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Close to TT $18 billion.

Sen. Singh: What? $18 billion?

Hon. Member: Tell them again!

Sen. George: Say it again!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Close to TT $18 billion. One eight, one eight.

Sen. Maharaj: “Dai the price of the PNM!”

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Talk to the energy sector leaders, talk to energy sector leaders in the upstream, and they will tell you they were pleading with the former Government to make the fiscal regime for the upstream more competitive. Their pleas fell on deaf ears.

Sen. Maharaj: 18 billion!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: We pay a heavy price today for ignorance.

Sen. Maharaj: What Sen. Henry had to say about that?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Every budget of this Government has sought to make the fiscal regime more competitive by providing incentives. In the main, these incentives only apply if there is investment that realizes new production. That is why we have not compromised the quantum of cash coming to the State. What we have done, Mr. President, is that we have addressed the issue of the time value of money as far as the companies are concerned. This impacts positively on the net present value of investments, and by extension, the expected monetary value of projects. I will not bore the Parliament with the details of expected monetary value.

Mr. President, time does not permit me giving a detailed assessment of the restructuring of the capital allowances for exploration and development. I will do so in the Finance Bill debate, but I would just say that for exploration, the existing initial and annual allowances have been replaced by a new allowance of 100 per cent of exploration cost to be written off in the year the expenditure is incurred. This incentive will be applicable only for the period 2014—2017, to incentivize the companies to get out there and invest. For development, a grant of a first year allowance of 50 per cent of the expenditure, a second year allowance of 30 per cent and a third year allowance of 20 per cent. This will be applicable to both plant and machinery, tangible, and drilling of wells, intangible expenses. I will give more detail in the budget debate.
So, Mr. President, in the four budgets presented by this Government, we have not increased taxes on the energy sector. Each of these four budgets has instead recognized that the fiscal regime that governs our upstream, this is where we explore for and produce oil and natural gas had to be made competitive. Capital, Mr. President, is not obliged to come here. [Crosstalk]

**Sen. Hinds:** The man reading a long speech, he say he will give more information in the budget debate, but this is the budget debate!

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** I said the Finance Bill debate; the Finance Bill debate!

**Sen. Singh:** “Doh bother with him; he has nothing to say.” He is a tabloid politician.

**Sen. Hinds:** “This is ah budget debate!”

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** We compete for capital with other countries. [Continuous crosstalk and interruption] This was a paradigm that did not before obtain. An assessment of the risk reward profile of the energy sector, and in particular, the natural gas value chain, would reveal that the risk—Mr. President, could I proceed in—

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, if we could just listen to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs in silence.

**Hon. Senator:** Read! “Read nah!”

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** I sought permission to read.

**Hon. Senator:** Yeah, well—

**Sen. Singh:** Go ahead!

**Sen. Hinds:** You are getting confused. Discombobulated!

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** Mr. President, an assessment of the risk reward profile of the energy sector, and in particular, the natural gas value chain, would reveal that the risk is in the upstream, and that is where the risk is the highest. The incentives of the past four budgets sought to de-risk the upstream and the companies have responded with investment. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, I will give you an example. At present, there are six rigs working in our waters. This compares to one rig working in our waters in mid-2010. That rig was called the Constellation 1.

**Sen. Singh:** They were rig less!
Sen. The Hon. K. Ramarine: These six rigs are:

1. The Seadrill West Jaya
2. The Rowan XL II
3. The Rowan Gorilla III
4. The Diamond Ocean Lexington
5. The Well Services Rig 110; and
6. The Bayfield slant rig.

A seventh rig, the Seadrill West Freedom, is currently on its way to Trinidad and Tobago from Qatar to work for Repsol; and an eighth rig, the Well Services Rig 152, will be taken by Trinity in October. [Desk thumping] So we have moved from one rig to eight rigs.

The energy sector is the driver of the economy and the upstream is the engine of the energy sector. The engine is roaring again, Mr. President. [Desk thumping] But do not take my word for it, let us hear what the people in the energy sector have to say about Minister Larry Howai’s budget. Listen to Joel Monty Pemberton, the CEO of Trinity and he says in the Ernst & Young review of the budget:

“In recognizing that the hydrocarbon province in Trinidad is mature, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has introduced a progressive fiscal package to ensure that activity levels are increased and that the region remains internationally competitive.”

[Desk thumping] That is not me, that is Joel Monty Pemberton, the CEO of Trinity Exploration. [Desk thumping]

Let us hear what Norman Christie has to say. Who is Norman Christie? Norman Christie is the CEO of BPTT, and this is what he had to say to Ernst & Young:

“Over the last three years”—and this is Norman Christie—“fiscal changes have provided incentives for oil and gas exploration and development. These incentives have resulted in successful outcomes for the most recent bid round and have also resulted in a material increase in upstream activity as evidenced by the number of rigs now operating onshore and offshore…”

So he considered onshore and offshore.
“…(currently 12 versus 1 in 2010).” [Desk thumping]

**Sen. Singh:** The arithmetic does not lie!

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** Mr. President, in 2012, the Central Bank figures for foreign direct investment indicate that we had some $2.5 billion in foreign direct investment. The energy sector in 2012 reported the highest ever FDI. That money is flowing into the upstream where it is being spent currently on drilling and seismic. The energy sector is not only Point Lisas and Atlantic. That is important but we must also remember what is the cart and what is the horse.

Plans for natural gas development in 2014: Mr. President, I am advised by BP that its current Cassia hub maintenance is the last of its major maintenance interventions. This does not mean that we are out of the woods, but the outlook for natural gas in 2014 is positive given that consideration. We are seeing a 2014 with minimal maintenance interventions. The outlook for 2014 is, therefore, positive.

BP is also in the process of seeking sanction for its Juniper development. Reserves in Juniper are estimated at over—approximately 1.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Production from Juniper is expected to peak at 555 million standard cubic feet of gas per day. The Ministry continues to work with BP to ensure that the Juniper development happens, and we are advised that it is the intention of BP to fabricate the topside and jacket for the associated platform in La Brea, thus resuscitating a dormant fabrication yard in 2014. [Desk thumping] That means, Mr. President, jobs and economic activity in the south-west peninsula. It means 300 to 400 jobs. [Desk thumping] How much more time do I have?

**Mr. President:** You now have five more minutes.

**Hon. Senator:** Five more minutes before the extension.

**Sen. Singh:** Normal time.

**Sen. Coudray:** Till normal time.

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** Mr. President, I will accelerate a bit, like our capital allowances. [Laughter] BGTT, the country’s second largest natural gas producer, is also expected to add to these numbers with the development in 2014 of their Starfish field which has reserves of 640 billion cubic feet or 0.64 trillion cubic feet and will produce at a plateau rate of 260 million standard cubic feet of gas per day. Starfish will backfill for the Dolphin field which has been producing since 1996. BG also plans for the development of its reserves in Block 5(c) and Block 5(d) in late 2014 and into 2015.
EOG resources are currently in the process of completing their Osprey development. The company is drilling four developmental wells in that regard. The first of those four wells is already producing. The other three wells are expected to be completed by the end of September. On completion, Mr. President, the development—that is the Osprey development—will add another 120 million standard cubic feet of natural gas per day to the country’s natural gas production, thus helping cure the curtailment problem at Point Lisas. The next project for EOG is the Oilbird project which is scheduled for 2014. I say this to give an outlook for 2014.

As far as BHP Billiton is concerned, they have started to plan for what is the Angostura 3 development which is to bring on an additional 100 million standard cubic feet of gas per day by 2016 or earlier. Mr. President, the horse is now before the cart. [Desk thumping] The horse is now before the cart.

Mr. President, the Opposition shadow Minister of Finance, Dr. Lester Henry, made—[Laughter] Why am I hearing laughter? [Laughter] The Opposition shadow Minister of Finance, Dr. Lester Henry, made heavy weather of projects in the downstream subsector that have not materialized. He cited the AUM 2, the CariSal and SABIC projects. These projects were proposed by private sector entities, these are not Government projects. The Government only facilitates.

In the case of the AUM 2, I think it is well known that the project is the victim of a shareholders’ dispute between the shareholders of the MHTL. This dispute has been going on for two years. In the case of the CariSal project, the project did not happen because the investors could not get the requisite financing together. It is noteworthy that that project was first mentioned in a budget speech under the former PNM administration.

In the case of the SABIC project, both the NGC and SABIC mutually agreed to discontinue negotiations for a gas sales contract after they could not arrive on consensus around price and the contract term. Mr. President, had we agreed to what they wanted, they would have accused us of giving away the gas. We took the correct decision in the interest of the country, as we always do.

I have looked at the history of the last 10 years, Mr. President, in the downstream. In that period, only one project that was announced has been sanctioned, started and completed, and that project is the AUM 1 by MHTL. The project was announced in 2003 and completed in 2010. Mr. President, landing projects in our downstream is not easy. Investors often change their minds for varying reasons including the state of the global economy. The Opposition acts as though this is unique to this administration. My research says otherwise.
You see, I have gone through all the speeches of the PNM Ministers of Finance from 2002 to 2010, and we have compiled a list of all the projects that were mentioned by them in their budgets, and I will read out that list.

**Sen. George:** “Uh-huh! Gem dem!”

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** These projects announced by the PNM, which have never materialized, include: the Essar steel project. What happened to that?

**Sen. Al-Rawi:** That was not private sector as well?

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** That was private sector.

**Sen. Al-Rawi:** Or okay. *[Desk thumping]*

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** The Alcoa—*Continuous crosstalk and interruption*

**Sen. Singh:** “We using the same criteria you used.” It is the same criteria you used!

**Hon. Senator:** “But they excused that, but they cyah excuse CariSal.”

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** The Alcoa smelter project; the Ansa McAl First UAN project—*Interrupted*

**Hon. Senator:** Yeah, yeah!

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** The Coffeeville Union Estate Fertilizers—Mr. President, he is shaken but like me, he is not stirred. *[Laughter]*

**Sen. Al-Rawi:** One standard for you and one for another!

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** *Laughter* The Coffeeville Union Estate Fertilizers Limited project; the Westlake Ethylene Complex—I heard about that since the middle part of the last decade—the TEIL ammonia project—Sen. Hadeed may have more to say about that.

**Sen. Hadeed:** No gas from the PNM. *[Inaudible] [Laughter]*

**Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:** The Lurgi-Bassel Gas to Polypropylene project and the Isegen Maleic Anhydride project. And of course, there was the ill-fated aluminium smelter—the Alutrint smelter—where the decision of the EMA to grant a CEC was struck down by the High Court in 2009.

**11.45 a.m.**

Mr. President, in April of this year I signed a Project Development Agreement with Mitsubishi Gas Chemical, Mitsubishi Corporation and Neal & Massy for the construction of a US $850 million methanol to dimethyl ether complex that is to be located at the Union Industrial Estate in La Brea. *[Desk thumping]* Mr. President, I pause to commend the leadership of Neal & Massy for their vision to participate in the energy sector. *[Desk thumping]*
Hon. Senator: “Doh” mind the previous setback.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: The project is progressing well and we expect a final investment decision in the first quarter of 2014. To accommodate the project, Mr. President, the NEC has been mandated to conduct a study of the port at Brighton, which was initially supposed to be for the Alutrint smelter. Work on the Brighton Port, Mr. President—[Interruption]

Mr. President: Minister of Energy and Energy and Affairs, I will have to ask you to take another pause. The speaking time of the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Hon. G. Singh]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. President: Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: “All yuh eh say no again.”

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. President, getting back to Brighton. So the NEC has been mandated to conduct a study of the Brighton Port and work on the Brighton Port upgrade, Mr. President, will commence in 2014 and will require, we are advised, dredging of that port to a depth of 15 metres to accommodate post-Panamax vessels, as may be required by Mitsubishi.

I turn now to oil production. Oil production has been in decline since 2006. Listening to the Opposition, you would hear that it started in 2010. It is the same way, Mr. President—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: “Dey under” new management.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—I suppose they are ideologically bound to the idea that this country magically materialized out of thin air in 1956. The six main reasons for the decline of oil production from 144,000 barrels of oil per day in 2006 to 82,000 barrels per day in 2012 are:

1. Faster than expected decline of the BHP Angostura field;
2. The rapid collapse of production at Trinmar;
3. The decline in condensate a production from BP;
4. Lack of strategic focus by Petrotrin on oil production;
5. Inadequate fiscal incentives to stimulate investment; and
6. Inability of the private sector to access oil-bearing acreage for investment.
Mr. President, we have sought to deal with oil production again through fiscal policy. Oil production, Mr. President, peaked in 2006 because of commencement of oil production from the Angostura field, which is in Block 2(c) and I explained to Dr. Mahabir the significance of the year 2006 to our economy, Train 4 and Angostura. The field’s production thereafter went into rapid decline.

In 2004, Mr. President, production at Trinmar was 35,000 barrels of oil per day. By 2010, it had collapsed to 22,000 barrels of oil per day. That is what I call the Trinmar tragedy, Mr. President, the Trinmar tragedy. We now hear about oil production in decline. What about the Trinmar tragedy? What was happening in Petrotrin under the PNM, Mr. President, was akin to economic genocide.

Sen. Singh: “Umm, 18 billion of it eh.”

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Our friends opposite will not talk about that. I am pleased to report that we have stabilized Trinmar’s decline and we have started to increase output. The latest figure shows that we are now averaging around 23,000 barrels of oil per day and should be averaging 23,500 by the end of the year. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, many speculate as to why the PNM ran Trinmar into the ground, or should I say into the sea. Trinmar was left for dead. This is a critical national asset. We have set about fixing Trinmar, Mr. President. We are investing in maintenance of platforms and pipelines. Production has also commenced, Mr. President, from the much maligned Jubilee field, which has been described as a hoax by the Opposition. I have since instructed Petrotrin to place a full page ad, explaining the history of this field, in the newspapers. I am advised by Sen. Deyalsingh that he saw it today. So I will not spend much time on that.

Sen. Singh: He is the perpetrator of the hoax.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. President, in the years 2005—2010, Mr. President—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: Petrotrin had built [Inaudible]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—was very refinery focused. While there was substantial inefficient investment in the refinery upgrade in the period, conversely there was little or no exploration or development drilling on both land and in Trinmar. It was during that time, Mr. President, when money was flowing into the refinery, into the GOP, and the GTL, that the Trinmar tragedy happened. While Petrotrin was investing TT $2.7 billion in the failed GTL project and $14 billion in the GOP project, Trinmar was being starved.
The Opposition criticizes the bottom of the barrel project which is now at the RFP stage, Mr. President, but while they were in power, their refinery upgrade cost Petrotrin TT $14 billion and that is almost somewhere in the region of a 100 per cent cost overrun. And that is now the subject of a forensic audit by the AG. Mr. President, I know—[Interuption]

Sen. Hinds: By who?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—time is running out—[Interuption]

Hon. Senator: Forensic audit?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—and I would turn very quickly to—[Interuption]

Sen. Hinds: “All yuh shameless yes.”

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—issues related to Phoenix Park Gas Processors as this is a matter which is very near and dear to us. Mr. President, on the issue on the State enterprises, let me now turn to the NGC’s acquisition of 39 per cent of Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited from ConocoPhillips. This acquisition was criticized by the PNM shadow minister of finance, Dr. Lester Henry.

Sen. Singh: That is too kind a statement for him.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: He also said, Mr. President—[Interuption]

Sen. Singh: That is trouble making.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—he also said that Mr. Indar Maharaj, Mr. President, was the least qualified of the applicants for the post of NGC President. That is false.

Hon. Senator: Another—[Inaudible]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: And it is, Mr. President, that they have used parliamentary privilege to attack citizens who are not here to defend themselves. Mr. President, the recruitment process for the President of the NGC was conducted by the NGC and two private human resource consulting firms, and the candidate that topped the interviews was Indar Maharaj who is a highly qualified chemical engineer and who worked for over 30 years in various companies at Point Lisas.

Mr. President, I turn now to the Phoenix Park acquisition. On August 16, 2013, at 11.47 a.m.—[Interuption]

Hon. Senator: “He didn have a PNM party card.” [Crosstalk]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—the National Gas Company—Mr. President.
Mr. President: Senators. If you could listen in silence, thank you.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. President, as I said, on Friday 16 August, 2013, at 11.47 a.m., the National Gas Company acquired 39 per cent of Phoenix Park Gas Processors—[Desk thumping]—taking its share, Mr. President, from 51 per cent of Phoenix Park to 90 per cent.


Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Under Indar Maharaj. Mr. President, in nominal terms, this is the largest ever acquisition, by the Government, in the energy sector. [Desk thumping] In nominal terms—[Interruption]


Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—in nominal terms, Dr. Mahabir, in nominal terms.


Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: It is the most significant acquisition, Mr. President, by the State since 1985 when the then Government acquired the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery from Texaco. I say this to put this in the context of history, because that is a historical event. The NGC, Mr. President, paid ConocoPhillips US $600 million for this asset and now brings its shareholding to 90 per cent. I consider this, Mr. President, to be a significant achievement of this Government and I am honoured that history would record that it happened when I was Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. [Desk thumping] Minister Hadeed, I think you were once a director?

Sen. Singh: We deliver, deliver.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Minister Hadeed was once a director at Phoenix Park.

Hon. Senator: No, no, no.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: This acquisition, Mr. President, has been praised universally by people who understand the value of Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited and its profitability. I am in support, Mr. President, of the position of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, who has announced that it is the intention of the Government to make an initial public offering, of this 39 per cent of Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited, on the stock exchange. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: Sacrifice.
Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: It is the policy, Mr. President, of this Government to deepen and widen the local stock exchange. Our energy assets must be directly owned by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] What is wrong, Mr. President, with the doctor, the lawyer, the teacher, the fireman, the nurse, the prisons officer, owning shares in Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited? Nothing is wrong with that, and we intend to make that happen.

This acquisition, Mr. President, is one step in fulfilling the mandate of the Government, to the NGC, to diversify its operations through the acquisition of assets across the natural gas value chain. Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited is one of the largest gas processing facilities in the Americas and is consistently one of the most profitable companies in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, the NGC is also competing to acquire upstream assets of one oil and gas company in this country and we expect to have results on that very shortly. What we are doing, Mr. President, is vertically integrating the company through acquisitions. The acquisition brings several immediate advantages to the NGC and, by extension, Trinidad and Tobago. These include greater strategic national control of a critical component of the gas value chain; increased dividend stream to the NGC from PPGPL—and incidentally, 39 per cent of your dividend would leave Trinidad and Tobago and go to ConocoPhillips. That, Mr. President, now stays here in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

So Mr. President, just to wrap up on Phoenix Park, the NGC was advised in this acquisition by Credit Suisse, by First Citizens Bank—and they are playing a tremendous role, First Citizens Bank, in this economy—by Martin Daly and by Ernst & Young. In winding up, Mr. President, I close by saying that we have achieved a lot, Mr. President—[Interruption]

Mr. President: You have five minutes.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Five minutes. We have achieved one, the resurgence of onshore and offshore drilling. We have put the cart, Mr. President, before the horse. Two, we have arrested, Mr. President, the decline in our natural gas reserves. The Ryder Scott audit for 2012 recorded the smallest decline in natural gas reserves in almost seven years. Our reserves are now standing still instead of declining. We have arrested, Mr. President, the decline in oil production, because oil production in 2013 will average roughly what it averaged in 2012.
There has been the discovery, Mr. President, of one trillion cubic feet of natural gas by BP in its Savonette 4 well. There has been, as I said, the acquisition of 39 per cent of Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited. We have had a highly successful deep water bid round. We have launched two more bid rounds, Mr. President, one for land and one for deep water. The Galeota Port, Mr. President, time does not permit, the Galeota Port, a significant piece of national energy infrastructure is now 80 per cent completed. It will be completed by the end of 2013. The PNM could not have gotten that project off the ground.

We have signed, Mr. President, an agreement with Venezuela for the Loran-Manatee field development. [Desk thumping] We have signed, Mr. President, a project development agreement with Mitsubishi of Japan, and Neal & Massy, for US $850 million methanol to dimethyl ether plant and we have signed six production sharing contracts for deep water worth US $1.4 billion. [Desk thumping] And we have commenced, Mr. President, production from the Jubilee field, regardless of what the Opposition says.

Mr. President, I am not fazed by the criticisms and attacks of the PNM’s men of the past. As I said, men of the past, Mr. President, always oppose the future. I have been attacked on this, on the Loran-Manatee issue. Mr. President, for the record, I did the right thing and we have advanced the process for cross-border field development in Trinidad and Tobago very significantly. [Desk thumping]

I want to put on record my praise for all the members of staff of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, some of the young people are here today. [Desk thumping] Some of the young people from the Ministry are here today, from our legal department, from our commercial department, from our ERPD, our Permanent Secretary is here today, Mr. President, and I want to put on record my gratitude for their support over the last two years. And the only reward, Mr. President, for success is, of course, more work.

Mr. President, as I said, I have not been fazed by the attacks of the last two weeks regarding this Loran-Manatee issue and I am inspired today, Mr. President, and in wrapping up, I want to quote, I am inspired by Miss Trinidad and Tobago when she said, Mr. President “What does not kill you, makes you stronger.” I thank you very much. [Desk thumping]

12.00 noon:

Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for my opportunity to make my contribution to the debate that is before us.
Mr. President, it is not my mandate from my team to speak on the matters that our colleague on the other side just addressed—[Interrupt]

**Sen. Singh:** You have to respond.

**Sen. F. Hinds:**—but, suffice it to say, Mr. President, I was taken aback. My grandmother would have described him as “farse” to have, and perhaps, she might have added “and out of place” for him to have described all that has happened in the energy sector in this country, particularly in the last decade, when we tripled our GDP, when we did magnificently well, when energy was and remains the mainstay of this economy, put us in the international scenario, we produced 25 per cent of the gas used on the eastern seaboard of the United States, we were the subject of request for assistance from the continent of Africa and a host of other things.

The people who manage the energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago, led, of course, by the Prime Minister, men in the energy sector; men like “amm”, Mr. Jupiter; men like Andrew Mc Intosh who was head of the NGC; Trevor Boopsingh, who died; these patriots, he called them men of the past. He stands today on a very successful aspect of our economic well-being and development and “farse and out of place”—[Interrupt]

**Sen. Deyalsingh:** Correct.

**Sen. F. Hinds:**—to talk about men of the past, “farse!” [Desk thumping] He came here today and gave us something of a thesis on PNM’s track record. We stand proudly. Trinidad and Tobago stands on that.

**Sen. Cudjoe:** That is right. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. F. Hinds:** Stands on that. But it is my mandate to deal with him. I have noticed as well that he did not respond, in any meaningful way, to the serious issues that caused him discombobulation and dishevelment; [Desk thumping] issues raised by Sen. Deyalsingh last week. He went to the Lower House to respond to MP Marlene Mc Donald. He left Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh well alone, well alone.

**Sen. Deyalsingh:** “Yuh ain respond to nothing ah say.” [Desk thumping]

**Sen. F. Hinds:** Not a word! All we know is that on the occasion of the last weekend, he went into the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs looking under people’s desk, sniffing out to see who was the snitch. [Desk thumping and laughter] Shameless! To say the least. [Desk thumping] And poor fella, still did not find it, or him, or her.
Sen. Deyalsingh: “Yuh respond to—[Inaudible]

Sen. F. Hinds: Reminds me of that hapless housewife. She saw a rat in the kitchen; she destroyed the stove, the fridge everything trying to kill it and it escaped into the bedroom. “She mash up de bed, the dressing room, de dressing table.” It escapes in the living room. “She mash up de furniture set, everything, television and she still did not get it.”


Sen. F. Hinds: Destructive! That is all they are about.

Let me begin my own contribution by very sincerely congratulating the Leader of the Opposition, who responded to this Government’s budget in the other place. [Desk thumping] And that followed a very significant Independence Address by the Leader of the Opposition, en route to his becoming the Prime Minister, a PNM Prime Minister, yet again, in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

The budget response—I hear my friend quickly talking about Sudama and how Sudama is—[Interruption]

Sen. Singh: But you said—[Inaudible]

Sen. F. Hinds: We are not wasting time on that. What we do know, if they could criticize Trevor Sudama coming on a PNM platform, in 2010, they took cobweb off of Makandal Daaga, cobweb off of Errol McLeod and brought them out for public consumption yet again. So Sudama is a gem. Sudama is a gem. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, the response by the Leader of the Opposition had great impact and it resonated where it matters in the national community: among the grassroots people, among the middle-income earners and among the professional class and the business owners in this country. All have responded positively to the work, through the response of the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Rowley. And I also want to congratulate, of course, my other colleagues in the other place and my colleagues here who preceded me in contributions in this. In particular, I want to congratulate my friend, Sen. Dr. Lester Henry, who—I took careful note, in his usual calm, in his usual unassuming style, he put some daggers in the heart of the UNC’s economic proposals for the upcoming fiscal year; solid in content as usual and suave in his delivery.

I know that they—“what they call this budget?” What is the theme? Sustaining Growth and Securing Prosperity. From all that I know, from all that I have seen, from all that I have gleaned, I refer to this budget as a “Bandit’s Charter.”
Sen. Cudjoe: “Oh gosh.” [Desk thumping]

Sen. F. Hinds: It is nothing less than that. [Desk thumping and laughter] It is about big money, big spend, big took, big take, big “tief” and big debt as well; public debt, big borrowing, deficit financing; telling us we will have that until 2016 and, of course, showing us no path, no possibility, as to how we would come out. That is what they tell us.

Sen. Cudjoe: They would not be there in 2016.

Sen. F. Hinds: In fact, the experts have under—they issue reports but on the bias, on the margins. They are saying that this budget and the figures are a concoction, cannot stand scrutiny and something is sadly wrong about all the figures in this budget. They are just not adding up.

This Government has a very unique ability to hide the truth from the people of this country and it is our responsibility to come here and to expose the truth in its naked simplicity for all the world to see, because this country made a serious mistake in 2010. They have lived with that mistake called the PP for the last three years—[Interruption]


Sen. F. Hinds:—and it is our business to hasten their departure in purely democratic arrangements, and that we will do. All of them, most of them and their friends and family, they have become millionaires and multimillionaires over the last three years and coming here—[Interruption]

Mr. President: Senator, you cannot attribute motives to the people on the other side.

Sen. F. Hinds: I am obliged.

Mr. President: You will have to withdraw that remark.

Sen. F. Hinds: That they have become millionaires, Mr. President?

Mr. President: Senator, you will have to withdraw the remark.

Sen. F. Hinds: I am sorry. I am quite willing. I just want to know if it is that I must withdraw that they have become millionaires?

Mr. President: The context in which you said it; the whole—

Sen. F. Hinds: Okay then, I am obliged, then I withdraw the context. But they have become millionaires.
Mr. President: Senator, Senator, I will not allow you—have a seat!

Sen. F. Hinds: I am obliged.

Mr. President: That remark, along with the context in which you said it, is not acceptable in this House. You will have to withdraw it.

Sen. F. Hinds: Indeed, Mr. President, I withdraw the context, as I have told you and I should proceed.

I heard the Attorney General on the television, my television that I spent my little hard-earned money on, calling children in Diego Martin “underprivileged” and he went there to give out school bags. “You see the mentality?” I saw him on the TV. I saw him here for the last three years. He has put on a lot of weight; neck fat, face fat, looking well fed and talking about underprivileged children in Diego Martin. I know the basis of that. I know the context but I will withdraw the context.

The same thing happened, the same attitude with their former colleague, Jack Warner, going around the country pandering to people who are in a certain experience because of their mismanagement and the way they have governed this country for the last three years and wanting to offer cheap gifts, wanting to offer handouts and pittances. That is what they are about. “We doh want dat.” And on behalf of those people, I say: That is not what they want. They want equality. They want equity. They want good governance and they want justice in this country. “Keep yuh lil bag and yuh lil $200 and yuh lil $300 in green or in yellow or whatever colour yuh coming with. Keep dat!” This country has enough talent. This country has enough resources for everyone to have an equal opportunity to aspire to their best. “We doh want dat.” And I want to make that very, very clear.

The Former President of this Republic, may his soul rest in peace, Sir Ellis Emmanuel Innocent Clarke, he was a man of great language and I once heard him use the term _animo furandi_ and I think, I hope, at least I hope I got the pronunciation right; it is a Latin term that means with animalistic ferocity. That is the approach that this Government has taken in relation to utilizing state resources, as in many cases, it is converted from state property and resources to private bank accounts. That is the truth.

Listen to what the Leader of the Opposition said, and it is reported, as I quote from the _Sunday Express_ of September 01, 2013; a quick quote: I begin:

“In my quiet moments I question if who we are today is who we set out to be. I am left to wonder about the kind of country we are building for our children and grandchildren to inherit. A nation is not only built on roads, ports, box drains, bridges and buildings, but is built on the collective dreams, ideas, aspirations, values and the principles of its people.
I have heard a new conversation taking place in Trinidad and Tobago that may perhaps be signaling a change in our ideology. It is a conversation that rationalizes instant gratification as the new order. It offers that integrity in public life is now optional; that the ends justify the means no matter how unprincipled and innately dishonest they are. The conversation explores the possibility that Trinidad and Tobago should now feel comfortable that it is ok to cut corners and plunder once the spoils are shared. It also says that persons are no longer expected to do what is right because it is the right thing to do. I can only imagine how unfathomable this would be to those who were present at the birth of our nation, fifty one years ago.

It is my view that the fact that our society is even entertaining these ideas and having this conversation is fundamentally dangerous and threatens to destroy everything that is collectively good and decent about us as an emerging independent people.

Is it that we are willing to surrender to corruption, indignity, hollow platitudes, fancy speeches, political spin, and flashing blue lights that hide and dazzle with all manner of wrongdoing associated?

Let me say here now to all patriotic Trinidadians and Tobagonians that I reject that conversation and all it connotes, with a deep conviction that I know most of you share with me.”

Sen. Singh: What newspaper?

Sen. F. Hinds: That was a quote from the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, speaking to this country at our Independence celebrations last.

Mr. President, I want to relate to you, as I discuss the matters in this budget, a story dated—coming from the Trinidad Guardian of Thursday, August 29, 2013, under the headline:

“Hi-tech hit on SFGH”

a story by Kevon Felmine:

“The alarm system at the San Fernando General Hospital was turned off before thieves made off with a $.5 million ultrasound machine on August 7, the CEO of the South West Regional Health Authority (SWRHA), Anil Gosine, said yesterday. He was astonished nevertheless that although not all locations around the hospital were covered by more than 100 video cameras, the thieves still got away with the sizeable piece of machinery.
…He said private medical institutions would now be targeted in the search for the machine, since the authorities were convinced it was spirited away in a well organised plan.

‘In fact, we have right now, our security, along with the police, trying to recover it and get some leads. What we can say is that there are only a few nursing homes/medical centres at this point in time that would utilise ultrasound machines, and obviously these are the areas we are looking at.’”

And he continues:

“‘We have over 100 cameras at the hospital and we are in the process of increasing the number of cameras to all areas…”’

Mr. President, this story gained my interest for a thousand reasons very appropriate and apposite to the discussions that are before us.

12.15 p.m.

The matter I have just raised with you touches and concerns a cross section of the issues that we are dealing with. It deals with crime. It deals with the question of policing. It deals with the fact of the existence or nonexistence of security services at the hospitals including the Port of Spain hospital, which the new Minister of National Security is very familiar with. It deals with the question of integrity, because those persons who are paid to secure the institution, according to the CEO, switched off the alarm systems in order to allow the thieves to operate.

It deals with the question of gangs, because as we know, a gang involves two or more persons who have come together to perpetrate an illegal act, and we have them listed in the anti-gang law. This was a gang. It deals with the question of economics. It deals with the question of our culture, because he is saying, the CEO, that it may be some health institution, likely rich, not poor like the people in the ghetto, but some health institution stealing from the hospital, stealing from the poor people for its own well-being, which is a feature of Trinidad and Tobago too.

It deals with the question of patriotism. To what extent do we care for our country and our people as opposed to ourselves and our little sectoral interests? All of these issues are encapsulated in the one story—interestingly enough, it is matched by a photograph of the Prime Minister and Mr. Ganga Singh as “she kicking off” some football game somewhere in her Louis Vuitton, $10,000 sneakers, I suppose.

We are in trouble, Mr. President, deep trouble and we are dealing with $61 billion as allocated by the Government, $56 billion of which will be raised from the Consolidated Fund and the balance by way of deficit financing; a matter to which I shall later return.
In 2013, $61 billion; 2009, we had a budget—$44 billion and I could hear them now protesting about the size of that, and the “big spend”, and that we “breaking records”. Today, a few years later, between 2001 and 2009, we averaged $43 billion per year by way of budgetary allocations, but between 2010 and today, in 2013, they are averaging $55 billion per year. So far, they have chalked up $162—$165 billion, and if you included this year’s allocation, at the end of this fiscal, they would have chalked up $225 billion, coming from people who protested when it was $40 and $44 billion. Then you hear a Minister talking about, in his ignorance, prices gone up and things must increase, showing a complete misunderstanding of what is involved, especially as I said coming from this Government who had so much things to say, if I may quote Bob Marley “to get their wicked wish”.

What have they done with this money so far, $165 billion? What do they propose to do with the $61 billion of this year? I told some folks the other day in the spirit of conviviality, notwithstanding that there is truth underpinning it, that there are people, when a $61 billion budget is read by this Government, who calculate in their minds immediately, how much of that $61 billion I am going to thief, “tief”. That is true; calculating that. What have they to show so far? I am sure they would have done a few things, but we see nothing of that along the East-West Corridor, which was why I told you the story a while ago has to do with our governance, the way in which you govern the country. Are they governing the affairs of Trinidad and Tobago equitably and fairly? The answer is a resounding, no.

“Whey de money gone”, I am now obliged to ask? “Whey it gone?” Into whose bank accounts local and foreign? Within the eight years between 2001 and 2009, we were able to produce, already paid for and the public could see three expensive OPVs and they were paid for. That was not for the sake of esthetics and for boasting, and for wanting to aspire to developed nation status, that was to protect Trinidad and Tobago from the gory “murdery” mess that takes place here every day, every night. Such that a citizen in Laventille told me it is so bad that she cannot sleep peacefully when the night comes if she does not hear gunshots.

I was in the area some time ago, gunshots flying around and I am cringing behind my car, and people who were around me from the community were going about their business quite casually, obviously accustomed to hearing this. It did not cause them to flinch like me. “De ting bad.”

NAPA, which they live in today; SAPA, where we had the last independence awards distributed, hopefully to deserving citizens, and I added the word “hopefully” for good reason; a matter to which I shall return.
Government campus in Port of Spain, though yet unoccupied; the Hyatt Regency Hotel; the UTT; the very tower that we are in now hosting this Parliament as we repair the original Red House, the site of our Parliament; schools aplenty; industrial parks; overpasses on our roadways; roads, GATE—and these are not tangibles now, but GATE; CDAP and, of course, a lot of people forgot in this country, that no individual earning less than $5,000 a month pays one single cent income tax in this country. In 2008 or 2009 or maybe a little bit before that, I think 2007, a PNM Government put things in place by way of its policy and practice, that no citizens of this country earning less than $5,000 a month will spend a cent in income tax. You go home with the extra $1,250 in your pocket. Those are the things we did, and you still hear Ministers of Government coming here and say, we did nothing.

You heard the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs a while ago. That is one of the reasons we have committed as a matter of policy going into the next Government, that we will put the history of Trinidad and Tobago in the school curriculum so that the children, the young people of this country will know the truth. If we had one failing, is with—we did it, they benefited from it, but they did not even recognize it. It was so good.

During the years I just described, you could not get a mason to do anything in the communities, they were all busy working in the city, working for $400 a day; things were good; businesses were good. Now businessmen in the city are suffering. “Everything going bad”, and they still trying to tell us how great things are. “Ripping out my teeth with ah pliers callously, but injected it with novocaine, so I am not feeling it immediately; blood running all down meh face, they destroying my mouth, ripping up my face. That is what they doing. When it wears off in 2015, we feeling the pain and dem gone with my dentist money.”

Before the period I have just described, the priority bus route—how many young people in this country know “is we” who built the priority bus route [Desk thumping] to improve the traffic along the East-West Corridor; introduced the maxi-taxi in this country, a minor effort towards mass transit, “huh”. So when we talk about rapid rail now, we know what we are talking about, because as the political leader of the PNM has said often within recent times, the PNM—and we are the party of development in Trinidad and Tobago, [Desk thumping] that is a fact. “So dem Johnny come lately”, coming to talk about the men of the past and the lost decade, “dey farse and out ah place”, as my grandmother would say. [Desk thumping] The Claude Noel Highway; the Solomon Hochoy Highway—I remember as a boy going down the Southern Main Road to Moruga, take you six
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[SEN. HINDS]

hours, huh”? [Desk thumping] The development of Point Lisas, the heart of the energy sector, today we have three trains, trains 1, 2, 3—and 4. [Desk thumping] That is why we are concerned about the Loran-Manatee arrangement, but Sen. Deyalsingh has already dealt with that. So I would not consume my time.

The Mount Hope Medical Complex; the Hall of Justice in Port of Spain and in Scarborough; [Desk thumping] the entire HDC housing stock around the country where citizens lived and—[Interruption]

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. F. Hinds:—spent $8.00 and $10.00 and $12.00 and $15.00 a month rent. [Desk thumping] Today, some of them pay $150.00 a month. We did that. So we have things to show as the party of development. What have they to show? We are the ones who developed the former Caroni lands to distribute to the workers, treated them real good, they got jobs, they got retooling and retraining, they got land and they got money, [Desk thumping] and they still come here after 40 years and say PNM discriminate and did nothing. That is why we have to put history—we are committed to that. The history of this country would be written and taught to the children in these schools, and put an end to the lies and the ignorance that they dwell and thrive in, Mr. President.

They must be reminded, in 1994, it was a PNM Government, before that, in 1975 it was a PNM Government at the death throes of the sugar industry, bought the interest from Tate & Lyle in order to preserve the jobs of those who worked in there. Not my grandfather, we lived in Laventille, their grandfathers who lived in central; still bad talk the PNM. [Desk thumping] When it was no longer viable I told you what we just did for the workers; they still bad talk the PNM.

In 1994 when Caroni was in serious financial straits with $2 billion worth of debt, it was a PNM Cabinet and a PNM Government [Desk thumping] that wrote off the Caroni debt, made it bankable again, put it back on its feet, and by 2001 when they left Government they had run up $2 billion worth of debt in Caroni again; them.


Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. F. Hinds: They forget that.


Sen. F. Hinds: That is why we are going to put the history of Trinidad and Tobago—[Desk thumping] and if I have my way it will include African history and Indian history, so that people will understand themselves and feel proud like me, and “doh” be lacking in self-esteem and have people coming to tell you foolishness.
Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, $9 billion, you hear the Minister of Finance and the Economy talking about it as though it started from zero and he brought it to US $9 billion. He met that there—

**Hon. Senator:** That is right.

**Sen. F. Hinds:**—PNM, [*Desk thumping*] in addition to other Central Bank’s accounts worth US $3 billion in reserves.

**Sen. Singh:** It was started by Kuei Tung, okay.

**Sen. F. Hinds:** And as I told you already, all through those years people will tell you, you know, if you walk down the streets, they were feeling good, things were happening in Trinidad and Tobago—school principals, school teachers, police sergeants, ordinary people, aspiring to a middle-class life style, a nice foreign used car, living in Trincity, living somewhere, nice home, HDC building nice apartments in Oropune and so on. Things were happening. Things were good. So with all this $61 billion it is not the case, it is not trickling down, “people not feeling good” and that is why the United Nations—I think whoever it was—recently introduced the Happiness Index because they realized that you could come with nice macroeconomics, $61 billion budget and all of that, and the people are not happy; and they are not.

With all of that expenditure, South/East Port of Spain on Nelson Street closed as we speak; Tranquility, closed; Malick Secondary for about months in the last two years was closed, affecting those children’s ability to absorb the learning in preparation for their SEA under this Government and that is not all. Marabella Government Primary School, protest; Marabella Secondary, protest; Mafeking Primary; Pleasantville Secondary; Rio Claro Secondary; Tranquility as I said. Thousands of children are at home today as we speak—{*Interruption*}

**Sen. Beckles:** Denied an education.

**Sen. F. Hinds:**—denied an education with all this big $61 billion, a complete waste of time, because they say for the man who is unemployed, they tell us about full employment, you know. The Minister say the Government has the economy, we are hovering around full employment, 5 per cent, but for the man who is unemployed, unemployment is always 100 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Al-Rawi:** That is right.

**Sen. F. Hinds:** For the man who is hungry that is 100 per cent; for the child who cannot go to school today, all schools in the country close down—understand that, Mr. President—and why?
12.30 p.m.

I am the Chairman of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee and for the past year I had to face Sen. Karim, Sen. Moheni, Minister Mc Leod, Sen. Marlene Coudray and a couple others—that former Member of Parliament, Hubert Volney. I have been calling for a forensic audit into the EFCL now for two years and cannot get it. [Desk thumping] They have been blocking me because, you know, it is a vote. It has to be democratic. They have the largest number. They have been blocking and obstructing.


Sen. F. Hinds: Contracts plenty in the EFCL. We have come with facts and figures to show directors have companies doing business with the company. “Dey paying who dey want; dey ain’t paying who dey want; dey selling company estimates to their friends who bid just a small way away from it to win the bid—all kinds of bid rigging taking place.” I have facts on that.

So the result is—because they had a policy where one contractor get one school to make sure but now, in the EFCL, one of their favourite contractors got 10 contracts. He does not have the staff, the capacity to deliver, so as a result the schools remain closed and then “they coming” to tell me foolishness.

Hon. Senator: Only 10?

Sen. F. Hinds: Again, I am calling on the Government to allow a forensic investigation [Desk thumping] into the Education Facilities Company.


Sen. F. Hinds: Do not block it! Millions of dollars! What is there to hide? “If your record good, just let it be.”

Minister Howai tells us, boastfully, 20 per cent of the budget was allocated to education, some $9.82 billion. Well, he could afford to talk and smile because he is all right. He was prised out of his job at the FCB at a hefty sum of $10 million. Fact! Never heard it before! They paid him. They give him a handshake of $10 million to take the job as Minister of Finance and the Economy. Mr. Dookeran was not good enough.

I want to know how much of that allocation will really go towards the pedagogical aspect of the thing. How are the children benefiting from this? Even the laptops which this year they spent $58 million on—and they are boasting about laptops for every child—up to now it has not been incorporated into the education delivery process. It is still a thing that the children have and they use to play a lot of games and to send messages to each other, sometimes the wrong messages. Still the case! But somebody is benefiting.
As I said here before, with this Government, they may get around to doing a good thing or two, but it is never for a noble purpose. I am putting it to you, Mr. President, that the introduction of those laptops for those children was not for the benefit of the school or the education system for teaching and learning, it was to create a contract opportunity for a friend. [Desk thumping] Everything they do it is about that. Any benefit to the society is peripheral, by the way, on the margin, but the real purpose of everything this Government does is to create an opportunity to transfer money from state accounts to private bank accounts so they could get fat and chubby.

I heard him say as well in his contribution that there are some—they get 900 cameras for the east Port of Spain and Laventille area. Well, you know something, a few weeks ago, these sick criminals out there, cut a man’s head off. The pathologist’s report said it is obvious—maybe they found blood inside of his lungs and all of that—they found that the man’s head was hacked off while he was alive, as brutal and sick as that. That head was left on Nelson Street in Port of Spain for children and other people to live to see. “Mr. President, you know they ain’t detect that offence yet with all the 900 cameras.” So what use?

I told you from the story I read in the papers that the question of integrity is a critical issue. “They feel is only box drain that they could talk about and what they buil’ in south campus and all kind a ting.” Integrity is the key. That is why I quoted my political leader because without integrity you have nothing. [Desk thumping] The man behind the cameras does not have to see. The man who is on the console with the 360° radar coverage around Trinidad, all he has to do is turn a blind eye and all that investment comes to naught, so integrity is the key.

And on the basis of that fact, Mr. President, I can stand here today and tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago, “reject all the people who coming to you with gifts now, whether it is school bag or money, whether it come in green or it come in yellow. They have no class; they have no integrity.” [Desk thumping]

Sen. Singh: “Take it from de red.”

Sen. F. Hinds: We are the party of Government, not perfect. No man is perfect; it is only God, but our track record speaks loudly.

All these cameras—you know why they putting 900? Because in their very—let me watch my adjectives—in their minds, they believe all crimes start and finish in Laventille.

Sen. Singh: That is not so.
Sen. F. Hinds: That is what they believe.


Sen. F. Hinds: That is what they believe. That is why they imposed a state of emergency in 2012—

Hon. Senator: And release everybody.

Sen. F. Hinds: And went down—started in the very Nelson Street and lock up everybody.

Hon. Senator: Tell the police arrest and charge.

Sen. F. Hinds: I filed a question in this Senate. Sen. Drayton was amazed when I showed her the response—she and Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight who was here—beautiful and dignified woman she is. I miss here dearly. Insightful, but she spoke truth. They did not like it.

The question revealed that the Nelson Street Girls School has been running performances below the national average consistently. I raised that here and you would have thought that Minister Gopeesingh would have found something useful about that information and go down there and do something about it. Not a word, because that is Nelson Street. So when MP Marlene Mc Donald complained vociferously in her contribution to the budget debate 2013 that the Government is marginalizing Port of Spain, marginalizing the corridor and treating it like a bastard child, I support that she is quite right. She is quite right.

A friend of mine told me recently he went down to Queen and Nelson Street corner to wait for someone and three youngsters came up to him with some big knives and took away his chain and took away his jewellery. When he was through telling me the story, I asked him, “Did you go to the police?” And he told me, sadly, Mr. President, “No.” Why not? He did not think it would be of value. That is the level of confidence or the lack of it that people feel. There are many unreported crimes. So when you hear the Government boasting about what they are doing with crime and all that, at the end of the day people do not have the confidence. People are not feeling safe.

And they were quite right to move Minister George from the Ministry of National Security, but it would not help. I do not want to say why it was quite right, but it would not help—unless he provokes me here today.

Sen. Singh: Provoke him! Provoke him!

Sen. George: He is talking such nonsense, I would not waste time on him.
Sen. F. Hinds: I hear him grumbling—[Interruption]

Sen. Cudjoe: As usual.

Sen. F. Hinds: I hear him grumbling, as usual. Mr. President, they, as we know—we have articulated it here a thousand times—as they came to Government they butchered the jobs of about 5,000 people. Right now there is a VSEP taking place in NGC, is it?

Hon. Senators: Um-hmm.

Sen. F. Hinds: The Minister spoke two minutes ago about how buoyant NGC is and how expansive and expansionist in its philosophy and it is going to do this and that, but while he is saying that there is a VSEP taking place in the NGC. Why then? It is to uproot people who they believe resemble PNM. It is true and it is happening in WASA too, a matter to which I should very shortly return.

So the people are feeling the pain and this $61 billion highfalutin talk in the Parliament means nothing to them. They are suffering at the hands of [Desk thumping] the United National Congress and its band of friends. I did not call them a gang, because when I prove to you that they commit some illegal act then I can call them a gang because the definition of gang is where two or more persons come together to do illegal acts. So I will have to establish the illegality and then I will be right able in this Senate to call them a gang and there will be no objection.

And now they are criticizing their good old friend Jack Warner. He made the UNC. He took it in his hand, he financed it and he nurtured it. Jack Warner is the UNC and the UNC is Jack Warner.


Sen. F. Hinds: They are inextricably “bound like snake, dey wrap up with one another”.

Sen. Singh: “Yuh know it from the Balisier.”

Sen. F. Hinds: They cannot avoid each other. They are all, as Dr. Williams may have said in his very potent way, colloquial as he could have been: “Dey are all a-a-alligators from the same dutty lagoon—all.”

All this is why I hark back to what my leader said about the question of integrity and that conversation that is taking place in this country where everything is about “eat-ah-food, and like if money is meh God and everything is only about money.” How much more do you want? How much more do you want? How much food can you eat? How many pairs of shoes could you wear?
Mr. President, but I am fully aware, as a criminal law practitioner, as a man experienced in the ways of the human being, all things taken into account, that my placating them in these terms would not stop them. I only have to let them know, when we go to Government, if you left footprints and fingerprints and any electronic prints, we will come after you. Understand that! It is as simple as that. In defence of the public interest, we will.

All the people of this country want and we are not going to get it and none of them spoke about it, is that you will govern fairly; you will govern honestly; you will be productive. We ask you as well, as we have highlighted in the crime talks we have had, this question of urban renewal. People have to feel good about where they live. Those of us who live in decent communities, you do feel a sense of pride about that. Wherever people are, we have a responsibility to make the place better so that they can feel proud about where they live.

That is why we embarked upon an urban renewal project in the east Port of Spain area. We spent about $60 million buying property from businesses down on South Quay and Independence Square, buying it out. We bought buildings from some home owners in the Clifton Hill area—land acquisition; not to give away money like they are doing on the Point Fortin highway route where, there, money allocated for land acquisition jumped from about $300 million to $1.4 billion inexplicably.

We did that to get a footprint and to establish the Clifton Hill Towers, which we did. The people are very proud and the plan was to keep rolling back and to keep doing it. That is why in the 1960s what was La Cour Harp—we built Teschier Terrace, apartments all over Laventille, Dorata Street, Charford Court. “Wherever there were old houses and barrack yard houses, we bought them out, break them down and put proper dwellings for people and today they say we have done nothing.”

In doing that urban renewal project, you create jobs for the people in the very communities—sustainable jobs, not to go down there and offer them $69 a day; hands up, hands out in a Colour Me Orange.

The Prime Minister told this country—when we asked her here about Colour Me Orange, she and her Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs, Dr. Moonilal—that they were going to introduce right after the state of emergency the Colour Me Orange Programme, Mr. President, and that they will create 20,000 jobs. The Prime Minister said that, and that they will spend $300 million. Am I speaking the truth, Sen. Beckles?
Sen. Beckles: Absolutely correct! \[Desk thumping\]

Sen. F. Hinds: In the event—

Mr. 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. G. Singh]

Question put and agreed to.

12.45 p.m.

Sen. F. Hinds: Thank you. I just want briefly to elucidate upon a comment made by my friend, Sen. Dr. Henry, when he responded to the Minister of Finance and the Economy in this House. He highlighted a Super Industrial Services Limited press statement where they, in an advertisement, told the country that all these set of contracts “allyuh blaming we for we eh get” and so on, and they put out an ad. Sen. Dr. Henry was able to demonstrate that even the ad was not correct because under the same EFCL of which I spoke, in which there is massive corruption and bid rigging—it is $54 million in contracts SIS got. That was not in the ad; “not all ah that”.

NGC: the same NGC the Minister spoke about, 26 million—all this is within the last three years “eh”, and against the background of the fact that when I challenged SIS and the Government here about the Siparia market, and pointed out that the project manager’s estimate was $36 million, they granted the contract to the same SIS for $51 million inexplicably, and I showed in this Parliament—the evaluation document showed that SIS was approaching bankruptcy in 2009; had no money to support their bid. I went through that here. So it is within the last three years that this SIS has become the biggest thing. Coincidentally, SIS is the company that built the Prime Minister’s house in Philippine. That is a fact.

Sen. Singh: Mr. President, Mr. President, the hon. Senator cannot make that allegation. He has established no factual basis for that, and the Prime Minister has denied that in the public record.

Sen. F. Hinds: She has not.

Sen. Singh: In the public record.

Sen. F. Hinds: She has not.

Sen. Singh: She has.

Sen. F. Hinds: No!
Mr. President: Sen. Hinds, you have not—I have not heard any foundation for the remarks and allegations you have made representative of the Prime Minister and, therefore, imputing to her certain motives that you cannot do without presenting a Motion, a substantive Motion to debate the issue.

Sen. F. Hinds: I am obliged. Mr. President, “I ent going and argue that, you know, with him, you know.” He knows it is a fact.

Sen. Singh: “No yuh cyar say that”.

Sen. F. Hinds: I remember in the Tobago—all right. I am not—can I speak in peace?

Mr. President: You may continue. [Crosstalk]

Sen. F. Hinds: I am continuing.

Sen. Singh: Withdraw that remark! Withdraw that remark!

Sen. F. Hinds: Mr. President, I recall distinctly in the Tobago campaign, when it was put to the then house of assemblyman, Mr. Jack,—when it was put to him in documentary form that—the same SIS built his house in Tobago, the Prime Minister was on record as saying, “Jack, me and you in the same position.”

Hon. Senator: Oh Lord.

Sen. F. Hinds: I could find that. Take me to the Privileges Committee then! Take me to the Privileges Committee!

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. F. Hinds: So let me continue, let me continue. NGC, $26 billion—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: Million.

Sen. F. Hinds: Million?

Sen. Singh: “Look at yuh figures nah.”

Sen. F. Hinds:—million, sorry—54 in the EFCL. No man, yeah—26 in the NGC; NIPDEC, $233 million; under the PURE Programme, $89.3 million; WASA which my friend opposite knows well about, $205 million; PTSC to supply buses, $36 million. “Eh”? And then recently they had a big issue with bid rigging in WASA where “somehow or de other” SIS was able to get ahead of the lot, and there was an outcry from the other bidders and people in the country. They went and they stopped the contract. We have facts on that, an $800 million contract.

Sen. F. Hinds: Another one: another contractor who this Government knows well, Danny’s Enterprises, without any background in agriculture. I told you just now we distributed lands to the workers, parcelled it out. Now, Minister Moonilal is complaining that some of their friends are inflating their demands on the Government—some of the lots are costing $600,000 to develop and the Government is selling them for $50,000. That is what is going on under this Government. It is a feeding frenzy. It is madness taking place. They are raping our country, [Desk thumping] raping our economy. [Desk thumping] That is what is taking place.

Danny’s Enterprises was the beneficiary of 100 acres of State lands; no background in agriculture. Let them answer that! When I was the Minister in the Ministry of National Security, we got Cabinet to agree to give the prison service 100 acres of Caroni lands in order that it could develop different facilities—a juvenile female prison, which we do not now have; rehabilitation and drug treatment centre, as we move towards a programme for rehabilitation rather than retributive justice. They have withdrawn the lands from the prison. Take it back! The Minister of Justice, the new Minister will now know about that, “and that is all he ha to look out for”. He is the Minister for Carrera. He has nothing else to deal with, so he better check out that. [Desk thumping] Right!

So, Mr. President, I want to move because my time has really seriously run. I am raising these matters and the substantial public debt. I produced a document in this Parliament which shows the Treasury of this country—the Central Bank—is predicting, based on current trends—when I read, for example—let me just quote this for you quickly. In the Review of the Economy 2013 under the rubric “Public Debt and Debt Service”—I am quoting:

“The Net Public Sector Debt Stock is anticipated to increase by 6.9 per cent from $69,156.8 million in fiscal 2012 to $73,916.8 million by the end of the current fiscal year.”

In addition to that, under the rubric “Contingent Liabilities”, an increase of $2 billion; that is 2.988 almost three—

“...or 60.4 percent was recorded for Letters of Guarantee issued by the Government in respect of State Enterprises...”

As you know, a letter of guarantee means go ahead and borrow. They have been borrowing.
In addition to all that you hear about, I have documents where WASA is negotiating with Royal Bank now for $500 million. I have seen documents where the same EFCL raised a bond for $400 million in 2011, and is now raising a bond—if they “eh” finish yet—for another $500 million. So it is as if they are borrowing to thief.

**Sen. Singh:** Uh God.

**Sen. F. Hinds:** Borrowing! Serious public debt and contingent liabilities! It is right here in their documents, Mr. President. Right?

“Letters of Guarantee issued during the fiscal year included:”—$4.95 million to the Sports Company; $1.79 million to the Urban Development Corporation; $2.23 million, again, to UDeCOTT—right?—to Caribbean Airlines, $64 million—the same Caribbean Airlines where we lost $700 million just so. And after the CEO was removed from there, “they take him and give him ah next big wuk” in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development as chairman—[ Interruption ]

**Hon. Senator:** Chairman.

**Sen. F. Hinds:**—as chairman of the HDC. That is how they operate, and all the figures on debt are right here.

Under the PURE Programme, $250 million, which I pointed out to you a while ago, SIS is a big player. So they are borrowing to take and they are leaving—look, the NIPDEC loans that my friend, Minister Ganga Singh is familiar with, they took three loans from NIPDEC in the 1990s with that same airport that led many people to jail and led us, this Parliament to clause 34 which—by the way, Mr. President, after all the long hours of debate on the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) (Amdt.) Bill—after all the long hours; after all the furore in this country, we passed a Bill to allow people to apply for their matter to be dismissed after 10 years. The only thing that has been achieved so far from that is that these people have walked and gone.

Then we came back here and repealed that section. The other aspects of it to remove the preliminary enquiries and all that, that is still undone. The Judiciary expended a lot of time and intellect and money to train people—the DPP, lawyers—nothing has been achieved. Trinidad and Tobago is a joke under this Government. [Desk thumping] A joke, [Desk thumping] an embarrassing joke, Mr. President. [Desk thumping] And then we come here today.

Sen. Beckles filed a question dealing with multilateral funding organizations. I had the benefit of reading the answer, in terms of public debt. This Government admitted in this Parliament on November 20, 2012, as part of the social safety net programme, they negotiated US $50 million—this is with the World Bank, the IDB, the European Investment Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, and they listed it.
They were forced to answer in this Parliament—that is TT $320 million they borrowed; another $128 million for the Ministry of the People and Social Development; a neighbourhood upgrading programme, another $257 million; WASA modernization and waste water infrastructure rehabilitation, another $320 million—right!—waste water rehabilitation, again, in WASA, TT $1.5 billion or TT $240 million from the IDB; public expenditure management programme, $643 million—all these are loans—modernize capital expenditure programme management, phase 2, $115.7 million; programme to support climate change agenda, $514.4 million, all of these; another $192.9 million for the same programme; sustainable energy for Trinidad and Tobago, $385.8 million; to reduce vulnerabilities of the financial sector—financial sector supervisory and regulatory framework, $321.5 million; improving quality and efficiency in solid waste management, $160 million; a drainage programme, $514.4 million; enhancement of the civil registry, $128.6 million and, finally; another $96.45 million.

So I am only telling this country—I have just calculated for you, TT $5.642 billion. This Government is borrowing, borrowing, borrowing, borrowing—“big spend, big take, big took”—and they are a danger to the people of this country; [Desk thumping] a danger to our economy. [Desk thumping]

A citizen wrote to me, quickly, “please help us”, ugly handwriting.

Sen. F. Hinds: A citizen. “She fraid to put her name.”
Sen. Singh: Oh anonymous! Yuh reading a letter yuh wrote yuhsel’.”
Sen. F. Hinds: Yeah from CAL. She warned us. I have the letter here.
Sen. Singh: Let me see that handwriting.
Sen. F. Hinds: Yeah, for you all to go and victimize the woman and take away her job too.
Sen. Singh: “If she anonymous how we go make it out.”
Sen. F. Hinds: On the other hand—as I conclude—we saw a story in the front page of the Express—[Interruption]
Sen. Singh: “Yuh writing yuhsel’.”
Sen. F. Hinds: Big bills! A lawyer by the name of Jagdeo Singh, he billed the Ministry $1.82 million for some briefs, six opinions—$1.82 million—and instead of coming down hard on him like how he wants to come down on everybody who resembles PNM, the Attorney General found himself yesterday defending this, defending this, and hear the Attorney General. Hear the Attorney General.
Hon. Senator: Three million for the commission of enquiry.

Sen. F. Hinds: That is in addition to $3 million for the—that is their favourite son, and he has been with them for a long, long, long time, having fun, but I will tell you a little more about that just now.

Quickly, hear the Attorney General. The Attorney General said:

“I understand Mr. Singh has only been paid 50 per cent of what was in fact originally invoiced. That may very well reflect the compromise that was negotiated in the public interest.”

And hear him “eh”. Hear the Attorney General who should be defending morality as the titular head of the bar, and the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago. Hear him:

“To his credit…”

Mr. Singh’s credit.

“. . . he has not insisted on his full fees as other attorneys have regardless of the circumstances”

So he sends them big bills. The PS had a problem with it so she sent it to the PS in the Attorney General’s office, eventually—this happened a year go “eh”—Jagdeo Singh only accepted 50 per cent of his fees—if that was genuine fees, who could get me to accept half of my fees?


Sen. F. Hinds:—from the Government, all things considered. And the Attorney General is flagging that as though it is a matter of grace and something that should be commended. “Ah tell yuh dey are all alligators from the same murky lagoon”. Defending it! But that is the same Attorney General who, when I raised the NP contract here at the beginning of our life in this Parliament, when the Prime Minister admitted in this Parliament that she stayed in Gopaul’s house—and, strange enough, Gopaul got a $40 million contract, and we complained that it was bid rigging. The Attorney General intervened, cancelled the contract, admitting thereby that it was bid rigging but never told us who did it.

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds.

Sen. F. Hinds: Mr. President.

Mr. President: Your time is up.

Sen. F. Hinds: Just to wind up.
Mr. President: Please.

Sen. F. Hinds: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, I got up here in a very calm mood today to say two things, that this Government is a “big spend, big borrow Government”; that this $61 billion does not advance the concerns and the feelings and the needs of the vast majority of people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is an opportunity for them and their friends to do harm to us.

I also got up to warn you, Mr. President, and through you, the citizens of this country, that we are borrowing exponentially and we have big bills to pay later on when they would have gone. I have delivered, Mr. President, and I thank you, and I thank God for the opportunity to have so done. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, it is now 1.00 p.m.—1.01; I intend to take the lunch break at this point and resume at 1.45 p.m. This Senate now stands suspended until 1.45 p.m.

1.02 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

1.45 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

Mr. President: Sen. Small. [Desk thumping]

Sen. David Small: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute on the debate on the Appropriation (Financial Year 2014) Bill, 2013. Before I start, I wish to acknowledge, for the record, the insightful economic masterclass of a contribution made last week by Sen. Dr. Mahabir.

Hon. Senator: Yea! [Desk thumping]

Sen. D. Small: I believe that he has clearly demonstrated that while we are always in a place where we want to be looking forward as a country, there are lessons to be learnt from the history.


Hon. Senator: Lessons to be learnt.

Sen. D. Small: Mr. President, it has been said in many fora and in different places that “God is a Trini”, and in the context of the economic analysis laid out by Sen. Dr. Mahabir, I think that this statement could actually just about be true.

Let me first state that given our energy sector reality, a record budget of $61 billion seems to be the fly in the face of the just barely stable natural gas production, and the rapidly declining crude oil production.
Hon. Senator: That is right.

Sen. D. Small: And here is why I am saying that.

Hon. Senator: Well done.

Sen. D. Small: Given the overwhelming importance of the energy revenues to our economic stability, there seems to be some putting to the side of caution. Mr. President, we could only stand here today and smile and be comfortable, because some other force has allowed us, in a situation where ammonia prices, ammonia production, methanol production declined, oil production, oil exports declined; while they declined, the prices increased. So that we have been very fortunate that at a point in time when our production declined, the prices increased. So that as far as the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy is concerned, there was a relatively stable flow of funds into the economy. Based on the data available from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs in the years 2011 and 2012, ammonia exports declined by 11.6 per cent and 4.01 per cent, respectively; ammonia prices increased by 33 per cent and 3½ per cent, respectively; methanol, methanol exports declined by 3 per cent and 4.2 per cent in ’11 and ’12 respectively; methanol prices increased by 11 per cent and then 4 per cent.

For crude, crude exports in ’11 and ’12 declined by 15 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively; crude prices increased by 16 per cent and they just about held in the following year. So what I am saying, Mr. President, is that Trinidad and Tobago has been fortunate; God really is “ah Trini”. At a point in time when production of our major exports declined, prices went up and made up the gap, and anyone or any party or any group—not political party, forgive me—anyone who wants to claim any credit for having an impact in the prices, so be it. I think that—and as far as the economics, I think Sen. Dr. Mahabir has spoken much on that, but that is my sense of it; that in a situation where we are very fortunate as a country that at the point in time when production of our primary products, major exports have declined, prices have helped us out. It has nothing to do with any policy or strategy, in my own humble view.

Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago energy sector faces a number of important challenges in the medium- to long-term, we are a mature hydrocarbon province, our operational maturity has not yet been fully leveraged into equity positions. And I know there is some action taking place on that, but over the years, we have not really maximized on that opportunity. The emergence of shale gas presents both opportunities and threats. There is a mismatch between the fiscal system and the current stage of our industry, and I am very happy to see in the 2014 budget that several measures have been put in place to begin to address this.
There are challenges that exist for the extension of gas supply contracts for existing gas-based projects. Our current gas reserve situation limits our current ability to do downstream expansion. The downstream industry has not expanded with not any new projects since 2009, and then new projects are moving at a snail’s pace; there is the Constantine LNG project, the Eastern Caribbean Gas Pipeline project, to name a couple which I keep reading in the press about. I did not hear the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs make any comment about them, but would like to find out, eventually, where they are.

On the other hand, it is not all gloom and doom, the Ministry has been very aggressive regarding the scheduling on bidding rounds, and they should be commended for this, because this is something that has not been [Desk thumping] given the appropriate attention, and the outlook is very good for the additions to the gas reserve base. I am one of those who is very optimistic about it.

So, Mr. President, my next area I want to talk about is that Trinidad and Tobago should be focusing its efforts on moving the country from being a tax collector to being an equity partner with a leadership role. I think that in that vein I support, in principle, the move to purchase the 39 per cent shareholding of ConocoPhillips in Phoenix, Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited, and the plan to take those shares and put them into a new Co and have it—place it on the stock exchange, I am fully supportive of that.

Regarding that deal, I have heard concerns about the price paid and whether or not the value proposition for the country was being maximized. My concern is that there has been precious little information in the public domain to allow for what I consider to be a rigorous examination of the merits of the transaction. However, given my own previous link with that excellent company, I think it might actually turn out—with the turning of time—to have been an excellent deal, but I still think that more information should have been put out and made public.

And the reason you want to do that, Mr. President, is that you want to do a comparative analysis. So for instance, if you had that US $600 million and you said—someone said, “listen, I can give you 10 or 15 per cent share in Atlantic Train 1, or Train 2, or Train 3”; would the returns have been greater? Without understanding the merits of the deal and the details of how this worked out, we will never know, and the issue for me also is, what is the exact strategy guiding this and other major energy decisions. For me, as far as I could find, it is not publicly known in any depth.

As I continue in the point of equity ownership, we should, as a country, be seeking, not only to invest in existing areas, but be actively planning to invest in new projects. To that end, in my professional humble opinion, the loss of the Alutrinit project
deprived the country of a potentially economically strong opportunity to enter a new industry, one in which the State was a majority shareholder. It is often said that hindsight is 20/20, but I base my views on my professional understanding of the details of which I was very much involved in the details at the time, and from where I sat, that was an opportunity that could have matured and done very well. Things change.

So that, Mr. President, in looking forward, if we want to look forward and say—perhaps the State is saying, “Listen, we want to invest in any potential new LNG project”, I would strongly recommend that the State take a significant shareholding, perhaps even a controlling share.

**Hon. Senator:** I agree.

**Sen. D. Small:** Yeah. And to back this there are many ways you could do this; there are the economics and finance people here. The Government can say, “Listen, we can use the cash flows from the project to back our investment”, or “we could negotiate for a partial carry based on the project regarding our outputs from the project and use, let us say the first two/three years of output to repay our CAPEX. There is more than one way you can do it, and I have sat in enough rooms doing energy negotiations to know what is possible, it is just a matter of understanding what you want and being very clear about it.

But that brings me to a bigger issue, one which I have discussed with my senatorial colleague, Dr. Mahabir, the economics expert. There is a critical capacity-building issue to do with the capability of the local financial sector to get involved in the financing of energy projects.

**1.55 p.m.**

Mr. President, I understand there are some challenges around the Central Bank requirements, however, I am of the view that the building of financial sector capability in this area, if it was taken up as a Government strategy, special arrangements could be put in place to facilitate same. Of course, the initial entry would likely be in partnership with a major international bank, such as BNP Paribas or Calyon, but I think it is something that we should really explore a little deeper. If the Government chooses this strategy, they could really get local financing institutions on board. Critically, this would allow the local banks to step up their game and really get entrenched in the financing of energy projects in Trinidad and Tobago, and possibly elsewhere, but it has to begin with some clear strategy and push by the Government of the day.

Given the situation with the limited financial capacity and aforementioned regulatory limitations, I believe the Government should have a specific energy sector plan in mind to increase domestic financial capacity. I want to tie this into
some of the activities that are going on now. There is a golden opportunity that we should really be looking on. The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs in his contribution mentioned $2.5 billion in FDI. This is what we need. You want to try to get your local financing sector, this is the time. The Government should strongly consider utilizing the fact of these large expenditures made by multinationals over the next couple of years in the upstream to fast-track the development of this specific financial capability initiative. I think that is something, at the very least, which should be explored because you have the opportunity now. There is a bunch of activity happening now and forecasted to happen over the next 24 to 36 months.

Mr. President, I move on to what I call the gas future. For the record, like many of the prognosticators, I am of the view that there is quite a bit of natural gas still waiting to be discovered in our offshore licensed areas. I certainly am of the view that Trinidad and Tobago is not running out of gas any time soon. Given the recent Ryder Scott study and the outcome of it—13 TCF, nine years RTP—there is the normal usual concerns expressed in the media and other places. What is most times not explained is that the RTP ratio is a snapshot of where the industry is at a particular point in time. While the RTP may be nine years, it does not mean that gas would end in nine years’ time. What it means is that current production levels may only likely be sustained for that period, if we do absolutely nothing for the next nine years, and the industry is not like that. In my view there is no need to panic. There is need for action, and based on the things that are happening in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, I am seeing the action is taking place.

So the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has expressed his confidence and the Ministry’s technical team’s confidence in both the existence of and the likelihood of finding new reserves in the current exploration efforts. Given that there is some reasonable optimism about the gas reserves outlook, the question I ask in that scenario is: what is the plan and when will we plan? Do we plan now so that if the exploration is successful we already have a plan ready to roll out or do we wait until the gas is found and then begin to plan?

The business model used in the past has seen the State collect most of its earnings from upstream taxes and minimizing its exposure to capital risk by only taking a minimal equity position. I wish to respectfully suggest that this approach may need some rethinking, if only on the basis of the absolutely massive revenues generated by LNG projects.

Mr. President, I want to talk for a couple minutes now on—as I have been talking about planning—I want to talk about energy policy. For the purpose of trying to understand where we were with energy policy in Trinidad and Tobago, I visited the
website of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and I could not find any
document purporting to be the national energy policy. If it exists and I have
missed it, then I would await elucidation from the hon. Ministry of Energy and
Energy Affairs. What I did find on the website were several links to policy statements
on issues of local content, renewable energy, electricity, LNG, fiscal, industrial
development. Unfortunately, the majority of those links were dead. When you
clicked, there was nothing. So that if I am someone sitting far away trying to
understand what is the national energy policy of Trinidad and Tobago, there is
scant information available that you can find to understand what is the plan.

Strangely enough or goodly enough, by comparison I perused the websites of
several other Ministries, including sport, health and others and I was able to
download very comprehensive policy documents and the plans and strategies
guiding those Ministries and their actions. So from where I sit—and I am not
saying those other Ministries are not important, each Ministry has its role—but
bearing in mind the importance of the energy sector, where is the national energy
policy? On what basis are we making decisions? Further I perused several and many
speeches of the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, and it is in there that I
learned the Ministry is in the process of developing a natural gas master plan and they
are developing a policy paper on the natural gas sector. How that is being done, what is
the process, there is no further information.

Mr. President, I belabour the point because the energy sector is the single largest
contributor to our way of life in Trinidad and Tobago, and the absence of a publicly
accessible policy and strategy document is of huge concern to me, as it begs the
question: on what basis are things happening in the sector or not happening in the
sector? In the absence of a comprehensive plan, how can we objectively know how
well an administration is performing? It simply cannot be that we must accept verbal
assurances that all is well. Unfortunately, I am of the view that that is not good enough.

Trinidad and Tobago is now a much more politically astute society, and to the
extent that administrations want to sustain or grow support for their actions,
transparency of plans provides for a system of accountability and actually
engenders the outcomes desired by a particular government.

Energy is serious business. Trinidad and Tobago must have a national energy
policy that ensures we have plans, strategies and contingencies to ensure the continued
sustainable development of our economy. In particular, the national energy policy
should comprehensively map the strategic objectives into the medium term and
beyond. The document should detail the technical, commercial, environmental policies
and programmes on which the sectors will develop in the future.
The policy framework should allow for periodic review of the current uses of oil and natural gas, the contractual commitments and the portfolio mix of downstream industries in order to provide ongoing comparative analysis of possible alternatives or options. Critically—and this is something I am sure the Minister is addressing—the policy should be supported by an in-house model that allows for short, long and medium term analysis of the key factors that affect developments in the oil and gas industry, including linkages to global issues to cater for their impact on the country.

The Minister is well aware that Trinidad and Tobago is a member of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum, and one of the initiatives is something called a global gas model—the Minister is well aware—and within these major organizations they have a model that they map the future. They map demand, they map consumption and then they build strategies around what the future says, and it is constantly updated. This is something I think that has been long lacking in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs.

Mr. President, I move to my next topic. I want to spend two or three minutes, with your patience, explaining what I consider to be the reality of LNG in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to start off by saying that I mean no disrespect to anyone anywhere, especially the community of Point Fortin.

The reality of liquefied natural gas is that Trinidad and Tobago is an extremely small player in the business, and I will come to why I say that. The fact of Trinidad and Tobago being the physical location for the Atlantic complex and 15.2 million tonnes is often touted by all and sundry. But what does that mean? The fact is that the State through two special purposes subsidiary companies owned 100 per cent by the NGC, owns roughly 908,000 tonnes of the 15.2 million tonnes capacity, or the mathematics works out to be just a little less than 6 per cent of Atlantic LNG’s capacity. That is what Trinidad and Tobago owns, 6 per cent of the capacity.

Further, it gets a little worse, because as of now, the majority of the 908,000 is marketed on NGC’s behalf, because of certain arrangements in place. I am well aware that they are working to change some of those arrangements, but as of today the vast majority of those volumes is marketed on NGC’s behalf because of certain arrangements in place. It means that the State, the Government, the people have a small role in the ownership and a minimal role, and an even smaller role in the marketing. We really have little control over what happens with LNG.

These are not new facts, and they have not, in my view, been properly presented to the public. In my respectful opinion, these facts could have gone a long way in dealing with an ongoing perception by another Caribbean country about failed Government promises to supply LNG. You cannot supply what you do not have.

Sen. D. Small: But that is another matter to be taken up at another time.

I often hear statements about our LNG going here and our LNG earning these prices there, and I guess it depends on what is the meaning of “our”. I suppose since it is physically located in Trinidad and Tobago, then we could consider it ours; but in terms of control or operation or revenue sharing, it is in a very minor sense ours.

It goes further. Mr. President, of the 18 countries in the world with domestic LNG production who have a national oil company or state entity, Trinidad and Tobago at 6 per cent has the smallest state equity share. I have a table outlining that information that I can pass to the Clerk to provide copies for anyone else who is interested to understand where Trinidad and Tobago is and where the other countries are. Let us say that the next country with the next smallest share is just about 22 per cent. So we are nowhere near in the ballgame with LNG where we should be, in my humble opinion.

Here is where it gets interesting, because for me I have always said that you need to understand the pie. Atlantic LNG is a huge business. For information, a standard cargo, 145,000 cubic metres, leaving Point Fortin and going to, let us say, the UK and obtaining a sales price of $8 per million Btu is valued roughly at US $21 million, $135 million—one cargo. If one extrapolates that into an annual calculation, then the Atlantic operation is generating over TT $35 billion in gross revenues.

In the example I am using, which I also have copies of, for perusal and interrogation, I am willing to make myself available to anyone who wants to have a clarification or a question on how I have come up with those numbers. So this is my sample calculation that you can take and work out if you change the price or you change the destination, what happens to Atlantic LNG revenues. I am willing to share that with whomever, and I am available.

Further, I have taken the publicly available LNG export data and mark up prices, and based on these, in 2012, Atlantic LNG would have earned at least US $7 billion in gross revenues, which works out to a little over TT $45 billion. So we have in Trinidad and Tobago one business that is earning 75 or 80 per cent of the value in terms of pure dollars of the Government’s budget, and we are a 6 per cent shareholder. Something needs to be addressed. I am not saying what happened in the past. I am dealing with, okay, let us forget the past, let us work on what we could do. I think that is something that needs to be addressed because the pie is just too big. I am not saying the Atlantic partners are not supposed to make their
return, but I think in a situation where we have an industry in the country that is using over 60 per cent of our natural gas reserves, the majority of our natural gas reserves go to this project, and the Government as an owner is only collecting taxes and on an equity basis has 6 per cent, something is wrong with that. It needs to be addressed in some meaningful way.

There is a little sweetener, and this is where probably I am too deep in the numbers, too deep in the business. The Atlantic operation also produces natural gas liquids. On an average year they are doing about seven million barrels of liquid a year. I have done a calculation also which I am willing to share. If you sell that in its component parts of propane, butane and natural gasoline at $1, which is below the current market prices, the revenue gross on that is over TT $2 billion.

2.10 p.m.

So you are talking about a business approaching $50 billion in gross revenues, and I think that is something, if you are looking for—you know, you go places and you say look at the—you pick the big cherry. Let us go for the big cherry, and it is not going to be easy, but we are the Government, we can sit and have a conversation. At the very least, for me, we should be trying to normalize our 10 per cent shareholding, at the very bare bones.

Again, regarding my calculations and my numbers that I will make available, I have no problem, Mr. President, with anyone challenging or querying what I have put out, because I would love for someone who has the correct information, to come back and put it back and correct me. I lay that down because it is not that these numbers are correct, but if someone wants to correct them try and put the correct numbers and I am sure that everyone will be happy to hear the corrected numbers. It might be more than what I am saying. “Yeah.”

So, Mr. President, I have touched LNG. I want to move on to the upstream. We are aware of the extreme importance of our upstream exploration drive to the long-term survival of our economy. The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs spoke to it, and I am fully supportive of the view that upstream is what drives the business. You cannot have a downstream industry without upstream production. There is no mathematics for that; that is simple, straightforward.

These actions taken by the Ministry, led by the Minister, to have the more frequent bidding rounds and putting more and more acreage up for bidding is a laudable action, I hope it is sustained, and it only speaks well for where our industry could develop going forward. That brings me to the issue I want to raise underneath there, and I call it the management of the upstream acreage or the underutilized acreage.
I now move to another key matter for me that was not addressed in any way so far. This matter has to do with the State taking forthright steps towards maximizing the exploration of our offshore acreage that is currently under contract.

When in the 1990s, led by the then energy permanent secretary, Mr. Andrew Jupiter, the Government shifted away from the ENP exploration and production contracts; ENP contracts to production sharing contracts. And one of the big selling points of the production sharing contracts was the ability that they provided to the State to reclaim unused acreage by operators which could then be put back out for bid.

Mr. President, given the current tight natural gas reserve situation one would have thought that getting new areas explored, the State would ensure that all existing acreage is being explored to the maximum to increase the country’s reserve situation. For the production sharing contracts there is a clause that requires relinquishment of unused areas after particular periods of time, but this clause does not exist in the exploration and production contracts. This is a matter that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs team would be well aware of, and for some reason, successive administrations have not made any meaningful attempt to treat with the matter in any meaningful way, in my humble view.

Mr. President, in the same way, in the very same way that underutilized assets or assets that Petrotrin could not, did not, have the capital to invest in, were excised and now form the part of an exciting onshore bidding round. There are areas offshore where companies are literally sitting on assets, but because it does not meet their internal hurdle rate, or for other reasons, they are not deciding to do work; and that is not good enough.

In his contribution on Friday Sen. Ramkhelawan suggested that in respect to land being given to persons, that if it is not under production then it should be taken back and given to someone else to produce. While the industry is different, I think the principle is the same. I understand that these areas are under contract, and like the now former Petrotrin onshore assets they contain various sizes of accumulations, but we should seek to aggressively get those assets back and put them out for bid, because while they may not be attractive, may not meet the internal investment requirement of the companies that are sitting on these assets, this should not unduly detain the State from taking, considering at the very least, this course of action.

Mr. President, releasing this underutilized acreage could unleash a mini bonanza of exploratory activity that would invigorate further the upstream sector and provide a much needed boost to the oil service sector.
The fact of our rapidly declining crude oil production, and our very tight natural gas reserves position, should empower the Government to take all the necessary actions to ensure that all available acreage is being exploited, on a time frame that is State directed, as opposed to any other course. If we are really serious about the State getting the most from all available resources, I am confident that contractual provisions notwithstanding, an accommodation can be reached to release this acreage. Or you might find that the company, when told that the Government wants it back, might decide to start to do the work. You never know. If we do not start the conversation, nothing happens.

For the record, Mr. President, during my short 22 years stay at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, I saw many and numerous advances by energy companies who came knocking at the Ministry’s doors and said, “listen we have this contract, we would like to have these terms changed”. And all that happens is that the Ministry’s team would say, “fine, let us have a discussion about it”, and to my understanding, to my recollection, every single advance there was agreement, everyone said, “fine, we would change the terms”, then everybody left the room feeling that, “listen, we got what we were looking for”.

So in my respectful view, if the State makes an approach to a company and says, “listen, we would like to have some of these terms altered so that we can release this acreage”, and it is an end that is clearly in the national interests, then such should be pursued with haste.

Mr. President, the likely response to this would be for some parties to raise sanctity of contract. And I am not an attorney, there are several attorneys in the room here today, but I understand this. [Crosstalk] If the parties to a contract agree to alter the terms, I see no issue. I see no issue. This is as opposed to unilateral action by one party against the other, which would clearly bring on some of these concerns.

So, the issue of sanctity of contract is not an issue. There is nothing that stops the Government, the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, knocking on the door saying “listen, there is this acreage, there is this asset in there, we know it is there, you know it is there, you are not producing it”. Because we have a situation, Mr. President, where I do not want initially—I am seeing where companies are saying that, you know, companies are essentially sitting on assets and waiting for the fiscal system to improve so that it is beneficial for them to go and drill. I am saying take it away from them and put it out for bid. You would be surprised as to how many companies would actually be interested in that same asset.
I think that we have gotten to a stage where some companies, because of size and other issues, have been able to bend the system; there is a fear to approach them. If we have a problem, send me to talk with them. [Laughter] They may not—“yeah”, because I will be very straight and very blunt. [Desk thumping] Thank you very much for that. I move on.

Mr. President, I am not sure how I am doing for time, but I have a few, one or two, more issues to talk about.

Hon. Senator: No, you have time.

Sen. Al-Rawi: You have good time.

Sen. D. Small: I want to talk about the natural gas downstream sector. The downstream natural gas sector is one of the most important and significant achievements in our energy history. The thinking, the strategy, the decisions taken and their timing have seen our country become host to an economically important and globally benchmarked industrial sector.

In my short time at the Ministry of Energy before moving on to other things, I had the privilege of being overseas on the Government’s business on numerous occasions, and every single time you go to countries, people were in awe, they were amazed at how Trinidad and Tobago was able to do what we were able to do. It was not perfect, but people were able to say, “listen, we are impressed with what you were able to do”. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Senator: The only perfect person here is [Inaudible]

Sen. D. Small: Within these achievements there was an opportunity to leverage them into new and additional growth. Last year, as the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs mentioned in his comments, that the methanol—SABIC was awarded the two methanol downstream RFPs, and they could not come to terms with the National Gas Company for pricing and those projects went away, and the Minister dealt with all the other projects, the EM2 which is limping along, and the Mitsubishi/Neal & Massy project which is brand new.

The point that I am making, in the same way that the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs said, over 10 years one project from 2009 to when the DME project is supposed to start, will be eight years before the next project starts. That has nothing to do with anything about Government or policy, that is just the gestation period of these projects, but we need to understand that if we want to shorten that gestation we need to have more projects. You want to have more projects, you need to have more gas, but if you want to have more gas, you need to have a plan, and I am going to tie all those pieces together.
Mr. President, I want to quote from the Central Bank Energy of Trinidad and Tobago Economic Bulletin July 2013. I quote:

“The US imported 4.8 million tons of methanol in 2012, 3.4 million tons of which was supplied by Trinidad and Tobago. Current US import demand and the expected increase in domestic production capacity suggests that the US may become a net exporter of methanol by 2016. Given that the US is Trinidad and Tobago’s largest methanol market, domestic producers will have to find new markets to sustain the local methanol industry.”

Mr. President, given this outlook, what are the plans to sustain our existing methanol industry? I ask this in the context of the fact that several of these plants have gas supply contracts that will come due for renewal in the medium term, and the impact of the forecast on the pricing strategy for the NGC.

Given what is publicly available, there perhaps needs to be some policy direction from the Government to guide the NGC. As in my own short experience with the NGC—and I am told the experience of several companies—the NGC’s negotiating stance is one that is very much focused on its own individual bottom line, but upon analysis may be sub optimal to the national development plans of the country, if such exist. I think clarification on the status of these matters should be provided by the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs either informally or I will do the appropriate questions at the appropriate time.

Mr. President, in the same vein, there are two projects that have been reported on in the press repeatedly over the past couple of years that seem to have just stalled in their progress. Every few weeks David Renwick is writing a story about something called the Konstantin medium scale LNG project, and the Eastern Caribbean Gas pipeline. These projects have been on the table for some time both of which target the Caribbean market. Given the challenges being faced by our Caribbean brothers and sisters, I would have thought that the State would be fast-tracking, to the extent possible, the approval of these projects.

The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs did not mention these projects, so I would love to get an update from him on this at some point in time.

In terms of gestation period, Mr. President, I understand that the Konstantin medium scale energy project would be ready 30 months from Government approval of a gas supply. At a reported requirement of 80 million cubic feet per day, and with all of the reported benefits, I am struggling to understand why the approval for this project is taking—approaching three years. From public statements by the company, they have, since August 2012, completed their feasibility study and are ready to go, pending all of the usual approvals of which the most critical is the gas supply.
The Eastern Caribbean Gas Pipeline Project has also been experiencing similar challenges as the Konstantin in terms of its ability to get an approved supply of gas from the Government. Given that these two projects target different countries in the Caribbean market, and offer gas delivery in different ways, they present a mix of supply options for those Caribbean countries wanting natural gas.

I understand that the NGC has been offered the opportunity to be an equity partner on the Konstantin project across the full value chain, whilst the NGC is already, a shareholder, an equity partner in the ECGP project.

If the delay in approving the gas supply for these projects is because of a shortage of gas, then I want to challenge that. Someone has to convince me of that because from my simple understanding of the gas situation in the country, the volumes for these two projects total just around, a little over 100 million SCFs per day today, and where we are in a situation where all the recent finds plus all of the work that is happening, the forecast is robust that by 2016 we are likely to have quite a bit of gas, and these projects, their timeline is 2016 and beyond. So that 100 million SCFs right now in the current mix where we are doing a little over 4 BCFs per day is not a hard ask. So I do not think the issue is availability of gas. I would love to understand what the issue is. People are willing to do a project, it is ready to go, it has multiple benefits for Trinidad and Tobago and for the Caribbean neighbours. And from the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, I would like to get a response because for me I think that those are two easy little projects that could have been approved and could have been running. I am not aware of any other issues, but I am sure the hon. Minister would help me with that.

Oh, I have one or two more issues. Mr. President, compressed natural gas. I am pleased to see the move to expand—to see that the move to expand CNG is finally getting some momentum. Finally. The economics of CNG are easily justified. The major challenge has been the history of the efforts so far, and most importantly, something that has been avoided, or just not seen by everyone who is involved from day one, is the upfront cost of the conversion unit.

2.25 p.m.

Successive administrations have not been able to expand this programme because of ignorance of the fact that while the public are generally aware of the better economics they are not in a position or willing to put the $10,000 upfront, to put it out. That is the major stumbling block to broad-base—people understand that you will save the $10,000, you will recoup it over a year, but finding the
$10,000 cash now to pay, they cannot. So I am happy to see that this latest initiative is dealing with the service station issue upfront, and as well as the 100 per cent tax allowance, but this still does not deal with the initial cash outlay which to me requires some innovation to get people on board.

Perhaps, and I have a suggestion, perhaps the State could consider having FCB offer a financing facility on very soft terms. And you do it in a one-stop shop approach, where people who want to get CNG conversion, the same way you go to a new car dealer, you go there, the new car is where you see it, and then the bank person is right there, you sign and you get your loan approved. You go into the store, I want to have CNG converted to my car, you see the banker, the banker is there, you provide the documents—everything is done, you get it done right away. I think that is something that can be explored, because we have to understand that people are resistant to moving with CNG, because they cannot find $10,000 cash to pay upfront. I mean for me the economics—probably I am just a simple person and I see that very clearly or perhaps that needs to be explored.

Also, taking a clear lead by the State or even Members of the Cabinet to convert their vehicles to CNG would do the public messaging of the benefits a world of good, a world of good. So I am just asking that the Government think about my suggestions in this area to see whether or not they are workable. But I really think that we have to understand that the $10,000 upfront cost is the real stumbling block to the adoption of CNG. Now that we have the service station issue under control and will be under control, we need to address the other parts of it.

Oh, here we go, Mr. President, Loran-Manatee. For the benefit of those—I have no conflict here because I was actually part of the negotiating team for many years on this, so I understand these issues with some depth, and I am glad that the Minister dealt with the history of going back all the way to ‘74 and the delimitation agreement. I mean this is what it is. So the Minister has dealt with those things. So, let me come to speed. So I am not going to talk about the MoUs and all the—those are things the Minister dealt with and we have that in the records.

Here is my concern, Mr. President. We are at a stage where we are very close to doing this deal, and you do a signing ceremony and statements are issued. When statements are printed in the press and there is no clarification from our side, then, like me, I am reading it, I am waiting for the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs’ response, and I had to wait a few days before I heard his response, and then a couple more days to get the complete details. So for me the
appropriate bill, 2013  
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[sen. small]
gap, the few days wait, all i am saying is the comments of minister ramirez, and he is entitled to make his comments, and i am going to come to that, but i think that because two or three days passed or how many days passed, i was wondering why it is we are signing a deal. to me, on the basis of the available information—we live in the information age; if you do not tell me what the deal is i have to believe what i see in the newspaper. or, if it was reported by fox news or by reuters, i have to think there is some merit in it. that is what i am thinking and that is what i went with until the hon. minister, only today, presented a full outline of where the process is, and for the record, what he presented is my understanding of where it should be. [desk thumping]

sen. cudjoe: “doh break it apart.”

sen. d. small: but perhaps it is also important for people to understand how this works. the long explanation is good, but here is the short version. a field was found, it straddles the border, we agreed that it may be possible for us to explore it. an agreement to do that was signed. then we set up technical groups to say listen, what is the size of the field, what is in it and then what is on your side, what is on my side. technical teams took about three years to do that and then everybody signed an agreement, we agree this is the size, this is yours, this is mine. we are at the stage now where we are saying okay, the way to drill a field—you would not want someone drilling on trinidad side and on venezuela side; you will have one party operating, but how they do it, when they do it, how many wells, what is the drawdown rate, those are the things that are being discussed now. that will come together in a plan and that has to be approved by the ministers. how many wells you are going to drill, which company is going to do it, what is the schedule, which month, that is the short version of it. it is not anything for me probably because i have been in it—[interruption]

sen. singh: what is mine is mine.

sen. d. small: yeah. so that i want to say for me, mr. president, is that the big issue in this—and this is why i come back to the lack of a policy or lack of a plan, at least one that i could see and interrogate, because do not tell me this is the policy; if i cannot interrogate it, it is not a policy, it is words.

mr. president, the issue is that the venezuelans, and i want to make a comment. i have had the pleasure of being on the negotiating team to negotiate with the venezuelans. they are some of the most patriotic, hardworking and professional people i have ever had the pleasure of working with, both here in trinidad and tobago, in venezuela, in washington, for all sorts of other
negotiations, and here is what, the Venezuelans are very clear about what they want. They may not always get it but they were always clear. The issue for me is that the Venezuelan Minister of Energy, as is his right, has very clearly signalled to the international world what his country’s preference is for the gas: We are going to build a pipeline from here, we are going to send it in here, we are going to build an LNG plant, whether it comes out or not is irrelevant, he is able to articulate—[Interruption]

Mr. President: Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Sen. Small has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. S. Ramkhelawan]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. D. Small: Thank you, Mr. President and Members. [Desk thumping] So that—Mr. President, as I continue, I think that my concern is and the reason why I am talking about this is because the Venezuelans have been able to very clearly state what they want to do with their share of the gas. If Trinidad and Tobago is in a position to do that, I would love to hear what the plan is. From my information there is no plan right now to say if we have this gas available next year, what we are going to do with it. And that is all I am saying. Let us not knock the Venezuelan Minister of Energy for stating what his country’s plans are. He understands what they want to do and there is nothing wrong with that. Yeah?

Mr. President, I have one other comment I want to make, because having contributed well over 10 years to the development of this initiative with one goal driving, I am sure my former colleagues at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the public at large would be disappointed, if not outraged, at any outcome that does not see Manatee gas flowing into Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senator: Exactly.

Sen. D. Small: Mr. President, I also want to share something, because there has been much talk in the press and other places about the length of time that we have taken to get here. I want to quote from—a quote made by Prof.—a leading scholar, Dr. David M. Ong who is a professor of international law at the University of Essex in England and author of “Joint Development of Common Offshore Oil and Gas Deposits.” And I will provide the reference to the recorders if they need it. I quote:
“…it would be a mistake to construe the more stringent requirement of joint
development as an inevitable consequence of the procedural rule requiring
cooperation. While this rule obliges the parties to negotiate in good faith, it
does not necessarily imply a duty to reach a specific type of agreement.”

What he is saying, is that you can—there is no international law that says if
Trinidad and Tobago continues negotiating with Venezuela—this negotiation can go
on forever—there is nothing to compel anyone to sign or reach an agreement. So that
we need to understand that this is the frame—those of us who have been fortunate to
operate in a diplomatic space understand that while you may have your internal
pressures to move something forward and you sit across the table, the other party may
have internal pressures to not move it forward. You cannot push, you could only
politely ask.

Hon. Senator: Correct.

Sen. D. Small: This is the nature of diplomatic negotiation. I have done enough of
them, and sometimes you are frustrated, you want things to move faster because on
your end, and then you may have political changes in a particular country, things may
happen, it may move faster, it may move slower. So if someone looks at the timeline
and asks why did it take so long, there are simple reasons for it. You cannot force it,
and then this is just the nature of how diplomatic negotiations go.

So, Mr. President, I want to talk about two other things quickly: one of those is
CO2. And I want to deal with something that I have had to actually go on international
fora in another place and defend Trinidad and Tobago for and say that I do not support.
Trinidad and Tobago has a heavy industrial base. And right now Trinidad and Tobago
is a significant producer of CO2. Right now there is an—publicly coated statistic points
to Trinidad and Tobago being amongst the highest emitters of CO2 in the world on a
per capita basis. So while I would agree that this is mathematically correct, I question
the efficacy or the usefulness of this number. For me it is a useless number, there is
nothing, just completely ineffectual and it should not detain us from what we need to
do.

Now, to qualify my statement, it is the countries and the regions described as small
island states and low lying coastal agents that would be the most affected by what is
called “sea level rise”, which is one of the most devastating effects of a CO2 warm
climate. Further information, I urge all Members to visit the website of the Caribbean
Community Climate Change Centre, they have some interesting information, especially
information around Trinidad and Tobago of how the water temperature around
Trinidad and Tobago, and all the other islands has increased over the past 50 years.
There is some really, really shocking data.
Mr. President, I wish to place on the record that according to the 2012 statistics released which is the latest available by the International Energy Agency, Trinidad and Tobago in 2010, which is the latest data available from the IEA we emitted 43 million tonnes of CO2. When compared to the world total of 31 billion tonnes, Trinidad and Tobago’s share of this is one-tenth of one per cent. So while Trinidad and Tobago may be contributing we are insignificant in terms of the world emissions, one-tenth of one per cent.

So, Mr. President, moving on, I also wish to state my support for the proposal of industry veteran, Dr. Persad, for CO2 capture and reuse in enhancing the recovery potential of onshore oil deposits. As Dr. Persad has been tirelessly, advocating, the CO2 flooding has emerged as one of the most effective ways of improving oil recovery. Given the dramatic and ongoing decline in onshore oil production, perhaps, this should be given some further examination in more detail as it has the potential to reduce our CO2 footprint and at the same time increase our crude oil production. As Dr. Persad would say: “Let us just do it.”

**Hon. Senator:** You have 10 minutes again.

**Sen. D. Small:** Yeah, good, thanks. Mr. President, I want to talk about information. Over the years I have always struggled with the way the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has presented information and too often numbers are presented in an aggregate form, and given the historical role of oil and gas in fuelling our country’s development and the forecast that this will continue at least into the medium term, one of the key reasons why, seemingly, so few people understand the energy business has to do with how and the way in which information is presented. I think that given the importance of the sector a breakout section of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy’s report or they could create a report that should detail all of the revenues earned from all sections of the energy sector. It could be simple in my view, I am not sure how they capture the data or how it is recorded, to have a little table that says listen, revenues from the energy sector:

1. Government revenues from LNG broken out into upstream royalties, corporation and other taxes, upside sharing.
2. Government revenues from ammonia broken out into its component parts, upstream royalties, taxes from gas sales, corporation taxes and same for methanol and urea.
3. Government revenue from crude oil exports.
4. Government revenue from refined oil products, different.
Mr. President, it continues to be a jigsaw puzzle to put together a comprehensive picture and tabulation of our energy sector revenue situation. I do not think this is fair to citizens. I understand one of the initiatives brought forward is the EITI extractive industries initiative which is intended to provide for transparency of the revenue streams emanating from the energy sector. I would really be hopeful to see the outcomes of this initiative as it relates to this matter.

Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago is not an insignificant player in the oil and gas business. In recognition of this fact that we are players in the global business, our strategies should be global. In concert with what I consider to be a major piece lacking in the energy strategy/policy of successive administrations, we should be seeking to leverage our energy industry experience into a higher level of global business connectedness.

2.40 p.m.

This approach will require some capacity building to what I call, what is often termed, the Trinidad and Tobago incorporated, which would allow us to begin to understand how we can meaningfully influence the thinking of overseas decision-makers to our advantage. I want to stop here and just spend one minute.

It is important for us to understand, while we have major companies operating in Trinidad and Tobago, the decisions that affect Trinidad and Tobago by these companies, do not happen in Trinidad and Tobago. They do not happen in Trinidad and Tobago. The major companies that are here, the persons in charge, very good professionals, know what they are doing but the decisions are not made in Trinidad and Tobago. And if we really want to affect how we plan going forward, we do not have to worry about the CEO here or the managing director here, we need to worry about the CEO in London, yeah, or wherever the head office is. Those are the people we really need to influence. Because the guy here, very good guy, respectful guy, knows his stuff; he could only transmit information to those powers that be and I think this is where we need to look as a country and try to leverage our experience.

Mr. President, I have spent a lot of time in the energy diplomatic space, and my experience of how countries are able to leverage their energy situation, whether as a net exporter or net importer, suggests that we in Trinidad and Tobago have much to learn, but much to gain, provided that there is a clearly articulated policy direction. And the goals in this area—it cannot be done in an unstructured, unplanned manner, which explains our lack of success in this area to date.
Mr. President, I firmly believe that being proactive in this reshaping of the regional and international economic and power relationships for Trinidad and Tobago is critical. Over several decades, this country has built broad-based and sometimes deeply-rooted relationships with our Caribbean neighbours, the USA and Europe, which is backed by our energy exports. We should ensure that we assert ourselves and maximize upon the development opportunities for our country.

Mr. President, the natural resources of Trinidad and Tobago belong to all citizens, not to any administration, or energy company, or any other group or entity. The Government of the day is responsible for managing its resources for the benefit of all. The Government of the day must be held to account for ensuring citizens fully understand the economic value being generated, as well as the applications to which these revenues are being put. That responsibility requires a duty of care to all citizens. This duty of care extends to the provision of user-friendly data and information on all aspects of the energy industry in a timely manner.

Mr. President, I also want to place on record that in my 22 years’ experience of working in the civil service, in particular my colleagues at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, that they are some of the hardest working professionals and patriotic citizens with whom [Desk thumping] it has been my pleasure to work, and they are uniquely placed and skilled to support the initiatives of the Government of the day, as they have always been.

In the same vein, Mr. President, the civil servants at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular, have been without doubt, the most critical cog in supporting the international energy agenda of the Government of the day and I want to publicly thank both groups for their past and ongoing nameless and faceless contributions to our country’s development.

Mr. President, in closing, I want to say one thing. Trinidad and Tobago is a base of opportunity. We have a huge base upon which we can build, but you cannot build if you do not plan and this is where I am—my biggest concern is that decisions are being taken. I hear about projects happening, projects not happening. What is the policy action? What is guiding and on what basis is the DME project the best project to go? I am not saying it is bad, but I am saying: on what basis? The basis was not shared. It was announced and it was good, wonderful. For me, that is not good enough, and I am not saying the project is bad, I am repeating that. All I am saying is help me with the framework. If we do not have a framework for planning, then we are just doing things ad hoc and you
cannot run a multibillion-dollar business in an ad hoc manner and this is where my biggest concern is. There should be some plan, some policy that is publicly available that can stand the test of a rigorous review and examination. I would volunteer to begin that; I am sure Dr. Mahabir will jump in, because this is the basis of a democracy.

Mr. President, the framers of our Republican Constitution, when they looked at how they would form this bicameral system that we operate within, there was a certain level of responsibility placed upon us as the Independent Senators to be the guardians, in my view, to try to make sure that, even if things are happening in a particular way, at the very least, we inform the public of what our opinion is.

Unfortunately, I am a student of several things. I am a student of Government. I am concerned about the way in which things are being run and insofar as I have information—it might be that it is actually running well; but, based on what I am aware of, I am not convinced and I am concerned for Trinidad and Tobago. I have a nine-year-old and an 11-year-old, and I want them to experience, at the very least, what I have experienced with the good things in Trinidad and Tobago and the good things in Trinidad and Tobago are driven by the energy industry, to the extent that the energy industry is managed properly by people with skills, people with history. It is important, because you cannot run this business without understanding how it got here and appreciating it. There are mistakes that we made, you just fix the mistakes. So with those few words, Mr. President—

[Interrupt]

Sen. Al-Rawi: And many thoughts.

Sen. D. Small:—I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President: Minister of National Security. Or, sorry, before you start, Minister of National Security, I did mention that there was an announcement I had to make that I had deferred to later in the proceedings. I have now before me further correspondence from His Excellency the President.

SENIOR'S APPOINTMENT

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA O.R.T.T., S.C., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T., S.C
President.
TO: MR. DON SYLVESTER

WHEREAS Senator Dr. the Honourable Bhoendradatt Tewarie is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, DON SYLVESTER, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 23rd September, 2013 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Tewarie.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann’s, this 23rd day of September, 2013.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Don Sylvester took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

APPROPRIATION
(FINANCIAL YEAR 2014) BILL, 2013

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, very much, Mr. President and hon. Senators, for the opportunity to address this Chamber and to contribute to the debate surrounding the 2014 Appropriation Bill.

It is not the first time that I have been privileged to speak in this Senate. Several years ago, when I was appointed as a temporary Senator, on several occasions I did speak, but at that time I was actually looking—I had to look to my right to see Mr. President. Now I am looking to you from my left. But regardless of which side you stare at, I think it is equally important to ensure that we know that all individuals who are here, it is important to ensure good governance and where the country is governed in an appropriate manner.

Rather than turn my contribution into that of trying to defend aspects that others would have spoken about and to regurgitate problems as to who did what and who did anything wrong, I think the focus should really be not what we did wrong but what we intend to do to get it right.

I noted the statement was also made that it takes nine months for someone to hold the post of a Minister of National Security after getting their feet wet, to understand the role and function, which is the concern for me being the fourth Minister of National Security.
Sen. Singh: Who raised that?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Well no, I wish to advise the proposed candidate for St. Joseph that I do not intend to wait nine months. I will do it in nine days. [Desk thumping]

In my tribute to Brigadier General Joseph Theodore—[Interuption]

Sen. Hinds: “Take care it doh have ah nine nights.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Nine nights. [Laughter] I wish also to state that during my tribute to Brigadier General Theodore, I also heard mention that, when I said that I was looking forward to General Theodore acting as my special advisor—[Interuption]

Sen. Hinds: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—that it was noted that I need advice, and I think therein lies the problem. Arrogance and perception that you feel that you know it all is what has caused us to be where we are. We need advice. We need support. We need cooperation and collaboration and that, I am very proud to say, I am always willing to do. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Hinds: Sounding good, sounding good.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: What is required to justify national security in this 2014 Appropriation Bill is, again, for funds to be utilized effectively. It is not just billions of dollars being spent. There should be four principles to effectively reduce crime and it has to do with leadership, management, measurement of performance and accountability.

The leadership—one entails that we keep pointing fingers at each other to put the blame game as to what is going wrong. While I sit in this chair, I have no intention to spend time to attack the Opposition and to show concern as to what it is that they did wrong. What I intend to do is to look at the policies, analyze them and come up with the correct policies and procedures. So, going back to all the things that we continue to hear about with SAUTT and the OPVs and all of that, if there is good that came out of any of those things, instead of trying to politicize national security policies, which we have done incorrectly for far too long, what we need to do is to look and select the right policies and have them effected.

I also hear a lot of the “enemy” and who the enemy is. While I stay here, I have no intention to look at anyone, any Member of Parliament, as an enemy. I think I know what an enemy is more than anyone else. When I was at Sandhurst, we
were in the heart of the IRA. When you have individuals who try to put an improvised explosive device under your vehicle while you are in London, that is an enemy. When I was in Haiti and shots were being fired at you, then you know who the enemy is. When I was in the attempted coup and you had the enemy of the State trying to destabilize our country, that is the enemy.

What we have here are political opponents and each and every individual, they are actually looking towards making this a better country for all of us. So I do not see anyone here as the enemy. I think the concern that I see here is when we continue to do this and consider people enemies in this House or anywhere, and then we walk outside and we laugh “gip-gip”, there are hundreds of thousands of citizens who do not see that, and they now take that hatred and that bitterness and that is what has affected us moving forward because the enemy, I always say, are those individuals, not on the other side of the parliamentary bench but those who deprive the citizens of this country of their fundamental right of safety and security. And that is who I would consider the enemy. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. Hinds:** “Yuh going good, yuh sounding good.”

**Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:** “Yuh like it?” Good leadership also involves accepting responsibility and leading by example. Mr. President, to ensure that we are successful also involves good management. Without good management all the goodwill, all the well-structured policies, would be of no use.

For too long, the Ministry of National Security—we have been hit by poor administration, poor logistics and poor operational structures. It makes no sense to have billions of dollars in national security when you have a coast guard vessel that would be moored for months because of a simple part that is required and then it just escalates and at the end of the day, you have national security assets that are not being utilized but you have billions of dollars. We need to find out what is the procedure to ensure good management so that the tools that are required by the law enforcement agencies can be implemented.

**2.55 p.m.**

Going into measurement of performance: again, if this is not done, there can be recommendations for a dozen blimps, 50 OPVs, but if you cannot measure performance—this will also ensure in assisting in the transfer of personnel, demotion and suspension. But more so, Mr. President, measurement of performance must not just be seen as an avenue for discipline. Measurement of performance can also, and should also, be seen to ensure promotion and rewards.
for efforts above and beyond the call of duty, and I think that is what we have been lacking for too long. Law enforcement officers need to know, “listen, if you measure my performance, apart from using that as a stick method, give me the carrot to show what can be done and what would I be rewarded with if it is that my performance is measured.”

The fourth principle lacking, and I intend to put emphasis on, is accountability—accountability from vehicle maintenance and being accountable to your force, your division and what is done and, again, to stop passing the buck. This accountability must be demanded from the most junior person in the defence force and the protective services, to even the Minister of National Security.

There are five basic walls that we keep looking at for national security and, again, all of it, we need to reinforce those walls—from intelligence gathering, upon which it can act as a preventative measure, to deterrence through law enforcement, to the arrest procedure to ensure that you have proper evidence, to conviction, and then finally, to proper rehabilitation, which brings me to the point, Mr. President, of the three specific crime prevention methods. Many people speak about anti-crime plans and anti-crime initiatives, but criminology is not based on common sense and a level head. Criminology and basic security management for national security is a science. It involves empirical testing, data research methodology, upon which only then can you utilize your limited national security resources in an effective and efficient manner.

The three primary elements for crime prevention would involve— the first one, primary, is what I intend to spend a lot more time on, that being in national security. Primary crime prevention involves the deterrent, intelligence, law enforcement, apprehension, and providing those mechanisms to make that concept—that individuals feel that they can commit crime with the likelihood that they cannot be caught—you provide those mechanisms around and you make it difficult for that individual, and if he does, you can have that mechanism to arrest that individual.

The secondary crime prevention measure and, again, it is not—National Security, the Ministry, we have a lot of that in the secondary crime prevention. That deals with the social aspects. It is not something that should be underestimated or taken as a secondary measure, but dealing with the social aspects of crime prevention—that is, utilizing the energies of individuals away from a life of crime— involving education, health, sports and all other aspects that they can use, I think that is also very important.
My concern in secondary crime prevention is that, unfortunately, we have stigmatized certain areas in Trinidad and Tobago. We see areas that we call hot spots, and I think it is unfortunate and it is a disrespect to places where you stigmatize an area only because of the irregular, irrational behaviour by a few.

**Sen. Al-Rawi:** Well said. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:** Mr. President, this goes to a concept that was actually utilized by the PNM Government, I think in 2003, which involved the weeding and seeding—it works hand in hand—that primary crime prevention measure that we will be focused on in the budget of those assets, but you need to weed out the criminal elements and then, only then, would it be beneficial to have proper seeding facilities for others in society.

The tertiary crime prevention measure and, again, this was initially under the Ministry of National Security—but it is no longer there for obvious reasons—has to do with the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system, again, that is the tertiary crime prevention, whereas the primary involves national security, from the deterrence to the arrest procedure. Immediately on the arrest, it is then handed over to the Ministry of Justice. So National Security and Justice will then work hand in hand. Whereas from the arrest procedure, I then hand it over to the Ministry of Justice. They then deal with—from the arrest, proper conviction, and then the sentencing to ensure proper rehabilitation.

Mr. President, looking at the situation we have now in our prisons, our recidivism rate, arguably, is one of the highest in the world and it shows the importance for the criminal justice system. Why we actually formed a Ministry of Justice is because you have persons—you go through the national security apparatus, you arrest the individual, you then send them to prison, but they come out a more hardened criminal; we are just recycling crime. So what we are actually doing now, through the Ministry of Justice, it is a very important element to ensure reduction of crime.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to—[ Interruption]

**Hon. Senator:** Mr. President.

**Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:** Mr. President, sorry, just to briefly explain the situation that comes about over and over, which is SAUTT and the OPV. Actually I heard it mentioned sometime late last week. I did not accept this position to spend time to defend what happened, and I am not here to say that I was involved in shutting down SAUTT or the OPV. For the last three years, I was the National Security Advisor and many people—just for clarification, the powers that you thought I had, I did not. [Laughter]
Sen. Beckles: “Oooh, now you have the powers.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: And with it, what I intend to do is to ensure that we utilize the correct procedures regardless of what perception people may have and put those mechanisms in place to have a safe and secure environment in our country.

Hon. Senator: That is it.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: The problem, however, unfortunately, is that SAUTT became politicized and we continue to have it like this, where we continue to make statements about SAUTT.

Sen. Singh: That is what he meant.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: I have no intention to throw out the baby with the bath water because I am fully aware of the benefits of SAUTT. But again, if it is that we want to look at SAUTT from what it was then to what we intend to extract now and we are doing, Mr. President, is the ultimate barometer for crime is the murder rate. In 2008, the murder rate was 548-odd and that was when SAUTT was at its finest. It was at its best. Again, the ultimate barometer for the crime level is the murder rate. This is not again to say that SAUTT was not beneficial. But there were certain elements, things that needed to be done, and they were not done and because of that SAUTT was affected.

From the concept of bringing in “foreign-used individuals”, they stayed and they planted themselves for several years and refused to hand over the knowledge to locals—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: How much they pay them?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—and by doing that, these individuals—50-odd being paid over $120,000 a month. When you added this, it cost the State over $100 million for these 50-odd individuals. What we have done now is to ensure that each and every member of the defence force and protective services has now acquired $1,000 monthly allowance. So almost over 12,000 law enforcement officers from Trinidad and Tobago are now benefiting from what 50 foreigners were getting.

The blimp as well. It was an excellent concept because we need that sort of air surveillance, but utilizing the blimp, how could you have a blimp and the Commissioner of Police had no input in it? And therein lies some of the concerns of SAUTT, where SAUTT came into being and there was no collaboration, there was no trust, and the benefits that we could get from SAUTT, they were lost because of that lack of communication, that lack of trust.
SAUTT became something more as being competitive rather than being of benefit to the law enforcement agencies, and it goes again with the allowance of $5,000 to individuals of SAUTT, how they were selected. It gave the perception that it was a SAUTT cabal, where they actually selected persons and there was no transparency to say, well, why Private Griffith and not Private Devant Maharaj. By doing that, it obviously would cause disharmony, lack of trust and lack of cooperation between the law enforcement agencies and SAUTT. And because of that, Mr. President, by their not working together, the value of SAUTT was lost.

However, as I said, Mr. President, you do not throw out the baby with the bath water. I have seen the value of what was in SAUTT and we intend to keep it, restructure it, and rebuild it to what was required. One I could mention was what was known as the DATS team, which basically was a counterterrorist unit, but, again, no one knew about it. We must have that frontline unit. If we could even refer to what has happened in Kenya recently, at the mall, the Kenya Special Forces actually had to seek assistance from the Israel Special Forces to deal with that situation in the mall.

**Sen. Maharaj:** Express condolences to the family.

**Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:** Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to actually express condolences to the family of Mr. Ravindra Ramrattan, who is a Trinidadian scholar, and he was actually killed in this terrorist attack in that shopping mall in Kenya.

**Sen. Maharaj:** His father was the vice-chairman of EDB.

**Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:** He received the President’s medal, I think, in 2002.

**Sen. Karim:** He is from Presentation, Chaguanas.

**Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:** Mr. President, so it actually shows that this can happen anywhere, at any time—[Interruption]

**Sen. Maharaj:** Anyone.

**Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:**—and it shows the importance of us having that counterterrorist task force that can be prepared, a SWAT-like—S-W-A-T, not S-A-U-T-T—anti-terrorist unit that will be prepared for any type of hostage negotiation, any situations where they have to do infiltration to try to extract hostages or any individual at any time. Again, this is what was in SAUTT, and we intend to have that unit, have them fully trained and prepared to ensure that they act as a deterrent and they can actually infiltrate into any operation as they see fit.
In our budget as well, we actually have armoured vehicles and other mechanisms for their training to ensure that they will be properly prepared for any eventuality. The K-9 unit in SAUTT as well, Mr. President, again, this was a powerful tool, but how often was it used with the other arms of the law enforcement agencies? So again, the K-9 unit at SAUTT must remain. We must build it and that K-9 unit will now be able to operate under the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, but that they will be used in the prisons—where they will be able to flush out all the illegal cell phones and whatever you have in the cells—and also the airports. I know many people if you go to certain airports you will have these dogs all around you and that is a powerful deterrent. We intend to utilize that same K-9 unit in the airports for all passengers entering and leaving Trinidad and Tobago.

The CSI as well. I have heard again concerns, Mr. President, that we shut down SAUTT, but the same Crime Scene Investigation Unit, that investigative team, they are still there. The individuals are all there but now under the control and command of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, more so, the acting Commissioner of Police. Even the heads—it has been stated that certain individuals, we shut down these senior persons and they were excellent. But I can refer to one. The Deputy Commissioner of Police Richardson where I have heard all sorts of negative things about him, but he was the second in command of SAUTT and he is still there in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, doing yeoman service, and actually assisting in all of the different institutions and the aspects of SAUTT that are now under the Trinidad and Tobago police.

**Hon. Senator:** And they hand-picked him.

**Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:** The air support as well, Mr. President, it is still there. The air support unit from SAUTT now is just under the National Security Operations Centre, where now, unlike what was happening before in SAUTT, they are now able to provide immediate support for any arms of the law enforcement agencies if and when required.

So, Mr. President, whether it is the counterterrorist team, the K-9 unit, the crime scene investigation, the heads, the tactical air support unit, it is all there. All the good things that we had in SAUTT, it is still there. The difference, however, is through the National Security Operations Centre. What we are doing where SAUTT was seen as competitive, something that was pulling away assets and resources and affecting the morale of the law enforcement agencies, the National Security Operations Centre will be providing all of these different arms that I just spoke about, plus ensuring that they are not going to be competitive to the other agencies, but being a communicational platform and a support element to help and assist the law enforcement agencies.
The problem we have had in many operations always involve the police not knowing what the army is doing, and one hand is not aware of the other, and unless you get intelligence—real time information must be passed immediately to the law enforcement agencies for an immediate response. And through the National Security Operations Centre which also is part of the budget, we intend to ensure that there will be representation in all the different arms, working together, getting information and communicating with each other for a successful operation.

Mr. President, the last point before I deal with the actual policies, but again it is, because it has to do with the offshore patrol vessel. It is something that keeps popping up over and over. Mr. President, I will be prepared to give way right now if I ask four simple questions to show the flaws and the problems of the offshore patrol vessel, granting, however, the value that the previous Government had with the offshore patrol vessel. It is very important. We saw what was required. The offshore patrol vessel was earmarked to secure our exclusive economic zone from 12 to 200 miles north and east of Trinidad and Tobago, primarily.

3.10 p.m.

But I will ask—when we keep speaking about: “They throw away the OPVs, they throw away the OPVs”, I ask anyone: can you please explain the concept of operations? Why it is we wanted an OPV? And the point being is: why three? Because somebody said three. So in other words, if they said one, if they said 15, they would have been singing the same song. I ask anybody here to tell me: do you know why three? And I will be able to give the answer. At no time it was supposed to be three because the three OPVs—two were supposed to secure an imaginary pipeline that was never even planted, to head straight up from Trinidad and Tobago as far as Jamaica—so we were going to purchase two of the three offshore patrol vessels to secure a pipeline that was not even constructed.

I also ask again: why a 90-metre OPV? Why not a 75-metre based on cost benefit analysis where a 75-metre may have done the same thing as a 90-metre but cost the taxpayers over $200 million less? Again, where was it earmarked to patrol? Why select an OPV for $800 million where there might be other countries and other agencies that we could acquire the similar type vessel for hundreds of millions of dollars less? So again, if someone had said, “Let us buy seven 120-metre offshore patrol vessels”, they would have said that.

My point being is that based on cost benefit analysis, you have to analyze the threat and look to utilize your resources in an effective manner. You do not just say “three OPVs”, there has to be a reason. And again, this is where I will continue to say that I
am fully aware of the importance of having a long-range patrol vessel, having a vessel out there to deal with our exclusive economic zone. However, there was no reason for three, there was no reason for a defective OPV, and I could speak about several different aspects pertaining to the problems from that offshore patrol vessel and it can start with, you have to ensure that you balance manpower strength with asset acquisition.

In other words, an OPV of that size required 70-crewmen odd, to rotation of crew, it is 70 plus 70, and then you also have to do a 50 per cent expectation based on persons on retirement, sick leave, resettlement training or whatever. So we are speaking of at least 170-odd sailors required to fully utilize an OPV. To have three, we required 500 fully trained crewmen. Then I ask: did we have the manpower strength at that time to have that? And the answer was no. So what would have happened is that three OPVs would have pulled up here, and then we would have had to basically park up two, but we could not because there was actually no mooring facility or berthing space at Staubles Bay for one such vessel, far less three, and this goes into the importance of when you try to set a structure of a powerful asset, you have to look at all the different aspects.

Hon. Senator: “Where they was gon park it?”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Out in the deep water. Onshore support in terms of power generation would have been inadequate. There was no storage or workshop space for spares to do repairs. There was exclusive reliance placed on BAE to do maintenance, and I could give you an example of that, Mr. President, where it is still hurting the country right now. When you see something looks big and massive, you have to look and analyze based on cost-benefit analysis.

We purchased four helicopters and again people would say, yes, it was important that we got these four Agusta helicopters—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: Westland!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Westland helicopters. If you go online, the cost of one of these helicopters, Mr. President, is roughly $100 million. We are paying over $500 million per helicopter.

Sen. Maharaj: For what?

Sen. Singh: Where the money gone? That is the question Hinds would have asked.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: So that is $400 million per helicopter over the regular price and four we purchased. We are now paying $2,000 million—[Interruption]
Sen. Singh: Two billion.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—two thousand million to train people to fly a helicopter, and this is over a five-year period, so the helicopters still do not belong to us. During the blackout, we had to utilize the NSOC “racatang” choppers to help us during the blackout period a few months ago because these Agusta helicopters, that really, with the value of $400 million for the four, we are paying over $2,000 million—and somebody had a bright idea to say, “Well, let us put a contract for maintenance and training of $1,600 million to train people how to fly ah helicopter.”

Hon. Senator: “Who do that?”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, if you look at some of the most sophisticated aircraft you have in Emirates and these other—it takes just about a few months for pilots to be fully versed. But what happened is that individuals—we were driving something very small and we were building, and they wanted to move straight to a Mercedes Benz, and, by doing that now, we are now caught in a bind where we have individuals utilizing these choppers that our own local pilots cannot use.

So my point again, Mr. President, it is not the fact that the concept of operations from the previous administration was not correct. I agree with it; it was moving into the 21st Century. All I am saying is when we put these mechanisms in place, we must look at all the avenues. So I know the importance of the helicopters, I know the importance of the OPVs, I know the importance of SAUTT, but how it was maintained, how it was managed, the purchase and the acquisition of assets, that is the concern.

Sen. Maharaj: Talk, no delivery! PNM.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, the third mention was about Resmi. I am not one to duck and run. If you ask me a question, I am going to give you the answer.

Hon. Senator: “Eh-heh! Leh we hear!”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: We asked a lot about Resmi Ramnarine.

Sen. Maharaj: “Not Kevin sister, eh!” [Laughter]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, what is interesting is that nobody knew about the SIA until this Government came in. SIA was such a clandestine, covert unit, nobody knew what they did, how they operated, to the point that the individuals before Resmi, nobody knew how they were appointed. [Crosstalk]
Hon. Senator: She made it popular!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Yeah, but no, I will show you why it was popular. What I intend to state today, Mr. President—[Interruption]

Sen. Maharaj: Who occupied that seat?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—is that the position of Resmi, just prior to Resmi being appointed—and the reason for Resmi being appointed—[Interruption]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Aha!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—is because I have a list here of persons whose phones were intercepted, people were spying, “macoing” on computers and that was not Resmi. Resmi did not tap the phones of Juhel Browne, Francis Joseph, Anna Ramdass—that was not Resmi.

Hon. Senator: “Dai Anna right dey?”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Natalie Briggs: that was not Resmi; Gail Alexander: that was not Resmi.

Sen. Maharaj: “Gail right dey!”

Hon. Senator: “Gail just leave.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Andre Bagoo, was not Resmi.

Hon. Senator: He was here this morning.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Ria Taitt: Resmi did not do this—or Anthony Wilson.

Sen. Al-Rawi: She was answering phones.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, in fact, I think Resmi was the one who actually stopped it.

Sen. Maharaj: “Eh-heh!” [Desk thumping]

Sen. Singh: Shame on the PNM!

Sen. Maharaj: “Anybody from across dey?”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, Resmi and that SIA at the time—not this administration—did not intercept and spy on the phones of Anil Roberts—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: “Waaay!”
Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Fuad Khan—[Interruption]
Hon. Senator: “Oi!”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: “I see ah name here call Ganga Singh.”

Hon. Senator: Faris Al-Rawi!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Jack Warner, Nizam Baksh—that was not Resmi—Gary Griffith; an individual name Wade Mark, Mr. President; Resmi did not cause that. So the point is: why do we see the splinter in our neighbour’s eye when we do not see the plank in our own?

Hon. Senators: “Ooooh!”

Sen. Maharaj: None of them was spied upon?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, I am seeing a name here called Colm Imbert, Resmi did not spy on him, but this was done. “Ah name call Keith Rowley.”

Sen. Karim: Who is that?

Sen. Maharaj: Oh God! [Laughter]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: There is a name here, Mr. President, it is a little blurred, it says Fitz-Fitz-Fitzgerald Hinds. [Desk thumping and laughter] Orville London, Ramesh Maharaj, Kamla Persad-Bissessar—[Interruption]

Sen. Maharaj: “Penny geh away from that? Yuh get away?”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—that was not Resmi.

Mr. President, my point being is that Resmi was never the enemy of the State, neither were the individuals who were actually involved in the intercepting, but the individual who caused them and directed them to intercept—[Interruption]

Sen. Maharaj: “Called de shots!”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—that is 10 times worse than Resmi. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Karim: Who is that?

Sen. Maharaj: Deyalsingh was not part of the—[Inaudible]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: I then move into the state of emergency.


Sen. Karim: “You ha tuh tap that in Arabic!” [Laughter]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Again, if a decision was made pertaining to a call for a state of emergency, that can and must not be based on politicians making that call, but based on the law enforcement agencies, based on their intelligence whether we consider it flawed or not. In my position, as Minister of National Security, if I get intelligence and advice from my law enforcement heads advising me of a certain avenue that needs to be taken in the expectation that it can provide that safety for the citizens of this country, I will call one immediately again. Because, what is important, Mr. President, is not the political spin but to ensure you put mechanisms in place to secure the life and limb of every citizen of this country.

Mr. President, again, going back to this situation with the state of emergency; during that period of the state of emergency, if you look again at the ratio of the murders committed during the state of emergency to what was done before, had the state of emergency not been called, over 100 lives would have been lost. [Desk thunking]


Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: If 100 persons’ lives were saved because of a state of emergency, if that is not a reason—[Interruption]

Sen. Lambert: If one life!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—or one—if that is not a reason or justification for one, well I do not know what is.

Sen. Maharaj: “All-yuh care ’bout life?”

Sen. George: “Nah, nah, nah, dem only care ‘bout the economy.”

Sen. Maharaj: “Care bout GDP!”

Sen. George: “Yeah!”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, what again is ironic is that the people voiced their concerns about the state of emergency, but let us look at the last state of emergency when it was called to lock up “ah little old lady” because you were afraid of what was happening.

Hon. Senators: “Oooh!”
Sen. Maharaj: Coconut water!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Compare that, Mr. President. Compare a state of emergency to save lives to utilizing that to putting somebody under house arrest. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: “And send coconut water for she.”

Hon. Senator: “That was to drink local coconut water.”

Hon. Senator: “That was ah ad for coconut water—buy local coconut water.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, if I can now deal with what matters most. Again, I have no time to bring back up the SoE, the Resmi, who did what, why SAUTT was disbanded [Crosstalk] we have wasted time. We continue to waste time dealing with what happened in the past. My concern is what we intend to do in the future to make this a better country for us all. I can look at the different aspects such as the regional security headquarters.

Trinidad and Tobago, being the lead for security in Caricom, it is important we have something as a regional security headquarters, and what that will do is to ensure that we can provide that avenue of an immediate response for different countries in case of any natural or man-made disaster. Whether it be St. Lucia, Jamaica, Haiti, in the last few years, we have been behind the eight ball in trying to provide that immediate response and support. That response and support, Mr. President, does not involve Trinidad and Tobago just being a godfather and just pumping funds and support. What we need is to have an avenue, a mechanism, headquarters that could provide that communication and to liaise with different countries to see what they can provide to provide support for the countries hardest hit. That is the importance of the regional security headquarters.

Also, Mr. President, what we intend to do is foster a much stronger working relationship with Venezuela dealing with security, and that involves joint operations with La Guardia, and joint military exercises need to be re-established as quickly as possible.

Mr. President, again, going back to SAUTT; SAUTT also had something very beneficial which was training but the training facility was earmarked towards a chosen few. What we have now established is a National Security Training Academy. This National Security Training Academy is not just earmarked towards providing training for specific groups, but for each and every law enforcement officer in different aspects. It can involve the use of force, arrest, search and seizure without warrants, drug lab detection, fraud, organized crime, missing persons search, hot pursuit training, roadblocks, cordon and search and all other aspects of counter-revolutionary warfare and the type of training that is required.
We have the defence force and the police involved in operations on a regular basis. However, how often do they have the capability and the facility to train and to work together to form a cohesive unit when they go into an operation? Hence, the importance of the National Security Training Academy, Mr. President, which will provide that type of training, that avenue, so that the law enforcement officers can be prepared.

It will also involve—I think it is appalling that over 50 years now, we have not seen it fit to provide our law enforcement agencies with an indoor range to shoot, that they do not have a simulation theatre so that they will be able to look at different scenarios to understand the minimum use of force at all times from verbal persuasion—right now they go straight to the firearm—where there are certain aspects that you need to utilize for minimum use of force from verbal persuasion, baton, pepper spray, stun gun and then to the firearm as the last resort. We saw that during the recent riot control drills in the Beetham. Again, it is because our law enforcement officers did not have the proper tools, which I intend to deal with immediately. You cannot move immediately, as I said, from the verbal persuasion straight to the firearm; and in riot controls, it is important that you have those mechanisms because the firearm should be the last resort and that should not be inside that actual grouping.

Mr. President, there is also the importance for a system for better intelligence. We would be putting those mechanisms in place because, unfortunately, the intelligence, or lack of, has hampered us tremendously in the successful arrest and conviction. We need to find the proper mechanisms to get that information, turn it into intelligence so that it can be utilized as proper evidence.

3.25 p.m.

Mr. President, we have heard a lot of something called zero tolerance. This is something I will always say is different to the broken windows theory. The zero tolerance—I think at all times the police must be able to have that sense of understanding, the element of flexibility based on the scenario. And, if I may, going back to the training academy, an important aspect that I did not mention was the fact of customer service training for each and every law enforcement officer. It is important that we have that customer service training brought into this, because for too long we have heard the concerns by citizens of our country that certain police officers, based on their manner, their character, how they operate, they do not feel comfortable in a roadblock. They do not feel comfortable when they speak to police officers or even members of the defence force.
And again, this is not to come down on the law enforcement agencies, but training must be provided—proper training—and through the National Security Training Academy we intend to put that type of training to ensure that each Trinidad and Tobago officer in the police service, in the defence force, would have that capability. It will assist us in bridging that gap, Mr. President, between the police and the citizens where the citizens can now build back that trust, build back that confidence; they could feel good when they see the police officers. And it assists a lot in them willing to give information that will assist the police officer in protecting the same citizens.

Going back to the broken windows theory, Mr. President, I heard that the acting Commissioner of Police spoke about it is time to take the gloves off. Well, I agree. In fact the gloves should never have come on in the first place. We have reached a position now where our flexibility or our meekness is being taken for weakness. People will then say, “well, why you going after these small things.” It is these very small things that we would have taken for granted that can cause the escalation, Mr. President. So when we see persons with sagging pants, people speeding, driving on the shoulder, littering, we try to take that for granted. But where do you go from there? You then step forward to feel that you have a right to block roads, to throw debris in roads, to actually go in front of a government building and block it.

It stops now, Mr. President. The only way that we can actually have this country in a safe and secure environment is to look at these different aspects of the broken windows theory, with an approach that the gloves have to come off and they have to stay off. Where individuals feel that it is tradition that you can block roads, that you can do what you want—that is not civil disobedience. That is stupidity and breaking the law, and I would expect that the law enforcement officers will handle it in such a manner.

Mr. President, again dealing with not politicizing crime, it is important that we have a structured national security framework. This national security framework policy, again we can go all the way back to 1995—2000, when again then Brigadier General Joseph Theodore, he had several powerful anti-crime initiatives and with the change in government it was shut down. The Joint Operations Command Centre is similar, to some extent, to the National Security Operations Centre, where it is important in the 21st Century that all the different arms of the law enforcement agencies work together, that they have real time information, and they get the communication and intelligence as quickly as possible.
The JOCC was shut down, the E999 Rapid Response was shut down, community policing was put on the back burner. And then, being very impartial, we can even look at the other side where we stated that SAUTT was shut down, and the OPVs.

Hence, Mr. President, the importance of us having a national security framework policy, not decided upon by civilians or politicians who make decisions to fight crime based on the perception of hit and hope and ideas but based on analytical testing and looking at the problem—and I am speaking about persons who have been ex-chiefs of defence staff, commissioners of police, criminologists, persons who are experts in this field, in this scientific field of criminology, where they can then say, “listen, this is our national security framework policy”—regardless of which Minister of National Security takes over, regardless of which Government—this is the direction that we need to go in and we need to continue moving in this direction regardless of what happens. If we do not do this, we always start from scratch—when Ministers of National Security change, Governments change. And when we start from scratch, Mr. President, the criminals who have their gangs, who have their units, they keep moving forward.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: They have continuity. Criminals have continuity.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, there will be always the concern about statistics. I have no intention, whilst I am here, to speak about a “decrease in the increase in crime”, or blowing a flute about they had 500 and we only have 300. We could do what we want and put the murder rate down to less than 100 but unless there is the perception—that perception and fear of crime that is removed—we would not have succeeded.

In New York City, in the 1990s, the murder rate was reduced by over 53 per cent but for two years the citizens in New York did not feel safe until mechanisms had to go in place for people to know that, “listen, this is a safe city, you can feel comfortable, you can trust the police service and you no longer have to call him a pig”, but they then became known as America’s Finest. What we intend to do as well, Mr. President, is again that high visibility, patrols, snap roadblocks and providing that perception and that heavy deterrent—so it is twofold.

The main mechanism for this—we intend to utilize in the upcoming year, Mr. President—is what is known as the Rapid Response Unit. I have heard many persons, they speak that the Rapid Response Unit is the “same old, same old”. There has never been a properly implemented Rapid Response Unit before. What
is the difference of this to what we have had before? This Rapid Response Unit, unlike the other avenues where they will just be incorporated into the police service in the regular divisions, the Rapid Response Unit—there would be 77 vehicles assigned to this unit; fifty-one vehicles would be on the road 24 hours a day.

We have cut the country into 15 specific regions. Each region we cut it based on the threat assessment, the geography and looking at what is required. So each area would have a specific number of vehicles. Each vehicle will then have GPS on it. From that now, it goes right back to what I spoke about with measurements of performance and accountability and good management. We can now account for the vehicles, see where they are, monitor them through the national operations centre where we can visualize exactly where these vehicles are at all times. So for example a specific region, Chaguaramas/Carenage—that will have three vehicles, you can see where these three vehicles are.

What happens next? If at any time there is a distress call by any citizen, what would then happen is that the E999 Unit, the operator will see the call, analyze where the call is in tandem with where the vehicles are and to send that specific vehicle as an immediate response.

That immediate response is going to ensure that, almost immediately to 10 minutes maximum on most occasions, you are going to have an immediate response. And by doing that, firstly you give the citizens comfort to know, “well listen, I know that if something happens to me I can make a call and I could get immediate response from the law enforcement agencies”. The second aspect involves the importance of that deterrent where, again, I mentioned that crime being a product of opportunity, if criminals—the people commit crime because they see the great likelihood that they can commit crime and not be apprehended. Once you provide that deterrent, it gives them that second guess now to say “well, maybe I should not do it because there can be a vehicle that could just come around the corner”.

That first response as well, Mr. President, it acts as minimizing the threat of something that might happen. On many occasions, whether it is a domestic violence call, a bar brawl, people wait too often until it reaches such a point of no return. That immediate response that turns up there to stop that argument that might turn into bloodshed, that will stop a number of cases from escalating to something of a major criminal act.

Hon. Senator: Proactive policing “boy”.
Mr. President: Minister, before you come to your next point. The speaking time of the hon. Minister of National Security has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Minister’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Hon. E. Moheni]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Senator: Fast on the draw “boy”.

Mr. President: Minister of National Security. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: Continue.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, when I lay out the anti-crime policies, if these policies I speak about, if they are not achieved in this fiscal year, I would have failed and failure is definitely not an option that we have reached to right now. As I said, I intend to extract the good, the ideas and the recommendations from all individuals, all Members of Parliament, NGOs, religious organizations, groups.

I intend to speak as much as possible with the Members of Parliament in those so-called hot spot areas—find out what their concerns are, see what is required. The citizens themselves, Mr. President, we need to get them on board. I plead with the country to believe that this can work, that we have reached a situation now where it is good versus evil; it is a situation where we need to rally, circle the wagons and have trust in the system.

It is unfortunate that the citizens, many citizens—and maybe rightfully so—they do not want to be warriors in this battle because of the fear of what might transpire. What we have to do is to put those mechanisms to take away that fear for the citizens and other organizations who want to be part of this, for us to unite and work together and root out the criminal elements. It again has to do very much, Mr. President, with those two words that I have heard too often, the political will. When I was—in 2006 we brought up the concept of the anti-gang laws. The concept of anti-gang laws, the focus of it is not so much to arrest the individual but it is to dismantle the gangs, because dismantling the gang, what you then do is you have them work as a silo, isolated, without a group, without an organization.

When that happens, it is easier to apprehend them and it makes it more difficult for them to succeed. Some of these gangs, Mr. President, they feel that they own the streets; they feel that they own turfs; they feel that they are in
control of certain areas. What we need to do is to put what is required to shut it down. Stop them from believing that they own a part of this country. If they want to own anything, they need to purchase it. But they are not doing it by acquisition, they are doing it by fear. So what is required is again having the gloves off, taking them off and utilize our intelligence to dig and I intend to dig very deep to get into the root of these gangs to find out what is happening and for us to eliminate them [Desk thumping] and shut them down once and for all.

Mr. President, I have been advised that I am going into very uncharted and dangerous territory by what I intend to do, but this situation with gang warfare is a disease and it is a disease that just cannot be eased by medication. I need to put heavy injection into this and shut it down—if it means the Al Capone method or whichever method, but we cannot continue to turn a blind eye to what is happening in our country.

Hon. Senator: The untouchables.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: What is noted is that if we know who the gangs are, we know the individuals, we know what their plans are—[Interuption]

Hon. Senator: We know Mister Big.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—instead of us just sitting back and turning a blind eye in the hope that they go away, I think what is critical is that we need to make life difficult for them to ply their trade. It has been brought to my attention that they try to infiltrate government contracts, Mr. President. Let me open the Pandora’s box here right now. The Ministry of National Security will now be involved in looking at all aspects of contracts—URP or whatever—and we will be looking at any individual or group in any gang, and with immediate effect no gang member who we have on our list would be allowed any contract in the State. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: “We not feeding them.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: The John John/Africa/Nelson Street gang, the Carapo/Malabar gang, the Cassava Peace gang, the Maracas/Blanchisseuse/Las Cuevas Connection gang—fancy names. The Carli Bay/Claxton Bay/Central Connection gang. We know the gangs, we know who you are, we have your names.

Hon. Senator: We know where “yuh” live.
Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: It stops now. What we intend to do is to shut down that avenue, that system that they have where they are getting—utilizing URP and other contracts to try to feed them in their own trade. Mr. Speaker, before I close—Mr. President, before I close—[ Interruption]


Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—we speak of the importance of looking at the assets and the importance of assets. If I go back to the coast guard, what we would be doing is having a proper maritime security wall. So, rather than have three offshore patrol vessels that would have secured our shores 12 to 200 miles on the north and east coasts, what is important is to have one fully effective operational longshore patrol vessel, less than 90 metres. It will then cost hundreds of millions of dollars less, do the same thing—based on their operational needs—but then what happens now is that we will also have over $800 million to now put other arms of coast guard requirements which we have never had before.

3:40 p.m.

Mr. President, we wanted three offshore patrol vessels, but let us just look at it right now. The coast guard, in its present state when we received it, there was a long-range patrol vessel called The Nelson that has been unserviceable for years; there were two interim coastal patrol vessels that would have been unserviceable; they purchased six Austal fast patrol vessels from Australia that were not conducive to the requirements and the type of waters in Trinidad and Tobago. They are unserviceable—well, three right now, and the others “going” down fast. Seventeen interceptors, most unserviceable; pirogues unserviceable.

If you cannot provide proper service to get a pirogue, you want to do it for an OPV? It goes right back to the importance of management, accountability, measuring performance and good leadership. Again, it shows the proper management and what is required.

So, again, I am not saying that it is not important to have a long-range patrol vessel, but we need to put proper maintenance, proper mechanisms, proper management in place, and that is what we intend to do. By again mentioning the $800 million, instead of purchasing two offshore patrol vessels that would never have really been dealing with our biggest threat, which with low lying waters in the Gulf of Paria and the south-coast, what we will now have is the access for funding now to acquire dozens of interceptors to lock down our shores from the shoreline to two miles out.
The second tier will now provide us with the opportunity to purchase proper coastal patrol vessels. Not the six Austals that were ineffective, but proper coastal patrol vessels to secure the second tier from two miles to 12 miles out. They will work in an area of responsibility, Mr. President, with the interceptors. Then you have the third tier, which will be the long-range patrol vessel that will then have access to secure our exclusive economic zone from 12 miles to 200 miles out.

Mr. President, it also works in tandem with the UAVs that will replace the Blimp. The UAV again—welcome to the 21st Century—utilizing proper air surveillance and not a Good Year Blimp. The UAV is something that is 20 times more hi-tech, more sophisticated and will provide us with realtime video footage to pass on to the law enforcement agencies for a rapid response.

We will then also have to—we will be utilizing the improvement of the radar and, as well, Mr. President, we have an island of this size but we do not have coast guard installations strategically placed in areas where the threat matters most, which is along the south and the west coast. We will be installing floating coast guard platforms that will allow the interceptors now to moor and be able to have that 24-hour patrol at all times.

The National Security Operations Centre, Mr. President, would provide that communication between the radar, the UAVs, coast guard, the interceptors, the long-shore patrol vessels, the helicopters from Enisor; the fixed wing asset from the air guard which we intend to also acquire. And all of this works together. It provides that synergy and that unification and not three virtual battleships 200 miles off on the north-coast, Mr. President.

Mr. President, a final point that does not involve so much hard targeting deterrents and providing that crush approach to destroy criminal elements from our society, has to do with a place of God in national security. As human beings we understand that belief, ideals and values have consequences. These consequences can be positive or negative in nature, depending on their source. And one thing is certain, they are powerful to change lives and, by extension, society.

Religion, in us having a safe and secure country, has a big part to play—faith, I should say. It must play a crucial part in our personal life as well, not as a standard of belief but as a power which drives human behaviour.

Mr. President, we will all bear the negative consequences for removing our God from our endeavours, from persons who are answerable to none, to those who simply do not value human dignity. Any fight against crime in our society
must come, not solely from policies, but from the hearts of men. Love, charity and kindness are not just ideas but must be heart-rooted convictions. So for us to turn around our society, Mr. President, I also ask that we look at religion and prayer.

As I close, it is exactly as I began. I came here not to politicize crime, not to see any individual on either side as being the enemy, but for us to work together. Let us look at the policies that are required and let us put the mechanisms in place to ensure a safe and secure Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Mr. President:** Sen. Al-Rawi.

**Sen. Faris Al-Rawi:** [Desk thumping] Thank you, Mr. President. I rise, by my estimation, as the 56th speaker to speak in this debate, including those 41 downstairs and those who have spoken today.

Mr. President, we are here debating the Appropriation Bill for this upcoming fiscal year, 2013/2014. We have just been regaled by a very interesting conversation and contribution by my learned colleague, Sen. Griffith. [Interruption]

**Sen. Singh:** Excellent contribution. Acknowledge that.

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi:** Indeed, it was an excellent contribution. Some of the moorings from which he proceeded included his attempt not to politicize the debate. He gave aspirations as the fourth Minister of National Security, sitting right next to the last Minister of National Security, who has the distinction of holding that post for nearly a year and never once having spoken as the Minister of National Security to this Senate.

**Hon. Senator:** True. True. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi:** So, it was good for the Ministry of National Security to break the silence. [Interruption]

**Sen. Deyalsingh:** At last.

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi:** At last, at last, we hear words about national security. [Desk thumping] How good it was. Four Ministers of National Security, Mr. President, an attempt not to politicize the debate, and we were regaled with a story which I found most astounding. My learned friend was going very well until he mentioned the issue of one Resmi Ramnarine, and said he knows why that happened. In a very negative context he said, “I cannot tell you X but I will tell you Y. She was not the person who did tappings; she did not authorize interception of
communication, Mr. President. So she did a lot of things in the negative and my learned colleague told us that he could not speak as to why she was appointed, but, Mr. President, let me proceed where he dared not. [Interruption]

Sen. Deyalsingh: Listen “tuh dis now”.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: The hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, received a report from one Senior Superintendent Surajdeen Persad on October 15, 2010. It is a communiqué entitled: “Security Intelligence SIA re Illegal Tapping of Telephones.” And in direct response to my learned colleague, it reads as follows, with your leave, I am sure:

“At 12.15 p.m. on Monday 11th October 2010, I was contacted by the Honourable Prime Minister Mrs Kamla Persad-Bissessar at Special Branch Headquarters,…via telephone number”—whatever—. “The Prime Minister voiced her concerns over the illegal activities of Mr. Nigel Clement, Director of”—SIA—“whom she said was in the process of transcribing tapes that contained her private conversations with persons. The Prime Minister instructed that the matter be investigated and steps be taken to stop Mr. Clement from carrying out his illegal activities.

Despite diligent and clandestine inquiries, I”—this is the writer, Surajdeen Persad—“was unable to get access to the tapes pertaining to the Prime Minister’s private conversations, because of the tight security network at that Intelligence Unit. However, I was able to confirm through reliable and trusted sources…that in 2005 the SIA received from Patrick Manning Administration sophisticated spy equipment which was purchased from Israel through VEMCOTT. Upon the appointment of Mr. Clement as Director of Security Intelligence, the equipment was not used exclusively in the fight against crime, but instead to spy on the then leading members of the Opposition...

It was reported that the tapping of phones belonging to the present Government Ministers and Prime Minister is still being carried out at the SIA under the watchful eyes of Mr. Clement, for the Opposition People’s National Movement... The reports are also shared with the former Head of Special Anti Crime Unit, Brigadier Peter Joseph and Head of the…(SSA), Mr. Michael Maxima. Analysts who were exposed to such unethical practices, however, were ostracized by Mr. Clement and”—moved to another department.

“There are approximately one hundred and thirty (130) persons employed at the SIA. Out of that total, six (6) persons are attached to the Intercept Suite Unit, where the tapping of telephones takes place under Mr. Clement’s
instructions. They are supporters of the PNM and extremely loyal to Mr. Clement. Other members of the SIA are not permitted to enter... The six Telephone Intercept Officers are:”—and then they are named; six persons.

“In addition to the above, the following persons are very loyal to Clement and still maintain close links with the PNM and occupy senior and influential positions at SIA. They are as follows:”—letters (a) to (y) listed. Some of the names include, (“unable to enquire last name) Surveillance officer, analyst, accounting manager, et cetera.

“At present there are two Israeli nationals in the country assisting the SIA with their spy equipment. One of the Israeli Nationals was identified as Heim Ramich. He is a Project Manager and arrived in this country from New York at 8 p.m. on 2010/10/11 on board Caribbean Airlines flight No. 623. He was born on 1958/12/03 and holds Israeli passport # 10920229. At present, he is staying at the Hilton Hotel. The other Israeli National was only identified as Adam.”

It goes on, Mr. President, about SAUTT, et cetera. “Comments”, it comes down to:

“The situation at the SIA warrants immediate attention. If sensitive information from that unit is allowed to be clandestinely sent to leading members of the PNM, it would undermine the legitimate constituted Government of Trinidad and Tobago and ultimately lead to its downfall.

Recommendations:

(a) The Director of SIA as well as persons mentioned at paragraphs (4) and (5) of the report should be relieved of their positions immediately, in order to safeguard the flow of sensitive information to the PNM and other persons linked to Clement.

(b) An interim management committee headed by SIAs Reshmi Ramnarine...and Carlton Dennie... Doolam Rekha, Kerron Ganpat...should be appointed immediately to protect the assets of the State until Mrs Julie Brown completes her assignment with Dr. Gibran.

(c) The computers at the Intercept Suites Unit should be seized”, et cetera.

“(d) The Head of the SSA... should be immediately relieved of his position and replaced with Mr Taradath Harrilal.”

Mr. President, my learned colleague today started a conversation, saying that he could not tell us who appointed Resmi Ramnarine. Well, we know what followed after this letter was written on October 15, 2010. All of those people were fired. Resmi Ramnarine was appointed and, Mr. President, most
spectacularly, the Government Members, in dealing with the interception of communications legislation which we dealt with as a Parliament, came and read out a long list of names, including mine, and said they do not know where the evidence of this information is, because they cannot find it, because two unidentified Israelis made off with the information. Yet right here in the hon. Prime Minister’s hands, from Surajdeen Persad, letter dated October 15, 2010, is the information as to who these Israelis are, where they are to be found, where the records can be located, and the Government came to this Parliament, and it is on the Hansard record, as telling an untruth. Because it could not be true, Mr. President—

Sen. Singh: What was the date?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—that the Government did not know who these Israelis are and cannot, to today’s date, provide any evidence of interception of communication. So my learned colleague ought to be careful, as the fourth Minister of National Security, in starting conversations which the last Minister of National Security dared not even open his mouth once in this Senate on. [Desk thumping] Sen. Emmanuel George would be on record as the most silent Minister of National Security in the history of Trinidad and Tobago [Desk thumping] at a time when crime is the most urgent, burning issue which affects our economy, our people and our psyche, psychology and confidence, Mr. President.

3.55 p.m.

It prevails, Mr. President, in this very debate insofar as $6.4 billion is being given to the Ministry of National Security on top of a sum of approximately $15 billion in the last three years. So when my learned colleague comes bravely and boldly to tell us he does not know about Resmi Ramnarine and who appointed her, go and ask the Prime Minister. [Desk thumping] Ask Emmanuel George, the hon. Senator as he is. Ask Brig. Sandy. Ask the hon. Member of the Lower House, Jack Warner. He is the fourth Member of Parliament occupying the seat of National Security. [Crosstalk]

Now, Mr. President, it is by pure stroke of luck having acted for Dr. Rowley as his attorney-at-law, that I had this letter. So when he raised it, I pulled it up on my computer quickly. I said: He could not possibly be raising that? This same Surajdeen Persad threatened through one Kelvin Ramkissoon, attorney-at-law to sue Dr. Rowley for informing the country of these particulars. Upon receiving my letter in response to the pre-action protocol, he backed away into the darkness from whence he came. [Desk thumping] So the fact is, we are aware of the facts and particulars and nothing that “meh” learned colleague says on that ground, will be accepted by this nation and by the citizens of this country.
Hon. Senator: That is right.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Let me go to the budget before I come back to national security to deal with the issues that “meh” learned colleague raised, because I too wish to have crime, law and order as a non-politicized point in this country. The PNM is on record as being committed to supporting any measure that will bring relief to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and in that regard, Mr. President, very specifically, we participated in discussions with persons opposite to find solutions. In fact, we presented a short-term 11-point plan coming out of a larger plan. I will come back to that.

I want to reorient myself to the terms of this budget for a moment, because there are only a few issues which I wish to address. The issues which I propose to address are some basic mathematical issues on the budget: procurement; national security, including the criminal justice system. Those are the essential points that I wish to deal with, Mr. President.

This is the fourth budget of the People’s Partnership, so labelled. Not quite sure if they are really the People’s Partnership because there seem to be only two Members, three Members still prevailing. The TOP sank to the bottom of the Buccoo Reef in the Tobago election—[Interruption]

Sen. Cudjoe: Yes.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—and gone; MSJ left them on principle some time ago; the COP is still trying to find “ah” pulse; the NJAC is on record as the “only” political party not to have held—[Interruption]


Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—an internal election—for how many years?

Sen. Deyalsingh: Forty years.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—for 40 years in this country. [Desk thumping] So I am not quite sure how democratic a partner that partner may be, but nonetheless, the People’s Partnership now comprising the COP, the UNC—

Sen. Deyalsingh: Or battered wife, a battered wife.

Sen. Moheni: Fuel the propaganda.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—and the NJAC is presenting its fourth budget. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Senator: NJAC presented a budget?
Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, when the People’s Partnership hustled together when the last administration’s political leader called a general election two and a half years before its time, they rode into the spotlight on very narrow issues. One, crime; two, the allegation that the PNM had been profligate, that they had received the largest share of budgets in the history of Trinidad and Tobago and that they had engaged in bad spending. Those were the two issues accompanied only by the allegation of corruption as another major issue. So let us look at this.

Hon. Senator: Allegation?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Yes, allegation because we are in 2013 headed to 2014 and not one, single indictment, preliminary enquiry or any investigation has launched from this Government.

Sen. Hadeed: “Yuh really shameless.”

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: There are many pre-action protocol letters on the part of the Government on the civil side, none of which are happening. I will come to communications just now, Sen. Hadeed. I will ask you what is going on.

Sen. Hadeed: Shameless. [Laughter]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: So, Mr. President, the fact is the Government then, the PNM Government was labelled firstly as being profligate. Let us look at the position now in 2013 as we head to 2014. Total expenditures by my estimation for the PNM Government in the period 2002—2010, the PNM expenditure, actual expenditure was $241,986 million. The PP is $245,069 million. So let me repeat that. The PNM had as its actual expenditure in the entire period that it was in Government up to 2010, $241 billion in expenditure, actual. The People’s Partnership as they now are constituted, have had 200—with this budget, $245 billion. So it is $241 billion for the PNM, $245 billion for the People’s Partnership. With that $241 billion in particular, Mr. President, with the rises in Government expenditure really peaking in the period 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 under the PNM, the PNM was dealing with expenditure when the inflation rate in the global setting was at its highest. There was fierce demand in a global boom for the resources including, iron and steel, ore, cement, prices, et cetera. We were dealing at an all-time high of resources; scarcity of resources.

The People’s Partnership in its $245 billion now $4 billion more than the PNM with this budget, has been dealing with the economy in its lowest—the global economy in its lowest state of demand. So the fact is that the purchasing power
under the People’s Partnership is significantly higher in the last four budgets than the PNM’s eight budgets put together. Let me translate that for the citizens of this country through you, Mr. President.

They have more money with more purchasing power. That is a fact. So this Government now has to answer the issue as to where is the result of $245 billion including this budget? The first part of that is going to be an analysis of the first three years of expenditure, and by next year an analysis of the last year of expenditure. So the citizens of this country now stand to stack up the following comparison: under a PNM administration, you had 8,000 HDC houses per year built, year to year; you had all of the provisions going on for medical, for education, for subsidy and transfer in terms of poverty alleviation, et cetera. We had the development of the Port of Spain waterfront; we had the industrial estates, the Union Industrial Estate; we had LABIDCO going on; we had e TecK; we had the Intech; we had the aluminium smelter; we had the investment of money in many projects which are pearls. We also had a lot—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: Tarouba.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—of bad projects and Tarouba comes first to mind. So I can account even if I just take it at the highest level possible, a number of excellent projects and delivery to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and a few projects that I cannot explain; Tarouba being only one of them.

I can tell you where $241 billion went. Two hundred and forty-five billion later, however, for this Government, in this budget, it is estimated this year, Mr. President, that we may be able to get 2,000 houses from the HDC. The land upon which those houses are to be built, includes land bought and paid for by the HDC under the PNM, [Desk thumping] save for one project which is the nefarious Eden Gardens Project, where we have an inexplicable point, and I will come back to that, as to valuation. The Government valuator saying $150 million, Linden Scott saying one value at $57 million and the Government valuator saying $130 million—odd.

Sen. Deyalsingh: That is the one with Chan Chadeesingh?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Yes, that is the one with Chan Chadeesingh. So the fact is, Mr. President, we have this Government unable to achieve the rate of building of homes; unable to say that it has developed anything significant in terms of big-ticket revenue items, generators of revenue, but we have $4 billion more in expenditure than the PNM. It just, in the most simple terms possible, does not add up.
What I found spectacular was to listen the hon. Prime Minister’s so-called participation in the budget debate, because she only ever speaks last. Mr. President, the fact is that the hon. Prime Minister said: they told you we have all of this money, but they did not tell you about recurrent expenditure. The truth is that it all went into salaries and wages; as if that did not happen under a PNM regime.

The double figure, the double digit growth in Trinidad and Tobago under the PNM with less money, in a higher inflation environment, where we were delivering housing, subsidies to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, revenue generation items, that never included, according to the hon. Prime Minister if you accept the implication—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: “Yuh reviving dat debate, or what?”

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—that did not include recurrent expenditure. So, Mr. President, I had a look at recurrent expenditure in this year’s package, Draft Estimates Details of Expenditure. The recurrent expenditure item by item, for instance, the Auditor General, the Judiciary, the Industrial Court, the Parliament. When we pull out and extrapolate the figures, the recurrent expenditure is approximately 35 per cent. [Interruption]

Hon. Senator: “Nah, yuh have it wrong there.”

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: No, no it is correct. When you look at salaries as distinct from goods and services, two items of so-called recurrent expenditure, what we see is that the salaries component of recurrent expenditure is a nominal sum relative to the amounts that we approved. What we see, however, is that the goods and services item continues to expand and grow, and expand and grow. And that, Mr. President, is where all of the leakages in our system happens.

So the fact is that the hon. Prime Minister’s explanation does not stand up to scrutiny, most respectfully. We as a nation in calling this Government to account have to do so by advocacy against their wanton waste, by advocacy against the allegations of corruption which stand against this present Government. We are left in this kind of debate to try and discern from 11 large volumes of documents what the position is.

Very simply put, the statement by the Minister of Finance and the Economy, the budget statement, is at best nebulous. It lacks in specifics. It lacks in direction. It certainly falls far short of explanation. We, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago do not know if we have attained value for money, and what the result of our expenditure was. Let me put that into context.
Last year we were told that the economy would grow by 2.5 per cent as a result of the spending essentially of $1 billion extra. Let me explain that. The budget of the year before, the deficit that we were going to spend was equivalent to 4.3 per cent of our GDP. Last year’s budget, it was going to be 4.6 per cent of GDP. The difference between 4.3 per cent and 4.6 per cent translates to $1 billion. This year we are told that we are going to achieve 2.5 per cent growth based upon 3.5 per cent of GDP as an expenditure in deficit, Mr. President.

So we are, as a percentage less than last year, but we are $4 billion more in deficit or in budget in terms of expenditure than the year before. The bottom line, Mr. President, is that up to today no explanation in terms of whether the deficit that we engaged and approved last year as a Parliament, has brought the result that we expect.

What we do know is that the Government comes with figures that tend to say that they achieved some marginal growth. I say “tend to say” because Sen. Deyalsingh is on record as pointing out that for the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago budgetary packages, we are relying upon data from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy as opposed to data from the Central Statistical Office—

**Sen. Deyalsingh**: Estimated data.

4.10 p.m.

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi**:—estimated data from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, for the first time in the history of budgets in Trinidad and Tobago, one.

Two, GDP in constant prices, Mr. President, in 2009, is as a matter of fact, in the *Review of the Economy* for 2010, higher than GDP in constant prices this year. In 2010, the GDP in constant prices was $91 billion and the GDP this year is less than that.

So, the fact is, the Government appears to be in a quandary where it cannot explain why it is year after year using estimates of figures; secondly, why it is using the Ministry of Finance and the Economy estimated data as opposed to CSO; and thirdly, why they have not had the courage to tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago that the budget figures have been tampered with—[Interruption]

**Hon. Senators**: Oh Lawd! [Crosstalk]

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi**: It is a matter of fact that the *Review of the Economy* in 2010, laid by this Government, demonstrated GDP in constant prices at $91 billion and that they revised that from year to year using estimated figures down to $89 billion. It just does not add up.
So, Mr. President, we are in a system here where the figures do not make sense and where there has been no explanation as to where our money goes. Where $245 billion, including this budget, will go, we do not know. We are not seeing the signs of it on the outside there and the Prime Minister’s explanation that that is to be found by way of an analysis of recurrent expenditure does not add up. It did not all go to salary and wages as she put it, Mr. President, most respectfully.

In looking for value for money, it falls upon the Members in this Senate to look at the issue of procurement because procurement is that method by which value for money can be analyzed and particularly that method by which we can ensure that leakages in the system are eliminated.

In the 120-day plan by this Government in 2010, it was stated that they had published a legislative agenda. None, of course, has been published to date, but that was stated in their 120-day plan. It was read out in the 2010 budget, September 2010, under the item Legislative Agenda. “Done!” said the hon. Minister Winston Dookeran then. Never happened!

Two, that they would lay the public procurement provisions. Mr. President, need I remind the nation, through you, that the public procurement exercise has been stultified by this Government and it is my humble opinion that the Government does not intend, number 1, to implement the Uff Commission of Enquiry report; or, number 2, to pass effective public procurement legislation in this Parliament—and I mean before the general election in 2015.

We were told last year, by the hon. Prime Minister, that this Government was going to lay before the LRC, the JCC’s public procurement legislation draft. Last year’s budget, I remarked that that could not possibly be the case because the public procurement joint select committee came up with a proposal that was mutually exclusive to the ideas proposed by the JCC; and yet, in this budget, we see the Minister saying after we have this budget presented that they are going to lay public procurement legislation. That is never going to happen.

So, Mr. President, I want to raise a few examples of public procurement. The first example that I wish to raise relates to public procurement through WASA in relation to dredging of rivers specifically. I choose to centre on that position because right now we are having a serious flooding problem in Trinidad and Tobago. In particular in Diego Martin, we have seen flood after flood after flood, notwithstanding the fact that the Government has earmarked and spent millions of dollars supposedly in flood alleviation. But where is the procuring exercise going?
Appropriation Bill, 2013

[SEN. AL-RAWI]

We have had several rivers in Trinidad and Tobago dredged under the auspices of WASA through its procuring agent, the MTS.

Sen. Singh: No, no, no. Would the Member give way?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Sen. Singh: I think you have a fundamental flaw. WASA has nothing to do with drainage and that the Drainage Department has two procurement arms—NIDCO and MTS.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you. The hon. Minister is correct. Forgive me. I spoke quickly in terms of WASA. It is in fact, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. So the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure’s procuring arm—thank you, hon. Minister—is the MTS.

We have a position where we saw dredging carried out by this Government in respect of Caroni River, St. Ann’s River and Maraval River. Let us start there. The National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited, as the procuring agent for the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, awarded, by way of example as to how procurement goes under this particular Government, three contracts to three separate contractors for the clearing of those rivers, that is Caroni, St. Ann’s and Maraval Rivers.

What did they do? Those contracts were cumulatively worth approximately $60 million. I just want to show you how procurement PP style is done. Those contracts, according to the National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited, were awarded in the following manner. They acknowledged that on June 20, 2012, three companies: CAL Company Limited and Raldon Construction Company Limited and Fides Limited were awarded contracts on June 20.

They acknowledged the following procurement cycle: selective tendering was implemented for these because of the urgent state of flooding in Trinidad and Tobago; names were provided by the Ministry, that is the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure; contractors were invited to submit proposals on June 18, 2012; June 19, there is a site visit, 2012; and on June 20, the contract is awarded. Sixty million dollars’ worth of contracts are awarded by getting a list of names on the 18th; inviting them to see the site on the 19th; and then awarding the contract on the afternoon of the 20th. That is the way $60 million is dealt with in contracts under this Government.

You know what shocked me about that? When I did a search on Raldon specifically—the company’s name is Raldon Construction Company Limited. This company was incorporated on July 07, 2011. Mr. President, up to today’s
date, 2012, the annual returns, Form 28, for the company says specifically: “No
shares have been issued at this time”, but they list quite conspicuously one Bhim
Deosaran, of No. 56 Lackpat Road, El Dorado, Tunapuna, Procurement Manager,
as a director of this company.

When I checked, Mr. President, in relation to this company, I found out, quite
surprisingly, that this gentleman is in fact the accountant of a company known as
Gopaul—the famous Gopaul—the company is in fact called Gopaul & Company
Limited. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. Deyalsingh:** Ralph.

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi:** So I do not understand why it is that this company, with its
registered address at No.—I will tell you now, Mr. President—with its registered
address at 38 Watts Street, St. Augustine cannot describe who its shareholders are
yet; why it is that the accountant from Gopaul & Company Limited is the chief
person inside of here; and when you actually call this company and deal with it,
the operations are based in Gopaul’s company. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. Deyalsingh:** You serious?

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi:** Yes. So Raldon Construction Company Limited appears to
be a front for Gopaul, but here is what else happened. When we looked at this, I
went down to the Maritime registry and I looked for the equipment that this
company uses. There is a tug and a barge that is used. The tug is called the Eddie
Tug and the barge, I believe, Mr. President, is called—if you give me a moment—
the barge is in fact called W725.

Do you know when this equipment came to Trinidad, Mr. President? This
equipment came to Trinidad in 2012. So, these contracts, Mr. President, for
Caroni, et cetera, are being awarded by selective tender. July 2012, MTS writes to
say they have awarded this to preselected contractors. How was Raldon
Construction Company Limited capable of being selected as a preselected entity if
it did not have the equipment? [Desk thumping] Do you know who the equipment
is logged to? Ralph Gopaul.

**Sen. Deyalsingh:** Awww.

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi:** So $60 million worth of contract goes to three companies.
One of them appears to have been preselected prior to having any equipment at
all. Contracts are awarded in a three-day span; goes out on June 18; 19th, site
visit; 20th, you get the contract.
Mr. President, I am advised that the equipment arrived here—the tug and barge—at first without even a licence for importation. It was found out later and it was remedied in the nick of time. I want the Government to tell me how it was remedied and I want to know how MTS could take the instruction of the Ministry on the basis of a preselection, a special select for a company that did not even have the equipment to carry out the work?


Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, I am putting this Government on notice that the reason for the Diego Martin floods lies in the fact that there is a barge that is in the bed of the Diego Martin River—been there for about five years now. It was an O’Sullivan barge that sank; it has silted all the way around; it needs to be removed. A massive amount of the flooding problem will be cleared if the barge is removed. The job will take about US $12 million to US $20 million in terms of cutting up the barge and removing it, et cetera.

I am advised, quite reliably, that that contract is already earmarked for Raldon. I am advised, Mr. President. [Interruption]

Sen. Deyalsingh: That is for Ralph.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Phoenix Park, Mr. President, is another contract going there. So procurement, as a measure and tool of this Government’s transparency, if you look at drainage and clearing and rivers and where the money goes, it appears, quite spectacularly, that there is no intention whatsoever to deal with procurement properly.

That is only rivers. Mr. President, I want to tell you of another issue of procurement which I have that concerns me deeply. That procurement concerns something which came to me, in fact, this morning. This morning, I received some information. Mr. President, could I ask you how much time I have left?

Sen. Deyalsingh: Six more minutes to half past four.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Do you intend to take the break at 4.30, Mr. President?

Mr. President: We can continue until you complete your whole—4.45.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Mr. President. We do know that the interim [Turns to Sen. George]—I do not know why you are shaking your head—you do know that the medium-term policy and that the short-term policy—I am sure that you are not a part of these things and you want to know what I am telling you. I am sure of that, hon. Senator.
Mr. President, you do know that one of the pillars of growth that this Government wants to achieve is in what my learned colleague, Sen. Henry, has described as the five greasy poles. The five growth poles described by this Government are materially complemented by the Invaders Bay project.

4.25 p.m.

We have been on record in this Parliament, time and time again, ad nauseum, asking the Government to explain to us, how it intends to dispose of the lands at Invaders Bay in accordance with the law, Mr. President. By way of recap, I will remind the national community, through you, Mr. President, that in August 2011, a request for proposals went out by the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development. That request for proposals was for a design/build proposal for the development of Invaders Bay.

We raised the issue, at the same time the JCC and other entities were raising the issue—“Government of Trinidad and Tobago, tell us how you can ask for a request for proposals in a very short space of time” because it was due to come back by September—so August to September. By way of recap further, the matrix described for the analysis of the request for proposals had not been announced as part of the RFP. The time frame for the RFP had not, in most persons’ view, been an adequate time frame. Mr. President, there was a cry in the national community to scrap the process; the Ministry persisted.

Mr. President, we then saw the Government establish an interministerial committee for the disposition of this land. We pointed out, Mr. President, that the provisions of the Central Tenders Board Act had to be complied with because, according to Legal Notice No. 179 of 1997, the Central Tenders Board Act says that the authority to act—it has the authority to act for and on behalf of the Government to dispose of real property owned by the Government. We pointed out that the Invaders Bay area was owned by the State and that because the RFP—as the Government was engaging in—was going to result in the giving out of lands to some persons that had not gone through the Central Tenders Board and, therefore, the process was void, Mr. President, and unlawful.

The hon. Attorney General specifically answered in a debate in the Lower House that the process was “legal thus far”. The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, the hon. Sen. Dr. Tewarie, has constantly and persistently refused to answer the question as to how the State proposes to dispose of the land lawfully. But, Mr. President, lo and behold, I received information this morning.
First of all, Mr. President, I should put on record that the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago has considered the issue of Invaders Bay and, specifically, the land on no less than—one, two, three, four—four occasions specifically—by way of Cabinet Note, November 06, 2012; Cabinet Minute, January 31, 2013; Cabinet Note, May 08, 2013; Cabinet Minute, May 16, 2013.

And what has come out, Mr. President, is the fact that the governor sorry—that the Ministry has received confirmation from the Commissioner of Valuations by way of a memorandum dated June 29, 2012 that the Invaders Bay land has been valued—the raw land in its undeveloped state only reclaimed—by the Commissioner of State Lands at $1,229,601,495. That is the valuation of the land.

Mr. President, the fact is that in the Cabinet Notes and in the Cabinet Minute, it is glaring that the State still owns the land. The State owns the land, Mr. President, because specifically, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, under a PNM Government, Mr. President, made sure to give a licence of one year to UDeCOTT to reclaim the land with an option to extend by a further year.

Mr. President, in 2007, the reclamation was completed and UDeCOTT was not vested with the land as the developing agency. In 2011, the State of Trinidad and Tobago still owned the land. The RFP went out in August 2011. In 2012, the State of Trinidad and Tobago still owns the land, and in 2013, the State of Trinidad and Tobago still owns the land. So, Mr. President, those persons who have negotiated with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in a bona fide way, relying upon the Government’s ability to give them the land are going to be in for a serious surprise.

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of hon. Sen. Faris Al-Rawi has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. P. Beckles]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. President: Sen. Al-Rawi.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Mr. President. [Desk thumping] So, Mr. President, the fact is that the State owns the land and, Mr. President, those persons—and Mr. President, I want to address an issue by way of a disclosure. I had once heard the hon. Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, Sen. Dr. Tewarie say, “Ah ha, Sen. Hinds and Sen. Al-Rawi should have something to say.” Mr. President, I want to disclose that one of the bidders—the successful bidders under the RFP—is a company in which certain members of my wife’s family are involved; cousins of hers.
I am on record as persistently beating this issue, perhaps, against their very interest, but in the interest of the nation in asking for the Government’s position in how it intends to lawfully dispose of this land. But, Mr. President, the fact is that these people—one a particular company called Invaders Bay Marina Development Company and the other a company owned by Derek Chin, in fact, it is called Dachin Company Limited, so I think the name goes. Those two companies have been pre-selected and, Mr. President, they would have relied upon the Government’s representation and warrantee that they could give this land—that it would be a lawful process. They would have spent millions of dollars in investment planning and positions in the genuine interest to develop Trinidad and Tobago which we all want.

But, Mr. President, what has happened is that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is in a position where, I am advised, the Chief State Solicitor has advised that the Government cannot circumvent the Central Tenders Board and that the entire process is wrong [Desk thumping] from the start. [Desk thumping] So the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is in receipt of advice.

Hon. Senator: Where did you get that advice from?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I am advised—I could be wrong. Let the hon. Ministers opposite and the Attorney General, in particular, who will speak after me, answer the issue specifically because we cannot have a position where a $5 billion acreage of land is disposed of in the dark and where there is no information. It results in the kind of invidious circumstance that my learned colleague, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, was put in—making a declaration today after the horse bolted the stable. The problem is not giving the information; the problem is in not giving it in a transparent way and in a timely fashion.

So, Mr. President, we are in a position where the Government has been advised by the Chief State Solicitor, as I am advised that, they cannot dispose of the land that way. But, Mr. President, what is actually quite spectacular is that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has engaged in a valuation exercise for these lands and, Mr. President, the Cabinet Minutes and Cabinet Notes specifically demonstrate the following. They demonstrate, Mr. President, that the valuation for the lands conducted by the Valuation Division of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy came in at a cost per square foot of $511 per square foot, and that the valuator engaged by PricewaterhouseCoopers on behalf of the Government as the negotiator, came in at $436 per square foot.

But we are now in a position where, quite properly, developers are asking for the Government to consider a valuation of $74 per square foot, and they have done so, Mr. President, because they are saying, “Listen, the Government valuators
decision and PricewaterhouseCoopers decision are based upon a comparable sale approach.” The developers are saying, “Hold on, you need to look at this from a residual valuation approach”, and on a residual valuation approach they are saying, “Remember we have to do infrastructural work, we are only going to get a residue of this land coming into our hands, therefore, we want a residual value approach.”

The problem for Trinidad and Tobago is that the average man outside there is going to hear, “Government says $500-plus per square foot; private negotiation says $74 per square foot.” But, Mr. President, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago has already agreed to $74 per square foot. So what do we do? How do we protect the interest of lawful citizens of this country in the form of the two developers Dachin and the Invaders Bay Marina Company? How do we protect their interest—because they have an interest in law, relying upon the Government’s representations and, at the same time, how do we deal with the perception to the average man outside there that you are moving from $500 per square foot to $74 per square foot in land value?

The problem, Mr. President, is that the Government has not come into the open, first of all, as a major initiative in development of Trinidad and Tobago to explain the process. Secondly, to advise that the process can be achieved according to the following mechanisms in law to deal with the allegation of law that they cannot go around the Central Tenders Board and, thirdly, how they intend, if the situation arises, to pay damages to the two companies that would have been led along the garden path?

Because, Mr. President, it is clear in law that there is a legitimate expectation on the part of the two developers. It is clear in law that the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago in making decisions must do so reasonably. It is clear in law that unless you act reasonably, you are subject to judicial review. The Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago’s decision can be overturned on the basis of what we refer to in law as a Wednesbury unreasonableness. And the fact is that unless and until the Government comes clean on this issue that, we are headed along the line of paying damages to people who have in a bonafide way relied upon the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to do the right thing.

Now, Mr. President, I am not seeing the Attorney General in this debate at all, for days. He is not here, so I am hoping that he will be able to tell us in detail, how this mechanism is going to be achieved lawfully; how citizens of this country’s interests are going to be protected—the taxpayer who pays damages and the investors who rely upon the Government to do the right thing?
Hon. Senator: You all did not do that with the people—

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I call upon the Government as well, Mr. President, to explain how they could buy lands in Eden Gardens which I have raised on umpteen occasions, where the Government valuation comes in higher than the private valuation. Messrs. Lyndon Scott and Company say, “$52 million worth of land”, Government pays $180 million worth for the land. So what is it, Mr. President?

Mr. President, the PNM was capable of calling a commission of enquiry into itself. It did so for the entire construction sector; it did so for EFCL; it did so for UDeCOTT; it did so for the Ministry of Housing. This Government is incapable of demonstrating its bona fides and, perhaps, the time has come now for them to call a commission of enquiry into themselves to answer these questions [Desk thumping] because, Mr. President, they would have spent, by year four, $245 billion of taxpayers’ money when the PNM spent $241 billion in eight years.

They would have done so without implementing the Uff Commission of Enquiry’s 91 recommendations and they have done so in darkness.

4.40 p.m.

In the very few minutes I have, Mr. President—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: Five more minutes.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—I call upon the Minister of Justice, now Sen. Emmanuel George, the third Minister of Justice—first of all to pay attention that the Ministry of Justice appears to be a clearinghouse. Every single Minister of Justice has been fired to date, and I wonder if he is uncomfortable there. [Desk thumping] Secondly, the criminal justice system is in dire need of reform.

The hon. Chief Justice in his opening address on September 16, 2013, cautioned that if he put 10 judges for five years to try and clear a backlog, that they could not do it for the criminal assizes alone. We have 100,000-plus cases in the Magistrates’ Court. We have a sixteen point something per cent rise in the High Court. We are bogged down; we are burdened.

The allocations to the Judiciary are not even one-third or one-quarter or one-fifth of the allocations to WASA. The Office of the Prime Minister receives $100,000,000 less than the entire Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago. The independence and autonomy in financial management for the Judiciary is lacking. But more particularly, how are we going to deal with the administration of justice
preliminary enquiry legislation, which has been put on hold for the umpteenth time? How are we going to press a system reset? How are we going to do the inter-articulation with SAUTT?—none of which I accept from my learned colleague, in his analysis on SAUTT. The fact is even though he says SAUTT is still around, they took a task force of 55 officers in the Homicide Investigation Task Force in SAUTT and absorbed four people only.

The detection rate went down from 40 per cent for homicides to less than 4 per cent in the TTPS. [Desk thumping] So I do not know about the barometer being the number of murders. The barometer is the detection rate in Trinidad and Tobago. We went from 40 per cent in dismissing SAUTT, to 4 per cent under this Government, and that is a fact.

We have now seen the fourth Minister of National Security. We have not yet heard an explanation. Okay, you did not need three OPVs, well where is one? We did not need any form of offshore vessels, long range or short range, 75 foot or 90 foot, because the Government of Trinidad and Tobago said the fight is on the land not on the sea. [Desk thumping] Where is one vessel patrolling our waters? Not one, Mr. President.

Where is the Revenue Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, hon. Minister, that is going to deal with white-collar crime and tighten the system? Where is that? “You want to ketch little fish or you want to ketch big fish?” It has been four years since the cancellation of the revenue authority. Four years since the throw out of SAUTT; four years since our waters have been unpatrolled and without security. The fact is, marijuana can come in and cocaine can come in. Gangsters can stand with masks on, taken pictures of by members of the media to say, “We outgunning the police.” Where else in the world can that happen? Where else in the world can that happen?

Mr. President, unless we engage in an holistic approach to crime, which is white-collar oriented, which requires a revenue authority, Financial Intelligence Unit—unless we lock down our borders and unless we engage in a reform in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, we are in trouble.

Mr. President, I leave you with the fact that we have put before the Government 11 points for consideration on crime, security, law and order. For the record, we say in the PNM:

1. We need to have an appointment of a police commissioner. That should be done by the PSA, that should be supplemented;
2. We need an immediate manpower audit and review for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. We need to change the systems of operation; they cannot work for six months, 24 hours a day. Where is 21st Century policing?

3. We need an information-gathering unit capable of training and gathering like SAUTT did.

You heard the hon. Chief Justice mention it in his speech.

4. We need to use existing legislation to increase the municipal police; an easy win. Put 100 more municipal police officers in immediately;

5. We need the establishment of a standing committee of Parliament to deal with crime.

Make it non-partisan. Put a JSC in order; let us sit together. If you do not have the ideas, we will come and share ours. [Desk thumping] Next;

6. We need to deal with the issue of home invasion.

**Mr. President:** Your time has expired, but I will allow you to complete the letter, but perhaps you could truncate it somewhat.

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi:** Thank you, Mr. President. The one important point that I wish to end on, having run out of time: witness tampering, and the use of anonymous witness evidence is critical. It is an easy low-hanging fruit which we can reach at. Protect our witnesses and every crime can therefore have a witness to the crime. Anonymous witness evidence is the key. It has been dealt with in the United Kingdom; it can be dealt with here.

I regret that I have run out of time. Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute and for the small measure given to me to wrap up as well.

I thank you.

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, it is now 4.46, I propose to take the tea break at this point. We will come back at 5.16. This Senate stays suspended until 5.16 p.m.

**4.46 p.m.: Sitting suspended.**

**5.16 p.m.: Sitting resumed.**

**Mr. President:** The hon. Sen. Ian Roach.
Sen. Hugh Russell Ian Roach: Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to make a contribution this afternoon to the debate entitled an Act to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September, 2014.

I sat here on the commencement of debate in this House on Friday, September 20, and prior to that I also followed the debate when the Bill was first presented by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, Minister Larry Howai, and the several contributions that were made by Members of the Lower House, and again by fellow Senators here.

I must say I was encouraged, I was enlightened and I felt privileged that this was the first budget debate that I was sitting in Parliament listening to firsthand. I listened with great interest and enthusiasm as contributor after contributor were dealing, some of them with the same matters which were contained in the budget. But I must say, at about 8.00 p.m. on Friday night, I was about to leave these Chambers because of my challenges. After sitting for such a long duration, there are certain difficulties I have to deal with. So I was about to ease out, but for some reason I just wanted to hear in person the contribution being made by Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir, as I know he was a notable economist and it would have been quite of good interest to hear what he had to say in terms of the budget and the budget allocations and the projections that were being made by the Government.

I must say, I was not for one second disappointed or regretted staying and going through the pain. As a matter of fact, the pain left me after listening 20 minutes. I forgot all pain, [Desk thumping and laughter] because I was riveted and captivated by his delivery and its content. It was easy for me to follow because it was deprived of all the other political banter that goes on between the other Members of the Senate, which is understandable in the circumstances, but for me being a non-politician it was quite easy for me to follow in this instance.

What even struck me with greater surprise, is that when I left the Chamber just after 9.00, I arrived at my house around 9.45, and instead of meeting my dogs who seemed happy to see me, I met my daughter who is 13-years-old, and my wife waiting outside eagerly to ask me, “Who was that guy daddy?” “That Senator spoke with such eloquence.” My daughter is 13 years and a second-year student at Bishop Anstey High School, and she was so enthused and excited. I was surprised that she was up at that hour, as it was way past her bedtime during school time. She engaged me right there and then on the contents of what he spoke about. The fact that she never realized that the budget had that impact, that
they could be affected, that if Government spends and overspends money and commits too much in terms of deficit spending, that they could be left with the burden of paying taxes to take care of it in their time. I was really, really taken aback that that aspect of it would have come home to her.

Then also my wife, who is not in any way an economist or interested in economics, was also riveted in asking me a number of questions about the whole delivery by Dr. Mahabir. So much so, that I went to bed around one o’clock and got back up around two o’clock hearing Dhanayshar Mahabir’s thing going over in my mind, as though I was listening to something to pass an exam. It really, really, really put a smile on my face knowing that this was one of us. The last time I think I was that stimulated was after elections in South Africa in 1994, and the hon. Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki—Vice-President at that time—gave his inaugural speech, and he said, “I am an African.” That was a sort of epic speech, given for South Africa at that point in time.

I mean, I did not consider myself an African in the sense being born in Africa, but after I heard Dhanayshar Mahabir speak with such clarity and eloquence, and the fact that he was able to chart and give a sort of incisive understanding of the whole purpose of the budget, that the ordinary man and woman in the street that were listening, if they were privileged to listen at that point in time, would not have left without any doubt what was the intention of the Government, what is the intention of a budget for our country and where and what could be done to better its delivery and its allocation for themselves.

When I looked around, before I left here, and I looked in the public gallery, it was almost empty—if it was not empty. When I looked to the press section as well, it was also very empty, and I felt saddened by that, because I thought it was a contribution that should have been heard by many more people it had come earlier on. Over the weekend I was looking to see if his contribution would have been replicated in any one of the dailies and the only one I could have found was in the Newsday on Sunday on page 5. So it was not in the Express and it was not in the Guardian unfortunately. I know probably the news people would have left here after a reasonable time to meet their deadlines for publication the following morning, but I think it is a contribution that should be placed soon after for the edification of the public, for any student of economics and the ordinary person.

I told him after in congratulating him that it took me back to my days when I was in St. Mary’s College as an economics student myself, and the hon. Dr. Eric Williams would be making his contribution of delivering the budget. Trinidad and Tobago would be transformed and almost transfixed to whatever medium of
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[SEN. ROACH]

listening to this presentation of this budget, be it with a transistor radio, be it the television or whatever it was, for that period of time. For some way since his disappearance, that has twiddled away, twiddled away, and very many people are not really much interested in what goes on in the budget, other than probably if taxes are raised here or if gasoline would be cheaper. But to have that type of discussion, as I would call it—that type of discussion—it was not one that was belittling the Government’s efforts in trying to take our country further in sustainable development, but it was one that engaged a certain type of innovative thinking and the way how one can use one’s resources in a much more productive way, the way how one can cater for the lesser fortunate persons who would not necessarily have access to either political power or to financial wherewithal, how you can use from the very same spending from the poor in terms of gambling, to help alleviate their circumstances and their predicament that is unfortunate.

5.25 p.m.

So I was really, really very proud to be part of this Senate, listening to Dr. Mahabir deliver his contribution, and I wish here again to publicly thank him for that contribution that he has made.

I knew the Government also—I mean, one thing with them, there is a lot of criticism going on—that this Government is absorbing, rightly or wrongly, I mean I do not want to get into that—but one of the things that I have found noticeable with this Government is that they tend to listen, they tend to listen. I saw Members from the Government side came across thereafter to congratulate Dr. Dhanayshar and also said, look you made some contributions which I think we are going to take on board. That was very pleasing to hear. So I think it was a mature opportunity that night, and I wish that more of Trinidad would have seen because much of what they see is a lot of the things that they ought not to be seeing at this level.

So I was pleased that he was able to take the debate to that level and, you know, I hope I am able to follow in his footsteps, not on economics because I am not an economist, you know, but there are some—my contribution this afternoon to the debate is going to be quite pointed because unfortunately, I have listened, in particular, to Dr. Bhoe Tewarie who was speaking about an item of, I think geographical polling, and I stand corrected in terms of the development. He identified certain areas of development, and how this development was going to be dealt with.

It brought back memories to me, where I lived before in a community that was again emerging from darkness and emerging in trying to empower the historically disadvantaged persons; and I am speaking about South Africa. What I gained
from that society is that when they developed, when they were developing areas, the area was developed in a comprehensive way. There were schools and there were all the amenities and utilities residing in that area, houses and everything. People really did not leave very far to go to seek these other immediate, daily things that they required.

I heard one of the Ministers on the Government side saying that is something that they were trying to address. I think it may have been the hon. Minister Tewarie in his contribution saying that, you know, and I thought that was very encouraging because when you are developing a society and you are developing areas, I mean, to have things too scattered, it leads to the type of congestion that goes on in Trinidad and Tobago, and we still have not found a remedy to ease the traffic congestion, you know.

All these things at the end of the day go towards affecting somebody’s quality of life and their performance in work, because you have children leaving very early, four o’clock or five o’clock to travel—relatively in Trinidad, short distances but taking a long time to get there—and when they get there, their energies are already spent, their concentration and so has also been challenged.

So, I think it is a good indication that this Government probably is thinking in the right direction, in trying to bring some measure of relief to that in that comprehensive way.

Now, my presence here, I hope, is not because, alone, as the President indicated that, you know, he has looked around and he has seen that there has never been a disabled person in our Parliament. But I want to believe there are some other attributes that I can bring. But having listened to, I think Sen. Faris Al-Rawi, just said he was the 56th speaker, I may be the 57th, if I am right, but I have not heard anybody dealt with the provisions that were being made in the allocation of $60-something billion to deal specifically with people who are disabled, the differently-abled people.

I have looked through the Government’s projection. I have gone through the budget statement delivered by hon. Larry Howai on September 09. I looked through the allocation. I looked through 70—how many pages? The seventy-something pages, the 74 pages, and really and truly was disappointed that I think it fell short, woefully short, of really being inclusive.

When I listened to the Prime Minister in her contribution and she said that the budget is one that made sure that no citizen is left behind, but when you look through the allocations and you look at the provisions in the various Ministries, and the quantum that is being allocated to the various projects and programmes, you really see nothing there for the differently-abled person, it is quite distressing.
I think it would be remiss of me not to be able to make, at least, that aspect of contribution that the Government will think of seriously, in implementing your budget and your plans for taking our society towards sustainable growth and securing prosperity for all. You cannot have all when a significant population segment—the sector of our society, disabled members of society, are without proper inclusion in your budgetary allocation.

When I look at section 56 of the hon. Larry Howai’s statement, on page 56, I see under “Social Care and Community Advancement,” I see: in “December 2012, the Elderly and the Differently-abled Mobile Services was launched with a fleet of 27 buses to cater to the transportation needs of the elderly and differently-abled members of our society.” Now this is just buses “eh”. This is just special buses allocated for that.

Now in any really progressive society that wants to deal with the inclusion of their disabled people into their society, you will have all buses—there will be a policy, there must be a policy that informs that all buses, not just a few buses, token buses, not a matter of tokenism, this is a right that the disabled person, the differently-abled persons must be entitled to, like any other able-bodied person, as I would have been before this happened to me about two years ago. I feel distressed by the fact that this is just a sort of small, you know, to me, afterthought that was put in there.

Then I go further down, two paragraphs, I am seeing: “in February 2013, the Disability Assistance Grant was increased from $1,300 to $1,500 per month providing more purchasing power to over 24,100 differently-abled citizens;”. That is a significant population of disabled people, and I mean $1,300 to $1,500 purchasing power is not really a significant amount of money really and truly. It is something, but it is not significant, given the high prices of food, clothing and all the other amenities that one may need to access as any other member of society. Therefore, I will hope that the Government, in its allocation and, you know, in dealing and relooking and considering its budget statement will certainly make some adjustments to this.

More importantly, I also was fortunate enough in doing some research, looking at the disability, the laws, that would affect them, and found out really and truly that Trinidad and Tobago signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; somewhere on September 27, 2007. By this action, Trinidad and Tobago Government signalled its intention to be bound by the convention, but however, they have not ratified the convention, and ratification of the convention would certainly formally signal that the country intends to be bound by the provisions of that instrument.

Now, further research again led me see on the United Nations’ website that Trinidad and Tobago—sorry, that today of all days, September 23, today in New York, there is a high level conference taking place, right, which is called the
High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Disability and Development, September 23, 2013. As I am speaking, probably it is on its way, or most probably concluded. This was as a result of the Millennium Development Goals which was presented to the United Nations and where it was stated—there was an:

“…estimated 1 billion people worldwide who live with disabilities, are still excluded equitable access to resources such as education, employment, healthcare, social and legal support services. As a result, persons with disabilities experience disproportionately high rates of poverty.

However, in spite of such gains…”, some gains have been made since there was this convention that took place in 2006.

The United Nation website went on to say that:

“…disability remains largely invisible in most mainstream developed processes, including… Greater efforts are needed to ensure that development processes include persons with disabilities to help realize the overall objective of full and equal participation of persons with disability in the society.”

Therefore, when I look at the various programmes suggested, I look at the “Sustaining growth, security and prosperity”, Public Sector Investment Programme 2004, which is a document produced by the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development; you look through all of it, and unfortunately again there is no specific allocations for the differently-abled person or people of our society, and therefore we are being kept on the fringes or the periphery of any economic opportunities that may be available to us.

I will just read the introduction. The introduction here from this text, here, says that:

“The Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) is a budgeting and strategic planning tool employed by the Government, to translate its plans into tangible projects and programmes. These programmes support the nation’s social and economic transformation agenda which thereby improve the quality of the life of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. As the capital expenditure component of the National Budget, the PSIP is focused on projects and programmes that would achieve sustainable development.”

But how can you achieve these objectives, these laudable objectives, without including at all differently-abled persons? There is no provision at all. It goes on, there are six strategic priorities as listed in this document:
“* Crime and Law and Order
* Agriculture Food Security
* Health Care Services and Hospitals
* Economic Growth, Job Creation, Competitiveness and Innovation
* Poverty Reduction and Human Capital Development
* Facilitative Priority Initiative—Good Governance.”

But nowhere, within those six itemized projects, is there anything featuring provision for the disabled.

So I think that it is an obligation on the Government—if it is an oversight that that commitment has not been made, that it ought to be taken on board in a budget as large as this one, historically—that adequate provision ought to be made to assist in really bringing in to the mainstream persons with disabilities so that they can participate meaningfully in the economic opportunities of our society. To leave them behind and us, myself by inclusion, is woefully inadequate. It is an injustice and it is a violation of their human rights. Okay?

I think what one has to develop in these Chambers, I think we owe it that there must be a political consciousness related to the disability because when you have a more politically conscious Government for the disabled, you will have a Government that has the desire and the energy and impetus to improve the situation for disabled people. Changes will take place, and ought to take place in a meaningful way and in a projected way. There must be an agenda for the disabled persons in our society.

You look at Costa Rica. Just recently I read in the newspaper where the Costa Rican Minister, I think of foreign affairs and I think he held another portfolio, visited Trinidad and he held talks with our Minister of Foreign Affairs, and one of the things I saw reported was that he said, in terms of Costa Rica being a very forefront and progressive country—society—in dealing with and including their differently-abled persons, that a lot was achieved in a short space of time. Why? Because the fact that their Vice-President, I understood, was himself also disabled and he was able to push through a lot of legislation and make a lot of meaningful changes in their society. So Costa Rica being our neighbour is probably somebody we can look to, to see how some of these things can be done.

Today on my way to Parliament from my office just at the corner of Duke and Charlotte Street—offices which I cannot go up into—I saw this disabled individual, a gentleman in a wheelchair, battling between car and bicycle and
motor car because he could not be on the pavement. He could not be on the pavement, wading, winding, finding his way down until he reached the corner of Duke and Queen Street or somewhere down there—sorry, until he reached Queen and Frederick Street. He was battling between in and out, weaving between cars trying to avoid him because there was no adequate provision for him to be like anybody else to use the pavement. So he was at the mercies of the vehicle traffic. That was shameful. That is unacceptable, you know.

Therefore, I think the budget, our budget, must reflect these anomalies in our society, you know. [Crosstalk] Pardon me?


Sen. HRI Roach: Even for me coming to Parliament here, I have to be dealt with. There must be some special provision for somebody to meet me to help me to come into these Chambers. There is a practice where you can have the ear of the President, where you can go to him. There is no means for me to get access to the President if I need to raise a matter with him of some import, you know.

So even in these Chambers here there are no proper provisions for me. The other day I left, on the last debate on the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill—I had cause to leave because—not because I wanted to leave, but because of my challenges I had to leave. At the point in time, after sitting maybe about 13 hours or so straight—I mean even as a normal person, you are encouraged by medical knowledge that you must get up and stretch your spine. You must get up and walk because you are doing injustice—you do insult and you do harm to the integrity of your spine. So I had to leave.

5.40 p.m.

And I mean, much to my surprise, a programme the next morning, I am listening to the debate and they are making their commentary about what transpired in the Parliament that night. I remember listening to Tony Lee I think, was saying that Sen. Roach left at some point in time, but you know he had to leave because he has his challenges. And then his co-host, Mr. Dale Enoch made the comment that I hope he did not leave because of that, and hopefully because he was sick. I mean total level of ignorance, that is the level of ignorance that is pervasive in our society and the level of indifference to persons in that plight. You know, until you have suffered that, you will not understand what it is. You may see one looking normal, sitting in a chair as though nothing is wrong, but there are a lot of complications going with that situation.
I am paralyzed two years and I would not wish it on my worst enemy, right. It is not something that I chose and I am sure nobody who is paralyzed or differently abled has chosen that for themselves. And therefore, an awareness must be engaged by this Government as part of your programme, as part of your initiative within the 2013/2014 budget, to make allocations that would start addressing [Desk thumping] the difficulties that we face. And a society is judged on how you treat the lesser fortunate citizens, you see.

So I am encouraged to hear some of the laudable projects that are being placed, that have been put forward by the Government, but certainly it cannot be that you are catering for those that are obviously in your sight and for those who seem, historically, to be forgotten and left behind, almost like we are not in the radar at all. So I think that you must look at the various aspects of inclusion, how it could be included, and I think one of the sure ways of passing it is by, first of all, engaging in legislation which will pass as soon as possible, taking on board the convention that we have signed on to that it may be ratified, and then—because we are a system of law where we have to incorporate the treaty to make it domestic law. We are a dualist system of law. That means that therefore we cannot just sign and ratify it, and it becomes automatically law in our society. We have to make the legislation and incorporate it into our domestic law to give it force.

So I hope that that is something, that if our Prime Minister is attending—I heard that she is attending the Assembly at this point in time. I know this meeting with the disabled thing is a high point meeting and it is taking place today, and certainly when herself and her team comes back, at least that will be something that will be on her agenda as a legislative agenda to be passed in this session of Parliament or soon thereafter. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Al-Rawi: If we ever get it.

Sen. HRI Roach: Mr. President, the other aspect that has caused me some distress is that when I look at the allocation in the budget, I mean, which everybody has been speaking about and so, unfortunately in our society which was once a very peaceful, loving and easy-going society, we are now shaken and captive in our own homes by the scourge of the level of criminal activities going on in our society. So much so, that administration after administration have found themselves having to allocate large sums of money in trying to deal with this problem. And as a result of that, out of the $61 billion, the second largest allocation is to that of the Ministry of National Security. I mean that ought to be, I mean it ought to shake our sensibilities and conscience that something has to be
drastically wrong where that proportion of money, $6.497 billion is to be spent on national security. Not on health; not on housing; not on works and infrastructure; not on agriculture; not on transportation, but on national security.

And that spending, I am not an economist, but at the same time, that cannot be a capital expenditure. That is not to enhance and increase, and it is going to have a multiplication effect in our society in real. That is a serious—to me, almost like a leakage. It is almost like a waste. I mean, and this expenditure, I listened to the hon. Gary Griffith making his contribution which I was quite enlightened and pleased to hear most of what he was saying. It seemed to be a positive engagement of getting past what went on and let us deal with what is and what can be done in correcting the situation which I think is the approach ought to be done. What is done, done, and they are in Government because of not what went by but what they can do to remedy what happened.

So I think he was on the right leg saying that. But it cannot just stop there. To me instead of spending this type of money and allocating the second largest allocation to security when it could have been going to family affairs and children and education, because to me this is after the problem has happened. We need to go to try to stem, to curtail, to slow down the opportunities of it happening in the first place, and therefore if a lot more money can be devoted to whatever Ministries, Ministry of Social Welfare or probably a new Ministry dealing with strengthening of family and family values and so forth, strengthening the NGOs, the churches and so, that before that played a critical role in the lives of individuals, strengthening the communities so that the communities can start being, owning their own and looking after their own. You used to say you take a community to raise a child. That has gone by. A policeman before, living in your community brought about a certain amount of security and respect. That is long time gone. Those things some way have to be reengineered to happen again. I mean there is no value in spending this type of money in trying to create more jails, in trying to create—buying more weapons, more guns, employ more policemen, when we should be spending more time on educating more teachers, retooling them, social workers and things to deal with the family and assist the families, that people who ought to be in school be in school and not coming out prematurely because they are pregnant, because they are abused and things like that. [Desk thumping]

This is where I think our focus ought to go. So I feel somewhat a type of distress, a distress that the second largest allocation of our budget has to be going to the Ministry of National Security. I think that has to be changed. The next
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[SEN. ROACH]

budget that I hope to be part of, if I am still here in this Chamber, is that it should be going into something like education, as education is the first, it is going to social work, it is going to housing and that there will be a meaningful reflection that crime is now under control and our budget allocation for crime has gone down significantly low. And as I think one of the Members of the Independents may have said in his contribution, I cannot remember exactly who it is, it may have been Dr. Mahabir himself, but he said that there is not a matter of spending—getting more assets in terms of cars and this and that. We have sufficient, we have a lot. It is the use of it.

I can tell you first hand, I mean, I traverse Bournes Road pretty often as a main artery to get to and from my home, it is sort of a main way for me to get there, and for the last three or four months I have been watching a police vehicle, a white vehicle, and I have the number, and I will call the number—where is it? I have it written down somewhere, right. I will find it. I have it written down somewhere. I have noticed that this vehicle is parked outside on Bournes Road near by Quamina Street on a daily basis between 9.00 and 4.00 on afternoons. Nobody drives it. It just comes there, somebody puts it there and it stays there continuously. Obviously, that must be a misuse and abuse of the State’s resources. Who puts that there? Why is it there? Is it a decoy? Is it some sort—what is it? Why is it there? I think it is PSY [sic] or something, white marked police vehicle. I will get it before I conclude my contribution.

Another thing is, I am living in Maraval and every morning between half past eight and nine o’clock, I can hear my dogs howling, and, depending upon who is doing therapy with me or assisting me in therapy, I would say: “You know what happening, a police car is going to pass here just now.” They say: “Mr. Roach, how you know that?” I say: “Trust me.” “You are a seer-man.” No, I can tell you, and lo and behold, a police car is going to pass down at that time. Now you tell me, on Monday to Friday at the same time approximately, there is an emergency happening or a policeman taken away, you know what happen, they are trying to avoid the traffic so they are abusing the resources. You are abusing your privileges. You are abusing the fact that you have a siren and you have a police car, right. That happens every single day. On a Saturday and Sunday, the emergency does not arise, right. [Laughter] Those are what, those are the things that lead people to not have confidence in the police, when you are openly seeing that violation and abuse of assets that belong to the State, that when you call a police station they tell you: “Dey doh have a vehicle. They cyar do this and they cyar do that.”
I am in traffic just a couple of months ago, before becoming a Member of this Senate. I am driving down Long Circular—the traffic light goes between Barbados Road and Long Circular, “ah” long traffic jam, real traffic jam. This is around two o’clock in the afternoon causing a significant amount of stress and so on among the drivers. A police marked vehicle with a police in uniform is driving up and he is caught between somewhere by the Police Barracks side there, and I stopped abreast of him and I said: “Officer good afternoon.” I said: “You know what is the problem up there? The lights have gone.” He said: “You know what you have to do? You have to go and call St. James Police Station.” “I cyar do nothing about that.” That was his response to me. A police officer, in the traffic, in a police car, in police uniform and that is what he told me. I shook my head and I drove off in utter disbelief.

I came from a family where my father was a police officer, my grandfather was a police officer, my brother was a police officer and that was not what I was accustomed to, right. They do not even know how to speak to people. They do not know how to speak to you, so how could you engender trust and endear them to provide—the most critical part of a police investigation is information. How would I go to him when he cannot even speak to me? So those are the things. It is not just throwing large sums of money behind them. It is training, then again it goes back, further than that. Where are these officers coming from? Where are the doctors and lawyers coming from? What community? They are not coming from Grenada. They are not coming from Barbados as they used to before. They are coming from right here in Trinidad, from our communities, from the families that have broken homes. So if they do not get proper value system, the office does not make the man, the man maketh the office. And therefore if they come with the right values you will have integrity, you will have commitment, you will have hard work and you will have that commitment. That is the home I grew up in. Poverty is not an excuse for crime.

I remember when I was in South Africa—again permit me to say—because I spent a significant part of my adult life working there and working with the administration. I remember Dr. Nthato Motlana who was a brilliant doctor, a medical doctor and he was also Mandela’s medical doctor when he was in prison. He became, of course, his confidant, his good friend and everything like that. He was a successful businessman post-apartheid, and he knew I did a lot of work in Kinshasa in Congo, before the war actually started in ’97. He went there to do a transaction with bmobile because he was a significant share owner in the telecommunication industry which is now booming in South Africa. After spending a couple of days there, about four or five days, he came back and he said to me: “You know I told Madiba”, which is Mandela’s pet name amongst his friends, “that this nonsense he has been telling me about
because of the poverty and economic disadvantage of the population”—at that point in time, South Africa was engaged in a lot of violence and a lot of crime and so was being committed, “is absolute nonsense.” He said: “I went across there and I have seen abject poverty and I am not seeing the level of criminal activity that I see inside of this country. We have to stop saying that. That is not an excuse for that.” [Desk thumping] And I agree with that.

I agree with that, Mr. President, because most of us who are here would not have been privileged to have come from rich families but we came from families that were rich with love, were rich with integrity, [Desk thumping] were rich with doing what is right and what is wrong and those are the things that made a difference in us. Those are the days that were different. You held on to the mantra that you heard from the founding father of the Republic: “That the future of our country is in the book bags of our children.” Those are whom we must take care of, those are whom we must invest in.

And if you invest in that—I remember telling my father, listening to that as a little boy, that if you invest in my education you invest in me in that way, you do not have to leave me any inheritance. That will be my reign, that will be my way, and I can say today in Parliament, he is dead, unfortunately, and young, that I can say that he did not have cause to leave me anything, he invested in me in my education and I was able to make good of it. And therefore it is the same mantra I passed on to my daughter at this point in time. You work hard and to whom much is given, much is expected.

So, Mr. President, I am saying with the greatest of respect to the initiative being used by the Government, and I do agree with Sen. Griffith and the other Senators on the other side, I am saying that this scourge in our society in terms of crime ought not to be politicized. It is a concern for everybody. Because I cannot live in my Eiffel Tower and not come out and deal with you. At some point I will have to leave my house, and if I do not leave my house and you look into my house and you cannot have reasonable bread, water—you know, the necessary amenities to sustain and feed your family, you will have to come in by me to do it.

If you strip me of the means of making an income or working and so forth, I myself may become a bandit out of sheer necessity. But that is not always the case that is going on in Trinidad and Tobago. I think the value—the breakdown of value systems, the breakdown of our support systems in terms of community, in family life, and if we could have strengthened these basic things, I think we stem the tide of the large amount of easy recruitment into these gangs that the Minister of National Security was just listing here to the Parliament.
5.55 p.m.

I think we need to focus a lot of our budget in those instances. Should we hire more teachers? Should we train more teachers? Should we bring in more social workers? What can we do in the communities to get the communities again active and responsible for each other, for themselves? In a community that is active and alive, everybody knows everybody.

I am fortunate to be in a Chamber where I have about two persons who came from Laventille. They did not go to—they did not come out of an environment of living in opulence. Both of them are successful attorneys. One is even a first-class law student from the University of the West Indies and went on [Desk thumping] to have a distinction in a Masters from Cambridge, and he came from Laventille.

There is another one who became even an Alderman. He practices law in our Chambers, a very decent, very affable, mannerly individual. So what is the difference? Why that same environment could breed these types of people and then we have this seemingly stigma of so many others just coming out and going the wrong way? Something “have to be intervened”. We need to study that. Why is that so? We need to multiply them and make them more numerous so they become much more a normal thing that was before.

I look at the recent success of Dr. Ian Hypolite who happens to be also a very good friend of mine, and he took Jehue Gordon, who is now everybody’s darling to see, but the hard work that went behind, the sacrifices, the investment in somebody who also came from very humble circumstances, from a humble environment, and now he is on probably everybody’s lip in the world. I mean, everybody is proud of him for being—as a Trinidadian—that he was home-grown; he did not go abroad to train. He trained here.

So we have the talent here. We have the talent and we have all that it takes to make us first-world people. We have what it takes to make us, and convert us from being developing. We do not need to be copycats and monkeys and incorporate things that “is” not suited to our culture and our society. We are doing ourselves an injustice.

So when I look at the success that he just accomplished; when I look at the success of Keshorn Walcott—Keshorn was trained here but with a Cuban coach, we can do it here in Trinidad and Tobago. We can turn this around and make ourselves very proud. We can leave a very, very peaceful and enabling and sustainable growing economy for our children. That is our responsibilities. You know?
The other thing I want to speak about quickly, in coming to an end with what I am saying here, is that of trade and investment. In order to have an environment where we could continue to attract direct investment to the extent that we are doing, one of the things that probably is the envy that Trinidad is for the rest of the Caribbean, is that we have a lot of resources. Our resources, as much as there is a lot said about the physical resources in terms of oil and gas and so, our people “is” one of our greatest assets. They are the greatest—what you call it—elements of labour—it is our talent that lies here.

We are significantly gifted people and it has to do with the fact that we are a society that is multi-cultured; it is ethnically diverse, but the good thing about it that I used to boast about all the time when I was abroad in South Africa, unlike you all who live side by side, we do not only live side by side, but we integrate. We integrate in marriage; we integrate in food; in culture; in music. We integrate in everything, and that is what makes our society so rich, so vibrant, so renewed, and with all that is going on still, while we are still progressing, those are the virtues that keep pushing us forward as a people, and those are the things that ought not to be lost, while we try to fight some of the distractions of crime, corruption and all these things that a number of you have spoken about today in this debate.

Therefore, in dealing with the Judiciary, which, I think Sen. Faris Al-Rawi was talking about—the Judiciary—I will not go and repeat what he has said, but my only concern in the whole judicial system, in order to bring confidence—to continue to have confidence in our—and a stabilized industrial climate, it is high time that we look at the Industrial Relations Act and how the Judges of the Industrial Relations Court are appointed. [Desk thumping]

It is a court of superior record, yet still the Judges are insecure, and you cannot have insecure judicial officers performing such a critical role in our society—and the Industrial Court is a very valuable institution that has served us certainly well and has kept our environment in a very peaceful way compared to many other countries in terms of labour relations. And therefore, time after time, government after government, have come in and always you have had significant and well-known unionists and lawyers who have been labour lawyers, and nothing yet has been done. I think it is high time that that is also put on the agenda in addressing, because it could only help our investment climate even more.

When people realize that you come to invest in a country and things break down and you have a reliable judicial system—there is a system where employers and employees can quickly and confidentially work out or resolve their issues, it
can only lead to greater security and attraction to invest here in our society. [Desk thumping] Therefore, I think it is something that the Government needs to put as part of their legislative agenda. We need to look at that.

It cannot be that in the short term—your vision is so shortsighted that you come into an office and you realize, okay, “I can choose the Judges here”. You are not going to remain in office forever, and those Judges are not going to be—and those Judges would be subject, once their time come up, they are going to be moved off, and every government, I think, has been, to me, could be cited for that. That is a shortsighted type of way. We need to get away from that and give them the same security of tenure as the judicial officers of the Supreme Court.

Secondly, when you look at the Recognition and Certification Board which is part of the IRA set-up, that has served itself. That is useless now. [Desk thumping] That leads to retarding the whole process of giving workers their fair representation. You will have unions making representation to protect and look after the employees, who are no match in terms of negotiation with their employers, who are usually the financially stronger person, and this process is cumbersome; it is wasteful and ought to be abolished. The whole process of recognition can be given to the Industrial Court itself, to the Judges of the Industrial Court.

So I think those are two aspects of the Industrial Relations Act to help in the climate of our developing as a sustainable economy that has growth and reliability, all these are features that need to go hand in hand in taking us forward and I hope—

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

**Motion made:** That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by a further 15 minutes. [Hon. G. Singh]

**Question put and agreed to. [Desk thumping]**

**Sen. HRI Roach:** Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you very much, Senators. I never really intended to go to this. I mean, I have really shocked myself here. [Laughter]

**Hon. Senator:** Keep the momentum, man.

**Sen. HRI Roach:** I really shocked myself, but I would not—[ Interruption ]—Indeed, I must say. But seriously, Mr. President, I do think that I will urge the Government—and I have seen that they—as I said, one thing you can credit this Government with is that they listen, that there are certain constructive comments that have been made, and suggestions, and I will hope that they will take it on board; at least
examine it and give some life to it, especially my main contribution which was that of the disabled members of society, because most disabled people are without political access and they are without economic access. Therefore if somebody does not champion their cause they are going to be forgotten, and we are forgotten.

It is really disheartening for me, as a recently disabled person, according to Max Cuffie—he said in an article I was only recently disabled. So I “doh know”, if you have a qualification to be disabled in a different way.

Hon. Senator: Perhaps there is a difference.

Sen. HRI Roach: Probably there is a difference. You know, if the President wanted to really appoint a disabled person, he should appoint somebody who was disabled for a longer time. So I did not know two years is not sufficient. One day is too much for me.

But that is the level of insensitivity that goes on in our society, and I hold no grudge against him or anything. It is just a level of insensitivity. I, myself, before I was disabled, may not have had the same heightened appreciation of this condition, but now that I am, my God, I sleep it every single day, night and day, in hope that I may walk one day. It may never happen, but in the meantime I have to live as part and parcel an able person. I want the integrity to be able to be independent. I do not need that I look to leave and Sen. Singh has to come and push me outside and help me to get over a hump to get into the car park. I do not need that. I want to be able to move like him, just on wheels at this point in time.

Hon. Senator: That is right. [Desk thumping]

Sen. HRI Roach: So it is not a charity; it is a right and it is an entitlement, and I ask that the Government pay some attention in their allocation in this interim time in this budget, certainly, that accommodation be made, not only for me but for all persons who are differently abled, be it physical, be it by sight, whatever it is, and the numbers are large. You saw the allocation here was 24,100. I do not know how accurate it is, but that is a significant number of persons to be in this category.

Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity for making this small contribution. I hope that those who are in a position to do something would certainly take whatever they could glean out of it and give some kind of life to it because I really would like if, after all, if anything I achieve by being here for however long my tenure may be, is that something meaningful is done in alleviating the plight of the disabled person and that we can see it in a tangible way in a very short space of time.

I thank you very much. [Desk thumping]
Mr. President: The Minister of Justice. [Desk thumping]

The Minister of Justice (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George): Thank you very much, Mr. President, as I rise to join the debate on the Appropriation Bill for the budget 2013/2014. Let me just start by congratulating Sen. Roach for his very balanced contribution here this afternoon, and for the recommendations that he has made.

He started off by saying that he was inspired by Sen. Dr. Mahabir’s contribution and in that regard I am certain he speaks for all of us, and also by saying that, I think he is also making, obliquely, a criticism of the level to which—and this is my interpretation; I am not saying this is what you are doing—the lowering of the debate, at the level of the debate—by persons representing the Opposition PNM.

Like Sen. Mahabir, Sen. Roach’s critique of the budget was constructive, in that he made recommendations as to how we could do things better, and in particular for those persons with disabilities who he suggests had not been considered to the degree that they should have been in the budget, and as he himself said, this Government listens and I am certain that this Government has also listened to what we has to say and will take due note of those comments.

The comment he made also about the abuse of the police of certain privileges and so on, that they have, both in respect of the use of vehicles and the use of sirens and so on, as recently as Minister of National Security, I, too, was a little concerned about it and I had planned to engage the Commissioner of Police in discourse regarding those abuses, but I never got to that.

Mr. President, I prepared a very comprehensive discourse to present today. It is all of 37 pages, and although I would have cut and contrived to make sure that it took me the hour that is available to me, I think I must shift away from it a little bit to speak to certain issues that were raised by Sen. Al-Rawi, Sen. Hinds and Sen. Dr. Henry who spoke in advance—[Interruption]

Sen. Singh: “Yuh leave out Deyalsingh.”

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Well, I “doh want tuh speak about Deyalsingh” while he is not here to defend himself, nor do I want to speak about the other two, but because what they said demands a response, I would include both Senators Henry and Fitzgerald Hinds in the discourse.

The first thing that I want to take issue with Sen. Al-Rawi about is his untrue statement that I was Minister of National Security for a year. He could go and check the Hansard, and I listened to him carefully—[Interruption]
Sen. Al-Rawi: I did not say a year; nearly a year.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—and he knew that he was wrong.

6.10 p.m.

Sen. Al-Rawi is a person who always suggests that he is truthful and so on, and he checks his facts and so on. I want to just say to him, please check your facts. I am not going to tell you anything other than that in respect of that, but it is typical of these half-truths that they present to the population as truth. He also said that I was the most silent Minister of National Security in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to say to him that I am the most silent Minister in any Ministry that I work [Desk thumping] and that is a trait that I have.

I recall when I was Minister of Public Utilities, I had mentioned to Minister Ganga Singh as we planned projects to improve the water supply to a lot of areas in this country that suffered under the People’s National Movement, I said to him—Sen. Ganga Singh who was then—[Interrupt]

Sen. Singh: CEO.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—CEO at WASA—“Here is what we are going to do: we are going to run the pipes; we are going to supply the population and the various villages with water; we will say nothing about the work that we are doing; we will deliver the water to the people and let the people speak for us.” [Desk thumping] So my being the most silent Minister of National Security is just the way that I operate. I have to sit and plan my business properly, and then put it in place, get it working and let the results speak for me. Let me give you an example of that.

When the Navet line was being run—was almost complete—well that was a decision that was taken in June of 2010 to build that line. It was planned by the PNM as usual—they are always talking, planning, planning, planning and doing nothing—since 2005. In June 2010, we took a decision to build the line, and that line and all the work started and so on. It went on for months until early in the following year when people began to realize what was happening, and it was only then that we did give some indication by visits to the pipeline work that there was this miracle slowly unfolding.

I remember Mr. Imbert meeting me in the corridor of the Red House and he—he normally, Mr. President, does not tell me anything. He passes straight and I go about my business. But this particular day he says to me, “Emmanuel, who is the contractor who is doing the Navet line?” I said to him, “contractor?” He says,
“Yes, yes, you all are building the Navet line, the Navet water main”. I say, “Yes.” “He says, “Who is the contractor?” So I say to him, “contractor?” He says, “Yes, who is the contractor?” So I say, “There is no contractor.” He says, “How you mean there is no contractor? So how is the line going?” I say, “Well, we are using in-house WASA labour.” He said, “In-house WASA labour?” I said, “Yes.” And he walked away quietly.

Now I knew the significance of that particular meeting. You see, what the PNM always wants to do, is to say corruption in everything. But when he realized that it was in-house labour, there is no corruption to say because we did not have a contractor. You understand? So he was very disappointed that we were building this line with in-house WASA labour. And again, that line was completed and the people began to get water before we came and boasted that we had built the line. That is my modus operandi, let me say this. [Desk thumping] And, we were in groupings in WASA where we told the management this is what we are going to do. We are going to build the lines; we are going to run the lines to these communities and let the communities enjoy the benefit of having the water before we go and do any kind of opening and boasting about the completion of the project. That is my way of operating, Sen. Al-Rawi, through you, Mr. President, [Desk thumping] and you could jump high, jump low, I will continue to operate that way.

**Sen. Hadeed:** When was that line planned?

**Sen. Singh:** Contrast that with Sen. Al-Rawi’s style.

**Sen. Hadeed:** When was the line planned?

**Sen. The Hon. E. George:** The line was planned since 2005 or before.

**Sen. Hadeed:** “Oh my gosh!”

**Sen. The Hon. E. George:** It was done in 2010. Let me continue. We have to stop talking and let our work speak for ourselves [Desk thumping] and my long experience of life and of working in the public service—and I am much older than Sen. Al-Rawi and I am giving him, through you, Mr. President, the benefit of that experience. My long experience has taught me that the greatest talkers are the greatest non-performers [Desk thumping] in terms of doing things and I will have some quotations here that will bring that—

I want to say, again, that talk does not help the people outside there. Only action and results help people, and this has been borne out to me in my stint as a public servant, in my stint as Minister of Public Utilities, in my stint as Minister
of National Security and in my stint as Minister of Works and Infrastructure. All of those experiences, particularly my experience over 30 years in the public service, have taught me that the talkers, the people who talk the most and talk the best are hardly the ones that produce.

Another thing that I want to say to Sen. Al-Rawi, through you, Mr. President, again, is that we are full of ourselves inside of here and are blowing our trumpets and preening our feathers and so on and feel that we are so very important, you know, but the people outside there—well, the calypsonian has sung many, many songs on us, always talking about how we “kickings” in the Parliament, and it has to do with the fact that they are hearing all this talk, talk, talk, talk all of these years, and rarely, rarely, r-a-r-e-l-y, does all the talk end up in action that benefits the population. The PNM and the Opposition is full of blowing all of this hot air, talking, talking, talking and getting nothing done.

So I am proud, Mr. President, to be the quiet Minister who gets my things done quietly. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: Quiet, but deadly.

Sen. Hinds: That is why they move him—[ Interruption]

Sen. The Hon. E. George: In my stint as—“ah coming to deal with you, you know.” [Crosstalk] I have some quotes from you. I have some quotes for you. I have some quotes on your stint as junior Minister in the Ministry of National Security. I have them here. You will eat your words. Wait and see.


Sen. The Hon. E. George: My stint as Minister of Works and Infrastructure, there is the evidence of the Diego Martin Highway now under construction: [Desk thumping] there is evidence of the paving of the La Puerta Avenue which the PNM neglected the people up there for more than 25 years. [Desk thumping] More than 25 years! “One set ah talk, talk, talk; we go pave it, we go pave it.” Twenty-five years and those people voted for the PNM religiously.


Sen. The Hon. E. George: Every election they voted for you religiously, and after 25 years this People’s Partnership Government had to come and pave that road. [Desk thumping] Twenty-five years! We opened it recently.
In front of the Starlite Shopping Plaza, the newly repaved roadway and ancillary work that has been done there to relieve the stress of the people of Diego Martin, to enable them to get home much more quickly on an afternoon. That is going to, of course, be helped even further when the Diego Martin Highway widening is completed. [Desk thumping] Let me say this. The work that we did in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure to refurbish the Morne Coco Road which was destroyed by the floods of August 11 last year, the building of the pedestrian bridge in that area of Morne Coco Road, all of those works were done by this Government to help and to make the lives of the people of Diego Martin much more—[Interruption]

Mr. President: Leader of Government Business.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President, in accordance with Standing Order 9(8), I beg to move that the Senate continue to sit until 12 p.m. or before.

Question put.

Mr. President: Anybody wants a division? I think the ayes have it. [Desk thumping and laughter] This Senate—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: Mr. President, a division, please.

Mr. President: The Clerk will call a division.

The Senate divided: Ayes 12  Noes 12

AYES
Singh, Hon. G.
Coudray, Hon. M.
Howai, Hon. L.
Griffith, Hon. G.
Hadeed, Hon. G
George, Hon. E.
Karim, Hon. F.
Bharath, Hon. V.
Moheni, Hon. E.
Lambert, J.
Maharaj, Hon. D.
Sylvester, D.
NOES
Beckles, Miss P.
Hinds, F.
Henry, Dr. L.
Cudjoe, Miss S.
Al-Rawi, F.
Drayton, Mrs. H.
Wheeler, Dr. V.
Prescott SC, E.
Mahabir, Dr. D.
Small, D.
Roach, H.
Edwards, Dr. A.

Sen. Hinds: [Desk thumping and crosstalk] “We going home eight o’clock. The Government defeated.”

Mr. President: Hon, Senators, it is reported that the division has led to a tie, 12 votes for and 12 votes against. I, therefore, have the casting vote in this. The Standing Orders provide that this Senate will sit until 8 p.m. unless you declare otherwise and, therefore, this Senate will continue to sit until 8 p.m. unless you—[Interruption] [Desk thumping and laughter]

Question negatived.

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2014) BILL, 2013

Mr. President: Minister of Justice.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Thank you very you much, Mr. Vice-President. Sorry, Mr. President. Sen. Al-Rawi—[Interruption]

Sen. Singh: You want to start at eight on—[Inaudible]
Sen. Hinds: You mad? We voting against you too.

Sen. Beckles: Yes, but we have to vote on that too. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Senator: “All dat gun talk.” [Crosstalk]

Sen. Karim: “All yuh Iraqi is terrorist, boy.”

Mr. President: Senators, I would like to listen to the Minister of Justice in silence, please.


Mr. President: Thank you.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Sen. Al-Rawi very early in his contribution spoke to the issue of flooding in Diego Martin and so on, and I am happy to know that he has the solution for it [Laughter] because the PNM in all its years in office and particularly its stint between 2001 and 2010, had ample opportunity to deal with the issue of flooding in Diego Martin and did absolutely nothing. So I want to start where Sen. Al-Rawi made mention of flooding in Diego Martin, and—[Interruption]


Sen. The Hon. E. George: I have a speech impediment. Leave me alone, please. [Laughter] I want to start, however, Mr. President, with last year’s floods to heighten or to make clearer what is happening this year in terms of what the PNM is doing.

6.25 p.m.

Last year, the floods of August 11 took place and in those floods of August 11 last year, the Members of Parliament for the area—the three Members of Parliament were absent. What Trinidadians call missing in action.

Sen. Hinds: Not true!

Sen. The Hon. E. George: So over the entire area from Maraval to Carenage, including Diego Martin—[ Interruption]

Sen. Hinds: That is not true!

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—which experienced considerable destruction, these gentlemen were missing in action. The backhoes and excavators and so on of the various agencies were out there as early as seven o’clock of that morning trying to get the infrastructure back in place. You will recall that that flood was
extremely devastating to the infrastructure in the region. So, if you fast-forward to this year, one would appreciate that they would not have wanted themselves to be caught napping again. So MP Browne was out quite early, and I did see him around three o’clock so I know that he was out early. [Continuous crosstalk] But I think he was out early only to ensure that he could put some bacchanal in the proceedings. Because, again, all of the agencies were out there—[Interuption]

Mr. President: Senators, the Senator is speaking.

Sen. Beckles: Sorry, sorry, Mr. President.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: All of the agencies were out there, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, the Diego Martin Regional Corporation—all of those people were out very early. I myself saw the excavator belonging to the defence force being operated by one of the defence force personnel clearing away the two intersections that were made impassable by the flood waters and the mud that was deposited in those areas at the intersection of Sierra Leone and the highway and Crystal Stream and the highway.

So, by the time six o’clock came in the morning, persons wanting to leave Diego Martin to go to their various destinations, whether it be work or school, were able to do so quite easily. But once we had done that, Mr. President, the next stage, of course, was to try to deal with all of those persons whose homes were flooded. That is an exercise that began virtually immediately because the Minister of the People and Social Development had been alerted to it.

Lo and behold, on Sunday, there is a protest by people of Mason Street. I had also passed on Mason Street, Texeira Street and Jean Avenue and so on to see the destruction for myself. It was pretty devastating for a lot of people who lost everything and we had put in place the arrangements that the social workers would come and assess and so on, and address the whole issue of dealing with the replacement of their furniture, but much more urgently to provide food and water and so on for those persons who were affected.

But one can imagine that all of this cannot happen to please everyone because you have in excess of 100 households that had to be attended to. To cut a long story short, I heard that there was a meeting a couple of days ago—I think it was Saturday—at which the three MPs for the area took turns in bashing and blaming the Government for the flooding in Diego Martin over that Friday night into Saturday.
Let me say, Mr. President, I live in Diego Martin and I walk all over Diego Martin consistently as a form of exercise and I do so at various times whether it be on weekdays when I do it very, very early in the morning before dawn, or on a Saturday or a Sunday when I do it after dawn has broken. I am aware of a lot of the things that take place in Diego Martin. I think I am even more familiar with all of it than even the MPs for the area. I was able to see for myself that all of the watercourses had been cleared. I mean, I would walk from home and go around down to the corner of St Lucien and Diego Martin Main Road and make the entire circle coming sometimes up Sierra Leone, or at other times, up the Wendy Fitzwilliam and back onto St Lucien Road, making a circle that takes me an hour, sometimes a little over an hour.

And by that means I was able to understand that the reason, to me, for the flood was the amount of debris that came down and blocked the watercourses, and in particular the Diego Martin River, very very high up virtually at its source, and the bridge at the intersection—sorry, at Patna near the police post—was blocked, and that is what led to the flooding of all of the homes that were adjacent to the river, on both sides of the river.

In fact, I spoke to a gentleman who lives on Texeira Avenue, he is 78 years old and he said to me, “Mr. George, this flood is not the fault of the Government. It cannot be blamed on the Government. I have been living here for 78 years, since I was a little boy living in the same house” which he has renovated, 78 years, and he said this is the first time that they were ever flooded out. I can tell you because we took pictures of the debris against the bridge, and obviously, the water, with all the debris from the cutting of the hills and the bamboo and logs and so on that came down the channel is what blocked the channel and caused the water to overflow and to flood people’s homes. It is not at all the reason of the Government to blame.

**Sen. Hinds:** He is the MP for Diego Martin?

**Sen. Singh:** Soon to be!

**Sen. The Hon. E. George:** So I am just saying that—[Interruption]

**Sen. Beckles:** Soon to be?

**Sen. Hinds:** Tell us about the Ministry of Justice.

**Sen. The Hon. E. George:**—Sen. Al-Rawi, again—in referring to the flooding situation—and his colleagues who held the meeting in Diego Martin to misinform people that the Government was to blame because this Government
has done nothing for flooding in Diego Martin, were not telling the people the truth. I will ask one question: if that is so, what happened between 2001 and 2010? What happened between 2001 and 2010? And that is the question that we have to ask.

The PNM Government was in power for almost 10 years and had ample time to address all of the issues in Diego Martin, but I am saying that no matter what they had done then, this flooding would have still happened. I want to say to the people of Diego Martin and those people who have been affected by this flood that the Government is attending to your issues and you shall receive relief in the shortest possible time.

I want to say this about the contributions that have come from the other side, and there seems to be a strategy in every one of the contributions from the Opposition Benches to go as follows: first of all, let us rebuff the previous government speaker; let us deny everything he has said; let us throw all that he said into the waste-paper basket and say that you are fooling the people. Second, they mentioned the budget speech en passant and they mentioned it en passant in all of their discussions because they can find nothing wrong with it. The budget speech by my colleague, Minister Howai, in my view, was an excellent presentation—[Interuption]

Hon. Senators: “Yeah, yeah.” [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—and I want to congratulate the Minister. The other thing they do is to say, let us call the budget by a name so that we could get “ah” headline in the newspaper. So we will call it either “normalizing madness”, “eat ah food budget”—[Interuption]

Sen. Hinds: “Ah bandit’s charter!”

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—“bandit’s charter” and all of that is simply to grab a headline from the newspaper. [Desk thumping] It is a strategy, “dai wah they do. Yuh understand?” Right? So as I said, they mentioned the budget en passant, but they can find nothing to say about the budget, so if you can find nothing to say about the budget because it is such a good budget, what is the fallback position? The fallback position is to start to talk about corruption.

Sen. Cudjoe: Tell us about your Ministry.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: The fallback position is to talk about—let me talk, you will get a chance to talk, ma’am.
Sen. Cudjoe: You know that, right?

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Yeah.

Sen. Cudjoe: You know I will!

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Let us just—leave me let me talk and when you get a chance, you will do your talking.

Sen. Cudjoe: All right.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: So they say, you pick an issue—a contract or a project—and in typical PNM style with no proof, they toss out “it is corruption, it is corruption”. Again, Mr. President, I want to say this because this is what the PNM does as a matter of course. I have mentioned on many occasions in this Senate the issue of the Opposition Senators or speakers following a PNM tagline that says—that understands that a lie gets halfway around the world before the naked truth could put on its clothes to go after him. “Da is what they do.”

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Yeah!” [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. E. George: They throw the lie out there and then they say, “you run after it truth and see if yuh could catch it”, but of course, it is extremely difficult to catch the lie or the untruth because the truth is there still putting its clothes on to go after them. That is what they do.

So the mention by Sen. Henry of the entire SIS issue in WASA is typical; that is what they do. Sen. Al-Rawi epitomized that today again—[Interruption]

Sen. Al-Rawi: How?

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—with his discourse on the contract being awarded and the issue of the—[Interruption]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Reading it out is an issue!

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—the matter of the award of a contract for work down at Movie Towne. What is the name of the—?


Sen. The Hon. E. George: Invaders Bay. Same thing. Again, Mr. President, it amazes me that Sen. Al-Rawi in particular, and to a lesser extent my very good friend—[Interruption]

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—Sen. Henry, that these persons who are so protective of their own characters and integrity are so callous and cavalier and do not care about the integrity and characters of others. [Desk thumping]

I have said over and over that the test—


Sen. The Hon. E. George:—that the test of your character and integrity in this Senate is that you have to protect other people’s character and integrity with the same enthusiasm and fervour with which you protect your own. [Desk thumping] It is unfair to be impugning the character and integrity of other people who cannot defend themselves in this Parliament so cavalierly and callously with no proof or proof that would not stand up in a court of law.

Finally on this matter, I want to say that the elevated discourse by Senators on the Independent Bench, starting with Sen. Ramkhelawans and Sen. Helen Drayton and Dr. Wheeler—when this debate started—and continued in particular by Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir and I want to say that I too sat listening to him with full attention.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Listen to Roach, though! He said no!

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Full attention because he gave options and other ideas that the Government could consider as they try to take this country forward because all of us sit here seeking the interest of the population. And the interest of the population is found in raising the level of discourse in the Senate, and in Parliament generally, all right, so that people do not sing calypsos on us saying that “we kicksin”. I want to congratulate Sen. Dr. Mahabir on his contribution in that regard. [Desk thumping]

On the other hand, the PNM Senators—

Sen. Cudjoe: Stick on the PNM!

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—brought an all-time low to the debate, as is usual, by focusing only on—[Interruption]

Sen. Al-Rawi: “He gon pilot legislation for justice in this Senate?”

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—focusing only on untruths or what one might call half-truths and innuendoes.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Yeah.” Well said!
Sen. The Hon. E. George: I know too that even my good friend, Sen. Henry, who initially had—[Interruption]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Stoop to an all-time low?

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—that his initial avoidance, he has abandoned his initial avoidance of this lowest common denominator to join his colleagues in the corruption rant because that is what it is. It is a rant! Just go on and on, throw some mud at it and some of the mud would stick even though it is completely untrue, completely untrue, and it cannot be substantiated at all, but just throw some mud. [Continuous crosstalk]

6.40 p.m.

But just throw some mud. You have nothing to say because you can find no fault with the budget so your next—you resort to the next and only option you have, to throw corruption, to throw corruption, corruption.

I want to say just before I leave this entire matter, Mr. President, to quote, in order to make two points clear, one, the issue of mention being made of my stint here as Minister of National Security. Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds was once a Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security.

I just want to read from the Appropriation Bill debate of 2008. So this was on 28 August, 2007 from the Hansard. And to show how talk is what epitomizes the Opposition PNM, talk, talk, talk and no action. Listen to this carefully.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Tell them man, tell them!

Sen. The Hon. E. George: And this is quoted from pages 190 to 191 of the Hansard of Tuesday 28th August 2007. Quote, hon. F. Hinds:

“Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to spend the bulk of my allotment of time dealing with the prison environment, an area for which I have direct responsibility in the Ministry of National Security. …

The other force that is driving us, in terms of what we are doing in the prison, is the Task Force Report of 2001. …

The task force recommended, among other things, that the name of the institution be changed from prisons to correctional facilities, not surprisingly, because the main thrust of the task force report was that we move from the retributive system of justice where punishment was the order of the day;…”
The task force recommended a restorative justice philosophy which will bring all parties—the criminal, his victims, the society as a whole and the courts—representing the society, the Judiciary—all parties will participate and the objective will not be only punishment. Punishment is an important part of it. It must be so, and I subscribe to that, but beyond punishment, it has to do with healing to bring about some restoration.”

Now, he continued.

“It also recommended that prison industries be set up and made to occupy central space in the revenue-earning capacity of the prison, a recognition that the prisoners should not just sit there and get fat or rot or vegetate or be idle, but rather be put to some productive use.”

And so on.

“The task force also recommended that appropriate mechanisms be put in place to encourage inmates to maintain family and community ties, and to avail themselves…” of “rehabilitative activities.”

And so on. And you know he went on and on and on but you know, that was 2007 “eh” and when the PNM departed—well thankfully his leader, recognizing that he is just a talker and not a performer, got rid of him before the 2010 election. But more than that, nothing that he spoke of there took place until my predecessors, Minister Volney and Minister Christlyn Moore, took these issues in hand and they are well on the way to being implemented. The whole issue of restorative justice is only now being put into place. [Desk thumping]

Hear, in that same budget debate, another quote from page 193, here is Sen. Hinds again. And I am saying this to you, this is 2007 “eh”, August 2007, this is Hinds speaking in August 2007. We are now in 2013.

“Priority should be given to the introduction or drafting of legislation to provide for the introduction of a parole system. We accepted that and established through Cabinet, a parole introduction committee…and they came up with a position which has been forwarded to Cabinet.”

Now, as far back as then they have come up with a position which has been forwarded to Cabinet.

“When it comes out of Cabinet, it will most likely go to the Attorney General’s Department for drafting of the legislation. We are on the way to introducing parole as has been recommended by the task force” in 2001.
Sen. Ramlogan SC: Well done, well done man, well done. [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. E. George: And then he went on of course to talk about what parole does, about having a person who was incarcerated being released before their date and so on and so on. But hear the final quote from that Hansard by Sen. Hinds. Here is the final quote:

“Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are some of the recommendations of the task force, and we are pursuing them steadily as we go along.”

We are pursuing them steadily as we go along—2007. “Yuh understand?” And 2010, nothing done, and here, “yuh” see, it is this Ministry of Justice now that is moving forward with the parole policy and legislation in 2013.

And in fact, Mr. President, I want to congratulate the public servants who work under the aegis of the Attorney General in his office and under the office of the CPC and the lawyers in the Ministry of Justice for completing and presenting and having on my desk the parole Bill. And, in fact, the parole Bill was supposed to be taken by the LRC today but because we had the Senate sitting that LRC meeting was postponed to another date. So the parole Bill is only now really being attended to. It was just a lot “ah” talk and hot air, on the part of Sen. Hinds at the time—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: What year?

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—2007. Talk, talk, talk; talk, talk, talk, come in here and talk, talk, talk, and then tell me I am the silent Minister. I prefer to be silent, I am telling you, that is my way of doing things and I get much more done, much more than anyone of you could get done. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Hinds: He “didn” have a ministry, was dedicated a Ministry and for three years you did nothing.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Make excuses now man, make excuses. There are a couple other quotations I want to take from Sen. Hinds because he is here critical of everybody, you know, and I want to prove that he stands out as one of the most non-performing Ministers ever in the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senator: “Yeahh.” [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Coming here talking, talking all the time and doing nothing.


Sen. Hinds: No other Minister has been shifted so.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: I want to read from where he is as senator then—or the Minister then speaking, and I am going further back “eh”—[ Interruption]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Yeah.”

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—and just like the 2005, when they were talking about running—[ Interruption]

Hon. Senator: The pipeline.


Hon. Senator: “Eh heh?”

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Yes, yes “he talking” about crime. “Yuh” see, they were getting “pound” about crime at the time, this is 2005, and here is what the goodly senator did at the time. He went back to quote 1997 Newsday. So “he trying” to find a way to extricate himself from the criticism that the then Government, in 2005, was facing from the Opposition. So he went back to say, “well look what dey was saying about all yuh in 1997.” Hear him:

I want to read a bit of an editorial, the caption reads: “Disturbing leap in crime” Newsday page 8 February 26 1997. That was the headline. It goes as follows:

“Government’s failure to adequately address the crime situation has been reflected in a sharp rise in serious crimes for the period January 1st to February 15th this year, over the same period last year. The giant and disturbing leap in crime has embraced murders, 240 per cent, woundings from 45 in 1996 to 70 in 1997, rapes and incest, robberies, possession of dangerous drugs and kidnapping.

Today, with the Government clearly unable to stem far less turn back the steadily mounting crime wave, Trinidad and Tobago has now the dubious distinction of being the crime and murder capital of the south Caribbean.”

And then he goes again and quotes another—[ Interruption]

Sen. Singh: Who is saying that?


Sen. The Hon. E. George: In 2005, where he is—they are under some pressure from the Opposition at the time in 2005 for the level of crime, murders rising and so on. So he is pointing to 1997 and saying what the Newsday was saying in 1997 about the then Government. So he continues.

Again in the Newsday December 26, 2001, look at the headline. Headline “2001 was just brutal”

And they list a number of serious crimes that took place that year.

In the month of December, 2001, there were 17 murders, the Cropper murders and a number of others including the former Colonel Mader who lived in my constituency in Malik, Christmas Day, Boxing Day.

So when they come here…"

This is the quote, you know.

“So when they come here hypocritically…”

And you know when he says that:

“So when they come here hypocritically”—[Laughter and desk thumping]

Sen. Hinds: “No bald head cyah look like a Rasta.”

Sen. The Hon. E. George: “—deceitfully and deceptively”—[Interruption]

Sen. Hinds: “No bald head cyah look like no Rasta.”

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Take “dat” in [Inaudible]

Sen. The Hon. E. George: “…in typical UNC style to talk about crime as though it now started”—[Interruption]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: “…we know it is just rubbish.”

Hon. Senator: “Ooh, papa.”

Hon. Senator: 2005 [Inaudible]

Sen. The Hon. E. George: “It is a problem. It is not just a Laventille problem…”

Listen to him carefully.
“…it is a regional problem, it is a global problem…”—[Laughter and desk thumping]

So even at that time, there we had the goodly Senator defending the Government, his Government, by quoting what was happening to the Government previous to his.

And finally—[ Interruption ]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: [ Inaudible ]

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—again on the parole system, at pages 648 to 649, he is referring to the introduction of the parole system in Trinidad and Tobago.

“In 2001, the Cabinet…”

Quote. A quote again, Mr. President.

“In 2001, the Cabinet accepted the report and recommendations of a task force that was appointed to look at the prison system in Trinidad and Tobago. It recommended essentially a transformation of the prison system from the retributive system, that now operates, to a restorative system of justice.”

Lovely words.

“This system simply means that punishment was the order of the day but now rather than focus only on the offender, it would bring in the victim who would have a voice in terms of how the offender should be dealt with.

It would be a bit of a tripartite arrangement amongst the State, the convicted person and the victim.

Having accepted it we have to set about a transformation process. In this regard, a transformation unit has been established and their remit is to take the report of the task force and make it a reality.”

So they appointed a 13-member parole committee headed by Mr. Norton Jack as chairman.

“They are in the process of looking at parole systems in the United States, Canada, Australia, England and other jurisdictions to elicit the best that is amenable to our culture.

It is our intention to bring a parole system to bear in Trinidad and Tobago. Why a parole system? It is quite clear that burgeoning prison population is not
sustainable. You cannot continue to lock up people and put them away because you would have to build more jails.”

But the PNM administration never put in place a parole system despite the establishment of that committee in 2005. It is only now in 2013 that the Ministry of Justice is moving ahead with a parole system.

And I want to say to this House and to you, Mr. President, that the Ministry of Justice is moving ahead with this parole system. [Desk thumping] And I am hearing comments about give an account of the Ministry of Justice and I am doing exactly that, but they do not like the way that I am doing it because I am highlighting the ineffectiveness—[Interruption]


Sen. The Hon. E. George:—the ineffectiveness and sheer incompetence of Sen. Hinds at the time when he was Minister of—am “thing.”


Mr. President: The speaking time of the hon. Minister of National Security has expired.

Sen. Hinds: No. He is not national security [Inaudible]

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. S. Cudjoe]

Sen. Hinds: Minister of Justice.

Sen. Cudjoe: He moved from security to the Minister of Justice.

Question put and agreed to.


Mr. President: Minister of Justice. The ayes have it.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: The heat on “yuh”. [Desk thumping]

6.55 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Thank you, Mr. President. Thanks to my colleagues. Thanks very much, to Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe and am—[Interruption]


Sen. The Hon. E. George: I know it was your pleasure, Ma’am, but it was your colleagues’ displeasure.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Your colleagues’ displeasure. “Yuh cyah” take the truth. You cannot take the truth, Senator. [Crosstalk]

Yes, I now want to turn to some of the issues that the Ministry of Justice will be attending in the coming year, Mr. President. And so, I have to check my text now to make clear to this Senate what are the plans of the Ministry of Justice, and I will have to flip through a little more quickly, because I had consumed so much of my time in trying to deal with Sen. Hinds and Sen. Al-Rawi and their contributions.

In terms of legislation, if we are accounting for what the Ministry did over the last year—and I want to, again, thank my predecessors Ministers Volney and Moore for the work that they did in the Ministry, to lay the foundation for what will continue into the coming year.

In terms of legislation, the Ministry got the DNA legislation through the Parliament last year.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That was year before.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: The Ministry also got, through the Parliament—well as I said, we have the parole Bill, the databank. But we have to come back to the Parliament, I am advised by the people in the Ministry, to do some amendment to that DNA Act because, as they proceeded to put in place the arrangements for its implementation, certain shortcomings were discovered and it was felt that those shortcomings needed to be attended to, via amendments, before the Bill could be put into effect. So we are attending to that.

Those proposed amendments include: to provide for the office of a custodian of the DNA databank to be independent; to provide for the definition and separation of the roles of the custodian and the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre; to allow immigration officials to take a non-intimate sample from a deportee; to provide for first responders to a crime scene who possess the requisite training in crime scene sample collection, to have the authority to collect DNA samples at crime scenes in addition to the qualified persons that are referred to in the law; and also to provide for the requirement that qualified persons personally submit samples taken by them to the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre—sorry, to provide for the removal of that requirement and instead to cause such samples to be submitted to the centre. There are also certain changes that are being proposed for the regulations and those are being pursued at this time.
The other item of legislation that was enacted was the Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Act, which Sen. Hinds—[Interruption]

Sen. Al-Rawi: That was done before.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—we are doing the necessary to get those things implemented. That is what I said. So, this electronic monitoring Act, the Ministry is actively engaged in laying the groundwork to enable an effective implementation of the Act. The recommended features of the electronic monitoring devices have been identified and once these are approved, by way of an order of the Minister of Justice, Government will proceed to procure the devices and select a service provider for the discharge of some of the duties of the electronic monitoring unit. So, those, in respect of electronic monitoring Act, we are putting in place the groundwork to ensure that the Act can take effect.

There was also a proposal that was agreed to by the Cabinet for persons to have increased access to legal aid. This was a critical step in continuing to ensure that the rights to legal counsel and the protection of the law and to equality before the law are upheld. The Cabinet agreed to increase the amount payable to persons who took up the legal aid. I had the Order here but I do not seem to be able to find it now. I could have read from the Order. Okay, but I had the Order and I think it has increased from 10,000, I think, to 30,000. Do not hold me to it. The monthly stipend that would be paid to a legal aid attorney—[Interruption]


Sen. The Hon. E. George:—who is representing a grouping, I think, of persons who are accused.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is per brief, that is not monthly.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Per brief.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: I am sorry. I had the item but it seems to have disappeared. So that is—as I indicated earlier, the parole Bill is now before the LRC to be considered before it is laid in Parliament and this Bill is being finalized, as I said, as we speak.

I want to flip through because I know that I do not have much time, Mr. President. The prisons, there is attention also to amend the Prisons Act and the Prisons Rules. The new Prisons Rules are well on the way to being completed. Again, all of those we intend to bring before Parliament, including amendments to
the Jury Act and amendments to the Bail Act.

There are certain construction projects that the Ministry is considering, including Supreme Court of Judicature buildings in Malabar, Sangre Grande, Trincity, Carlsen Field, Penal and Roxborough, Tobago. Let me say this, because of the challenge for resources, in discussion with the Minister of Finance and the Economy, we have agreed that we will select the most important three of these construction projects, because it will be difficult, if not impossible, to address all of them during this financial year. So, the intention is to just select two or three of them. I think we are trying to focus on the Malabar judicial centre, the remand prison.

And let me say, Mr. President, I did visit the prison last week and those conditions under which people are kept in remand are appalling. I also had a visit from the representing union for prisons officers and they too urged and made the importance of getting this new remand prison and I will do my best to ensure that, if not complete, the work on that new remand prison will be well on the way within this particular budget period.

I want to turn briefly, Mr. President, to the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre. I did visit it also a week and a half ago, I think it was, and I want, first of all, to congratulate the director of the centre, Miss Arlette Lewis. I want that this be recorded in the Hansard. [Desk thumping] Because on my visit to that facility and to view what was going on, I recognized that the Director, Miss Arlette Lewis, and her team, had done really, really yeoman service to this country by the way that they had addressed the refurbishment and reconfiguring of that building to address the changing needs and the changing demands in the forensic arena. With limited money and limited human resources, they have been able to ensure that that facility is functioning to a level that the country can feel comfortable.

Let me say this, in respect of a lot of the refurbishing work and extensions, and so on, that had been done to that building, as a former public servant, I understand that you are faced with attempting to move heaven and earth to get that kind of work that I saw done at the Forensic Science Centre and I want to, therefore, again, congratulate them for work that was really, really well done and I think that we should give that a round of applause. [Desk thumping]

The plans there are to continue to ensure that the centre, physically, can function, in terms of providing the persons who work there with the surroundings, proper surroundings that can enable them to perform their work well. The
intention now is to contract additional persons to ensure that the work that is required can be done. And if I am to quote from the document, there was also the creation of six new contract positions: evidence technician and a health and safety officer and two scientific examiners, because the amount of work that they are getting now requires that the staff be increased. They are saying that once these positions are filled, there will be a reduction in the turnaround time of casework submissions and the existing backlog of evidence submitted for DNA and narcotic analysis.

There was also the recruitment of an additional pathologist in February of this year and that pathologist will help to ensure that the annual number of autopsies conducted at the centre is within the internationally accepted standard. My advice is that this additional pathologist coming on to the team has resulted in post-mortem examination reports being issued on a timelier basis. Eight hundred and eighty-seven autopsies have been performed in the forensic pathology subdivision for the fiscal year 2012/2013, so far.

So, Mr. President, the work goes on. I have been in the Ministry now for just a couple of weeks but I must say that the officials of the Ministry are doing their very best. They are very supportive and I see that the programme of work involving the construction projects, as well as the legislation, that we plan to bring to this Parliament, to get through the Parliament, to improve the performance of the Ministry, all of these will get done in good time.

So, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to join the debate and I hope that I have contributed to the raising of the level of the debate, rather than it is debasing or demeaning. Thank you very much, Mr. President. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. Dr. Aysha Edwards:** Good evening, Mr. President. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Appropriation (Financial Year 2014) Bill, 2013. In my contribution, I will attempt to address five issues or five areas. They are: housing, education, national security, agriculture and health.

I will start with housing. To me, there is an issue where middle class or the middle class sector in our community cannot afford housing. For someone who is considered middle class, you either make too much money to qualify for an HDC home, which is considered as low-income housing, or you make too little to qualify for a commercial bank mortgage. So it means, for a young professional like myself, if I intend to own a home, I need to get married. So I am not getting married for love, I am getting married for property. Right? I am from Tobago where it
is more important to have property than it is important to have a car, for example.

Now, the Government has taken, or has two systems in place for persons earning a certain income to own a home. One is: in the 2013/2014 budget, it is stated that the 2 per cent mortgage programme is being extended to allow all citizens with access to residential service lots, whose income do not exceed $8,000 per month and the value of whose property does not exceed $450,000. I have two problems. One, there is no property in Trinidad and Tobago that is worth $450,000—in no neighborhood. That is the truth.

7.10 p.m.

The next thing, let us do the maths behind this. If you make $8,000 a month, that is your gross salary. So after taxes, your salary is approximately $6,000, that mortgage is $2,500. It means that 40 per cent of my salary is now being paid in mortgage. I still have to pay for a car, if I have kids I have to pay for my children’s education. I have to feed my children; this is unrealistic.

Let us look at the second structure that there is. FCB, First Citizens Bank, which is the Government’s bank or the bank of the people, has a programme called the Aspiring Homeowners Savings Plan (AHSP). And I quote from their brochure. It is:

“Designed to help you meet the financial requirements to qualify for a residential mortgage, with the A.H.S.P. you can start saving with as little as $200* monthly for a contract period of 3 to 5 years.”

And they went on to give an example. So they say, for example, if your house is valued at $750,000, the down payment is $75,000; fees and upfront cost is $39,232. So the total requirement to get a mortgage for a $750,000 house is $114,232. And this is the breakdown that they gave you:

In order to achieve this you can do the three-year contract where you can save $3,200 monthly; a four-year contract where you save $2,400 monthly; a five-year contract where you save $2,000 monthly; or a six-year contract where you go in lumps of three years, three years, so in the first three years, $1,600; and then the next three years, $1,600.

Issues with this: one, again, $750,000 does not get you a home. And I am not talking about living in Glencoe or Westmoorings. I am talking about living in Trincity, Diego Martin, Arima. A home in Trinidad and Tobago starts at 1.2 up, and that is not a home with land, [Desk thumping] that is an apartment; that is a townhouse.

If you are to find—now, someone quoted to me recently and said, there are homes for $820,000, but that was in Sangre Grande. So are all young people to move to Sangre Grande, right? Realistically, if you are going to live in Chaguanas, Trincity,
Diego Martin, Petit Valley and surroundings, you cannot afford a home as a young person.

So, I am moving on to education because I am watching the time, and I have to finish by eight. It was stated that 59,476 students are on GATE, right. And the Millennium Development Goal was being shot out in the budget proposal. Now, the MDG states that by 2015, we will achieve universal primary education. That is the fact. That is what it said. So we will break down the issues or concerns that I have.

One, it was stated laptops have been provided to 70,000 students, for which I understand is Form 1 students. Right? Four thousand teachers and over 650 principals, vice-principals, and supervisors and it goes on and on and on. I would like to know what is the purpose of giving Form 1 students laptops?

Now, I will tell you this. If our education system had what is called an online blackboard where you can access your syllabus, your reading materials, your assignments, turn in papers, get teaching, see educational videos, I will say by all means you give a Form 1 which is a 12—13 year-old a laptop. But from the public’s perspective, it appears that we have given our young people expensive gadgets to go on to Facebook, Twitter and surf the Net without any benefits towards our education system.

This is not university students, a first year university student that we are giving a laptop to, that person might actually benefit from a laptop. Because going into university you need a laptop, you need to do the research required to maintain your tenure in university.

Let us look at GATE. There is a misconception whether it is by the general public, people in Government, people looking in, that GATE provides young people with free education. It does not. What it has provided us with is tuition. No one has talked about accommodation, food, books. You can pay my fees for school, but if I am hungry, uncomfortable and have no books, I will fail. If you fail, GATE is then taken away from you because you are only allowed to extend any programme on the GATE by one year.

GATE is also not sustainable. At some point in time we would not be able to afford GATE at the rate we are going. GATE is a great idea, but it needs to be re-examined. For example, at the time, I attended Howard University and all students were expected to perform some level of community service and you were not paid for that. You had to do it. You loved it and you did it with pride.

The Government spends a lot of money financing NGOs and CBOs to find resource persons. Therefore, we should look at some partnership of getting some of the
same university students who can provide this expertise to those NGOs and CBOs, and save on the money that the Government will provide. It plays two parts. One, you are giving young university students an opportunity in the workplace to practise their skills. Two, you are giving the NGOs and the CBOs exactly what they want, just that you are not giving them cash. You are giving them the experts or the resources.

**Sen. Karim:** For free?

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** For free. *[Desk thumping and crosstalk]*

**Hon. Senator:** Excellent idea.

**Sen. Karim:** Very good idea. Very, very good.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** We move—*[Interruption] sorry?

**Sen. Karim:** I agree with you. I would love that.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** We need—young people, believe it or not, if we are shown how social programmes can work, they will adopt it.

**Sen. Karim:** I agree with you.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** They are not having the opportunity to do so.

**Sen. Karim:** They do have. They have more opportunity now than ever before. I will prove that to you. I will show you the figures. I will show the data when I speak. *[Crosstalk]*

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** No problem, Sir.

**Sen. Karim:** Sen. Drayton confirmed that too.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** No problem. We look at national security next. There are some programmes mentioned, for example, Hoop of Life Community Basketball League. Personally, it comes across as though these programmes are reactive and not proactive. I listened to the Minister of National Security speak and I was enlightened and motivated, because I really do think that he would do an excellent job. He seems committed to the cause. However, I still believe that his budget should be cut.

**Hon. Senator:** I agree.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** I will explain something. As a child growing up I attended Castara Government School. If you ask any Tobagonian that they will tell you that is the bush. *[Desk thumping]* That is country. Right? However, every morning in primary school my day started like this: we said the national prayer; we sang the national song; we sang the National Anthem; we said the watchwords and the
pledge. So Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve, I knew; Discipline, Production and Tolerance, I knew. And you lived that as a young person. You aspired to be better as a young person. Because even coming from there, I knew that my parents expected something of me.

I came from a single parent home with a mother that worked extremely hard for me to get to where I am today. I understood that it was expected of me that if I were not a productive member of society, I was, in fact, a nuisance, and that is something that needs to be translated to young people. I am of the firm belief our country is in the state that we are today because we started off by doing two things.

First, we removed religious education from schools. [Interruption]

**Hon. Senator:** Not all. No, not all.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** Well, from most of the schools that I know, religious education has been removed.

**Hon. Senator:** “De” school Faris went too has religious education.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** Secondly, we removed corporal punishment without replacing some form of disciplinary system into our school system. So now we are reaping the benefit of an undisciplined society, and unless discipline is reinstalled, we will continue to have the problems that we are having today.

**Sen. Karim:** So we must reintroduce corporal punishment?

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** You do not have to do corporal punishment. For example, I will give you a personal example. As a child growing up, in secondary school, I went to South East Port of Spain. South East is on Nelson Street. I came from a single parent home. We had something called parents/teachers day. Before I left Maloney Gardens to go to school on that morning, my mother will remind me, if you embarrass me today, I am going to beat you in school. So I knew for a fact that my teachers better report positively. In addition to which, when my mother came and they gave glowing recommendations, you know what she would ask? “Yuh sure yuh talking about Aysha?” In other words, I think she was more eager to beat me, but in the back of my mind I knew it was not so much that she wanted to beat me, but she wants me to understand, when you step out of my house you represent me.

I will give you another example. We had this thing growing up where our parents told us, if you are ever arrested and the police ask you your name, you say
your name. If they ask you what is your mother’s name, you say mommy; what is your daddy’s name, you say daddy; where do you live, in a house. The reason for that is because they plainly told you, you are not going to embarrass me. Now parents willingly bail out their children for anything and everything. You have to wonder where the disconnect is.

So a lot of the money that is going into national security, needs to go to the Ministry of the People and Social Development, to build social programmes not only to engage the young people, but to strengthen families, because that is the breakdown. When I say family, I do not mean mommy, daddy, child. It could be single parent, whatever the structure of that family is. We really need to get back to where family is important. [Desk thumping] I am sorry, I sort of digressed.

**Hon. Senator:** No, you did not.

**Hon. Senator:** No, no, no. Very good. Very good. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. Karim:** You would not fall out of line at all.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** No problem. I must commend the Government, however, I saw—[Desk thumping, laughter and crosstalk]

**Sen. Karim:** “Oh gawd, why all yuh so boy?”

**Hon. Senator:** Let “de” young lady speak.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:**—I must admit I am impressed with the impending traffic plan—[Interruption]

**Hon. Senator:** Yes. Yes.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:**—of the highway patrol officers, because this will indeed curb the road carnage, and I am looking forward to it. I might be guilty of getting tickets, I must admit, [Crosstalk] but I am still looking forward to seeing them—[Interruption]

**Hon. Senator:** We do not mind the revenue.

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** Or, you do not mind the revenue? No problem. [Crosstalk] I am looking forward to seeing the police on the road especially on the highway, because I think it will deter some people from drinking and then getting behind the wheel. [Crosstalk]

**Sen. Karim:** “Oh gawd boy.”

**Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:** My next topic, agriculture. Food grown in another
country cannot be counted towards food production of my country; that is the fact. Trinidad and Tobago has a programme called the growbox programme. Not sure if—[Interuption]

Hon. Senator: Growbox.

Sen. Dr. A. Edwards:—Growbox programme. I am not sure if a lot of people know about it. I remember trying to access it a couple of months ago. I was told where it is, which is on Farm Road in Curepe, but then I was informed that this is no longer up and running.

Sen. Karim: I could help you with it—[Inaudible]

Sen. Dr. A. Edwards: “Doh” worry, I am coming. Growbox. What growbox provides is, the seedlings, the soil and the material to have your own kitchen garden. So, for example, patchoi which is 25 cents for one seedling—in Hi-Lo, you buy patchoi in a bag, you get four patchoi for $15.00. Now, if you show a young person that for $1.00 you can make $14.00, it makes sense and people talking about acreage of land, you do not need acreage of land. Patchoi will grow in a Clorox bottle. Let us be simple.

You do not need to have a lot of land and you do not only have to grow patchoi; tomatoes, 15 cents a seedling; cabbage, 15 cents a seedling; and I could go on and on and on and on. In addition to which, if you are trying to attract young people, one, you are getting them to grow food at home, so that they are saving money, their parents are saving money, then we can institute that into our education system.

Growing up, in primary school we had a garden, and that was part of it. You had to go out and you will stand with your hose very mundane. Now I have a kitchen garden, so my neighbours before I can get to my patchoi, sometimes eat my patchoi; [Laughter and crosstalk] and I have no problem with that, right.

So we can get young people interested in agriculture, but not the way—I think sometimes we think too big and too far and too fancy, when there are simple solutions to basic problems, right. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: Good point.

Sen. Dr. A. Edwards: Now, in wrapping up, we are going to talk about health. For those who do not know, yes, I am a physician, but by no means do I have the solution for health care in Trinidad and Tobago, by no means. Health in Trinidad and Tobago has several areas of problems, one, community service—not
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[SEN. DR. EDWARDS]

community service, sorry, communication. The way that we speak to people. Sometimes people are offended by what we say. Sometimes we do not know how to say something in the right way. Patients come in and they are waiting for long hours and they are frustrated, and they are seeing people coming before them, and they do not understand what is an emergency as opposed to a routine visit.

So when you come into our emergency department you think that first come, first serve, and not understanding it is in order of priority, or in order of severity of illness.

7.25 p.m.

Now, I enjoy seeing new buildings, I enjoy seeing expanded buildings, however, we have buildings that need fixing and we are not talking about those buildings, for example, Port of Spain General, it said, “allocation to come”, but we are talking about building a new burns unit and a new paediatric hospital with allocations to come for Port of Spain General. Let me digress a bit. We want to build a new paediatric hospital in Couva; as someone who works in a paediatric emergency department I welcome that, however, I would like to know where are we staffing that hospital. At Eric Williams we do not have a paediatric cardiologist. We do not have a paediatric nephrologist. We do not have specialists within the hospital that we have now yet we are going to build a whole new hospital to find staff for; it is kind of unrealistic.

Now, the Minister mentioned the PACS system; it is a great system, I have used it. PACS allows any physician within the hospital to pull up any patient’s radiological imaging. So I can be speaking to an orthopedic surgeon and I am looking at the film on my computer and he is looking at the film on his computer, at which time he could say, “send the person to my clinic” or “this is someone who needs to go to theatre.” So yes, all hospitals should have PACS if they do not have it.

He also mentioned what I think comes across as a national health database, which also I am in full support of, because the most frustrating thing is to have a patient who cannot remember their medication, cannot remember what they have, and you are saying, “Tantie, what medication you on?”, and she say, “The white pill, yuh know, the white one, doctor. It kinda round. The white one.” There are millions of round white pills. [Laughter] So if you can pull up a patient’s file the continuity of care is very easy and it runs smoothly; however, one issue I have, CDAP.

I know that CDAP stands for Chronic Disease Assistance Programme, but if
You look at CDAP there are 55 medications on that script, five of which are paediatrics; the five are: salbutamol inhaler, spacer device, sodium valproate, carbamazepine and prednisolone. So unless my child has a seizure disorder or she is asthmatic, I cannot get any medication free on CDAP. So if I come into the hospital and the pharmacy is close, and I get a prescription, I am then forced to buy or wait until the next day. Let me point out why I am bringing this point up.

In our budget document we talk about dengue and fighting dengue; the treatment for dengue is fluids and Paracetamol, or fluid and paracetamol—if we want to put it that way. Paracetamol is not on CDAP. Anyone who has had a child will tell you, between zero and 18, Panadol is the most commonly used medication that there is, yet it is not on CDAP. [Crosstalk] Let us move on.

In terms of our radiological system, there is much talk about CT scans and MRI. I will bring some clarity for you. If you have a patient requiring a CT scan and that one CT scan machine in your hospital is not working, this is how it goes: for the emergency case they go to the nearest private institution that has a CT machine; for the case that is not considered emergency or stable enough, they then go to a public institution, which is further. So at Eric Williams, if the CT is down and you have to go privately, you go to Medical Associates or St. Augustine private, if you have to go publicly you go to—our first choice is usually Grande, believe it or not.

Now the cost to get a private—[Interruption]


Hon. Senator: Yeah, I heard you clearly.

Sen. Dr. A. Edwards: The cost to the public purse for private CTs can buy probably two CT machines per hospital. Why go through going privately when we can have two machines? The fact of the matter is, any machinery that we have, any machine, whether is your car, whether it is a toaster; they need servicing, they need upkeep. CT machines are used constantly. We are in a stage of medicine where radiological investigation is a part of routine medicine. So imagine when you send a patient for an MRI and they are on a waiting list for two years, oh, for Christ’s sake, when they come back to you with that MRI it is of no use. So the public then think that the doctors are trying to frustrate them by sending them for investigation that they cannot have, and then they have to go privately to get those investigations.

So, Port of Spain General has no MRI machine, and we call Port of Spain
General—and Port of Spain General does not have a paediatric ward. Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex is the only place in Trinidad and Tobago that has a paediatric hospital, or paediatric ward. So in any hospital if you have a paediatric case that you think needs long stay, it is transferred to Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex.

I saw in the budget there was mention about funding for ENT equipment for San Fernando General and I smiled, and the reason I smiled is, I really do think they deserve it, because at Eric Williams if you have an ENT emergency you are transferred to San Fernando General, because we have no ENT specialist on call. And these are the things that we need to address, because it is very frustrating to tell someone who has left Couva, come to Eric Williams because they have an ENT problem that you are now transferring them to San Fernando, when they could have left and go straight so San Fernando. It is hard. And just imagine the abuse you receive when you are trying to explain this to someone.

Princess Elizabeth: Princess Elizabeth home does not only service Trinidad and Tobago, it services the entire lower Caribbean, however, every time the rain falls in Port of Spain, Princess Elizabeth is flooded.

Hon. Senator: That is right.

Sen. Dr. A. Edwards: It is embarrassing. If we want to talk about health tourism, Princess Elizabeth is an example of health tourism, because it is utilized by other countries. How embarrassing it is that it is always flooded; for the amount of the years that Princess Elizabeth has been there, every time it rains they are under water.

I really want to take this opportunity to say that there are great things in the budget, I agree, but there are things in the budget that need tweaking and fixing, and when you are handing over a country to me, eventually, I would like to know that you did a very good job at ensuring that what you are handing over to me is still sustainable and that has shown some growth. Unfortunately, I do not think—it is not that I do not think that there is growth, but I think that there has not been clarity on that growth, so I would like some clarification on some of those issues.

At this point, Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity, and I would like to thank the Senate for the opportunity to have spoken. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President: Sen. Ahmed. [Desk thumping]

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development (Sen. The Hon. Raziah Ahmed): Mr. President, respected Senators all, may I begin by expressing my warm appreciation for all of the wonderful welcome remarks that I have received from fellow Senators in this
Senate, and to say that it is an honour to serve as a Minister of State in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development under the Government of Prime Minister, the hon. Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar—[Desk thumping]—who in fact recognizes that the richest possibilities for expansive growth, unity and national strength is embedded in the vibrant diversity of our country. [Desk thumping]

Indeed as we mark Republic Day celebrations, it is a signal achievement of our Government under the People’s Partnership that we represent the highest ideals of national equity and equality so long articulated in our National Anthem, “where every creed and race find an equal place”. May I now compliment the Minister of Finance and the Economy on an astute budget and for a painted picture of the road to economic growth, that trumpets in fact, in the words of the hon. Prime Minister; the launch of the most aggressive development and progressive period of governance in Trinidad and Tobago’s history. [Desk thumping]

I also want to take a quick moment to express our Ministry’s sadness on behalf of myself and the Ministry at the horror stories emanating as they affect children, and, in particular, the story out of Chaguanas a few day ago, affecting the family of Kimona Roopnarine and all of that community, no doubt traumatized by the misfortune, and all the other families who have been traumatized by similar misfortune.

And as I join the debate today, I will start by saying that the core business of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development is to focus on the needs of our people on the social margins, on the edges of society, and to bring centre stage a package of credible solutions that cater to the collective prosperity of all our people. The time is now, hon. Senators, for a beginning of a conversation that is different, a discussion that is sober, a discussion that will raise the level of this honourable Senate, and, indeed, the level of awareness and self-consciousness of the entire country in every community. The new discussion must speak to what is called “cognitive empathy”; cognitive empathy at all levels.

So in my response to the budget debate I will not speak to fiscal deficit, but I will speak to the empathy deficit that leads to the abuse of children, that leads to violence in our homes against women, that leads to the abuse of alcohol and drugs, to dysfunctional families and other stressed-out living conditions, and the lack of common caring, as is so clearly evident by the inattention of Senators, the lack of common caring about matters that affect the heart and soul of our people.

Indeed, we need to move away from the old have-beens, from the old
processes of introspection alone and embrace the new innovative, creative ways of thinking that are captured in what social psychologists are now calling “outrospection”, to begin looking at how we must nurture new skills by learning to step outside of ourselves, not just an emotional matching in empathy, but in the new construct of cognitive empathy. If we do not take the initiative to begin a different kind of discussion, if we do not together act to change the attitude and the behaviour that is reflected in uncaring responses in this society we would be losing big time, or you will be leaving it to the Government in power to do it alone. [Desk thumping]

The time is now to focus on how we can overcome this deficit in empathy that the society so desperately needs to address, and as it affects our youth and our children—a core business of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. Mr. President, the Ministry notes with deep concern that 70 per cent of candidates who failed to attain the passing grade in the SEA examination, according to statistics for 2008 that are published, were boys. Seventy per cent of students writing the SEA exam who failed to make the 30 per cent grade are boys. A large population of boys become vulnerable and are most likely to fall out of the education system altogether, leading to a less attractive and more dangerous way of living, or ways of making a living and this is exacerbated by the absence of the male live-in role models in our society.

In fact, while the boys do not—while 70 per cent of them do not make the passing grade, one educator informed me that in her secondary school some 20 per cent of the boys who enter Form 1 do not make it to Form 5 to complete the CXC examinations, and this is reason why measures for our disadvantaged young men in particular, and those who reside in the social margins are addressed by our Ministry in what we call high priority youth projects.

7.40 p.m.

The intention of these projects is to break the vicious cycle of poverty that has stifled our young people and has near strangled our single mothers. I think Sen. Drayton wanted to find out what initiatives we have for the males in particular, so I will start with that.

Let me mention our Gatekeeper Programme. The Gatekeeper Programme has been successfully rolled out—is targeted to be rolled out in certain communities and it has already started in the Toco community and it targets youth at risk. Now that the roll-out has been completed successfully in Toco, it is moving to Marabella, Arima, Carapo and San Fernando. The Gatekeeper Programme is a
proactive approach to dealing with the effects of social ills by training a cadre of young men between the ages of 17 and 29 to become the new and positive model of community leaders.

Another problem facing the community is the whole question of bullying that occurs at the primary school level and the secondary school level. [Interruption]

Sen. Singh: Particularly in St. Mary’s.

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed: So, with respect to bullying, the Ministry is rolling out a programme called Respect Me, Respect You. [Interruption] This initiative is a specific purpose plan to address—a specific purpose problem to address the bullying that exists in schools. [Crosstalk] Trainers have been trained to work in the school system and a massive sensitization programme is scheduled to begin shortly.

Another programme coming out of our Ministry to affect and to influence what is happening in the young male society is the Parenting Programme. The Parenting Programme is designed to address—fostering skills in young male fathers of children who probably do not have live-in relationships with the mothers of their babies. This programme has been completed in a roll-out module in Marabella. That was completed in June this year and will be moving to other communities.

These young fathers are, for the first time, being given an opportunity to understand that there is time for them to develop a sense of direction and a better sense of purpose centred around the upbringing and nurturing of the children that they father in many communities.

This initiative addresses some of the root causes for social ills that result when children, especially teenage boys do not have live-in male role models and some of the issues that are referred to in the Ryan Report as a negative “dominant masculine gender scripts”. So our Gatekeeper Programme, our Respect Me, Respect You Programme and the Parenting Programme are three of the programmes that have already started to change the thinking of our young people.

There are a number of bitter issues that face certain communities. Many are disadvantaged and have all kinds of problems that fall out from misfortune, violence and they affect all of us wherever we live, in whichever community. One child hurting, one young man hurting, one young woman, one single mother hurting, affects all of us—every private householder in every sector—and they are long festering issues that result in gang violence, dysfunctional families, high-risk sexual behaviour, child abuse, human trafficking and now gun running, as was exposed in the newspaper recently.
In fact, it is the vision of the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who has created this Ministry to mainstream these chronic and sordid social ills, taking them from the back-burner on to the front burner. The serious nature of these gaps in the social fabric must give rise to a shift in the paradigm, a shift in the way of thinking, a shift in the way of conceptualizing our problems as purely economic and recognizing that the empathy deficit refers to the lack of care amongst our citizens. [Desk thumping]

And so the discussion needs to be raised to a higher level, a higher level, and we need to understand that when we are talking about the lack of care in our society, when we are talking about the disadvantaged and the abused, it is not about this side and that side, it is about us; it is about the third side, and if we do not get together collectively and regard this as our agenda, we are going to lose a generation of children. [Desk thumping]

I will focus for a couple minutes on issues affecting women in particular. The Ministry recognizes that some 31 per cent of all households in Trinidad and Tobago are headed by single women—single mothers, some 31 per cent of all households, and the struggle to maintain their dignity as mothers, single parents and workers who are disadvantaged in any capacity, is a front burner issue that is being addressed in the national gender policy, a work in progress. Studies also reflect that it is in these households, headed by women, that the highest number of dependents exists. So not only do we have a large proportion of households headed by women who are single, but they tend to have the most children.

Another alarming statistic is that teenage pregnancy is extremely high in urban areas and 13.5 per cent of all live and stillbirth deliveries in this country occur among teenagers—teenagers, Mr. President—13.5 per cent of all pregnancies—teenagers.

Hon. Senator: Wow!

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed: In 2005, a study by the Family Planning Association saw that some one-third of all pregnancies occurred in women, women who attempted termination of the pregnancy either through self-selected methods—tablets, herbs and other backyard methods. This is an empathy deficit at its worst. And I can go on and on, Mr. President, about the number of social ills that we have inherited and the number of programmes that we have to address, to bring front burner, centre stage, the kinds of initiatives that are going to be rolled out and that we are rolling out.
In this fiscal year, an allocation of $109.2 million will be provided for projects and programmes for social development and poverty alleviation. The Ministry will advance construction of six new facilities with three safe houses, [Desk thumping] two assessment centres and a transition home to assess the youth who move from institutions to independent living.

The Ministry will renovate the St. Mary’s Home for Children, the St. Jude’s School for Girls, the St. Michael’s Home for Boys, and the St. Dominique’s Children Home. This modernization programme will run into some $26 million and has been approved by Cabinet.

Further, the refurbishment and retrofitting of the Malick, Laventille, Los Bajos and California Youth Facilities will run into some $13.7 million and a multipurpose youth centre has been earmarked for Ste. Madeleine to the tune of $5 million.

Mr. President, there are a number of policies that are being formatted on the table, on the drawing board to protect our children. In the five or so minutes that I have left, let me just speak quickly about the national child policy; about the National Early Childhood Development Nursery Policy, about the National Child Protection Policy and the National Strategic Framework for Child Protection.

The National Strategic Framework for Child Protection aims specifically to provide a framework of principles and standards—standards and guidelines for safeguarding children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. I want to stress “standards” because while we have some delivery of care in the communities, what we need to improve on are the standards of delivery and the guidelines to ensure that we meet international best practice when it comes to our children.

In addition to the development of the National Parenting Policy, the Ministry has prioritized its intentions to positively affect parenting on a national level. As such, a sustainable framework for the delivery of more comprehensive and cohesive parental support services at the level of the home, the school and the community at large has been established.

The Ministry also recognizes that in terms of children who have to be removed from a home for their own safety, there is also need for a national policy for children in alternative care and, similarly, the foster care standards and regulations and the community residences standards and regulations are being developed so that the proclamation of the Children’s Community Residences, Foster Homes and Nurseries Act will come in the short term.
In addition, Mr. President, Cabinet has approved the establishment of an autistic support centre of Trinidad and Tobago to provide services that support the development of autistic children through the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. Alongside the development of such policies, there are programmes and projects which aim to affect child development in 2014. These include the outfitting and opening of a child assessment centre at the Eric Williams Medical Complex.

In returning to the problems that affect our youth and our male youth in particular, currently, in fiscal 2014, “youth” has been defined as those people between the ages of 12 and 29—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: What!

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed:—and the revised National Youth Policy is going to be continued to be implemented to reflect the guiding principles that Government will establish on the basis of youth development and the future of our youthful population. In fact, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has declared that for each youth—for each youth—there is a purpose, a place and a plan. [Desk thumping]

Some of the initiatives stemming directly from the revised youth policy would include:

- the National Youth Commission, and this commission will assist with the implementation of a policy and a Cabinet-appointed committee will be established to guide the design and implementation of the Commission;
- the continuation of the National Youth Volunteerism Programme, for which community outreach sessions will continue to be held to provide the opportunity for individuals and organizations to get involved;

7.55 p.m.

- the development of a national youth empowerment strategy in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, will address the professional development concerns and needs as identified through consultation with the youth across the nation; and
- the continued modernization and reengineering of the youth development and apprenticeship centres at Persto Praesto and Chatham are a national priority.

Mr. President, in terms of our gender development policy, the Ministry will continue to champion what is called evidence-based policy making, with a programme implementation of high quality, accessible and effective service delivery in order to advance gender equality and equity. This will be done through
the continuation of our flagship programme “Women in Harmony” non-traditional skills training for women, defining masculine excellence and food preparation and fine dining and home management programmes.

Pursuant to the training conducted on gender-responsive budgeting, the Ministry will facilitate the implementation of this training within Government agencies in the upcoming fiscal year so that at an interministerial level, the centre place of gender, youth and child would be recognized at the budgeting level.

The Ministry will continue to partner with and support all civil society organizations because we recognize these organizations have the knowledge, have been out in the fields—they have done the footwork, they are knowledgeable about what is on the ground—and we will work hand-in-hand with these organizations, and we are committed to helping all of the NGOs by providing much needed subventions.

The services of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-SAVE will also be continued into fiscal 2014. Cabinet has approved strategies to improve the provision of psychological counselling and support services for the vulnerable through its hotline service.

In the PSIP report budgeted expenditure targeted to reduce poverty alleviation and human capital development—it is 32.2 per cent—almost one-third of the chunk will focus on the most needy, the most vulnerable, at the level of social and community development and, of course, human capital development. While this is not restricted to the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development alone, it concerns the social development. It is interministerial, and it will focus on what I have called the “empathy deficit” in this country—the lack of caring on the part of adults, on the part of educated, informed professional adults who would walk by and not cast an eye to the side of the road, not lend a hand to a child or a family in distress, but who want to function at all kinds of other levels without caring about the people. [Desk thumping and crosstalk]

**Sen. Singh:** Part of the hypocrisy.

**Hon. Member:** In the society

**Sen. Singh:** It happened it China.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed:** In response to some of the contribution from Sen. Ian Roach, when he spoke about, “What are we doing for people with disabilities?” let me advise that the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities in Carlsen Field is 95 per cent complete, an expenditure of some $15.5 million. [Desk thumping]
Appropriation Bill, 2013

[SEN. THE HON. R. AHMED]

DRETCHI which has been neglected for years—persons with disabilities—
DRETCHI is targeted to be refurbished and an allocation has been made for
housing for some 25 families living in abject poverty to access low housing. In
looking back, Mr. President—[Interruption]

Mr. President: Sen. Ahmed. Hon. Senators, you would recall that we agreed
that this Senate would sit until 8.00 p.m., it is now 8.00 p.m. On the other hand, I
have extended the courtesy of not interrupting the contribution of Senators. I am
surely hoping, given her maiden contribution here today, we will extend the same
courtesy to Sen. Ahmed [Desk thumping] and, therefore, I propose to put the
question, that this Senate do continue until the end of the contribution of Sen.
Raziah Ahmed.

Agreed to.

Sen. Maharaj: No division? [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed: Thank you very much, Mr. President and hon.
Senators. In looking back on what was done in 2013, some $18.6 million was
spent on improving the lives of youth and children through the establishment of
homes and facilities, including the model children’s home. So an agenda on the
part of the Ministry is to develop what a model home is supposed to look like in
terms of guidelines, principles, standards, standards of delivery international best
practices. So that when we speak in the future about a children’s home in this
country, we know that the children who are institutionalized will be receiving
standard services that are international best practice, and we want to lift the
standards of all of the existing institutions to international best practice.

We recognize that sometimes there are management issues; sometimes there
are issues of a historical laissez-faire attitude in some of the people who are
charged with administering these programmes at the management level, and so we
need to work on the changing of the attitude and bringing people to a place where
they can take responsibility for their behaviour. And this honourable Senate is a
good place for us to start to change our behaviour; to start to respond and to react
and to conduct ourselves in a manner that is becoming of responsible legislators
in this country, not as “mauvaise langue”, bacchanal people who are here to throw
picong and to scandalize the good name of innocent people. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: Devant Maharaj.

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed: And in order for us—[Interruption]

Sen. Maharaj: Say that for Hinds.
Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed:—to close this “empathy deficit” I want to just go back to earlier today, Mr. President, and tell you what shock and horror I felt to hear certain expressions being used in this honourable Senate to describe responsible and respected citizens of this country, an empathy deficit that describes an honourable elder as Makandal Daaga, as a man covered with cobwebs? In fact, the exact words were to “take the cobwebs off the gentleman”. That is a travesty.

Hon. Senators: Who said that? Who said that?

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed: That is not the kind of language we expect in this honourable Senate. This Senate where we stand to make law, Mr. President; this Senate where we spend time and energy and effort to make law so that citizens of this country will be law-abiding, and when we in our speech disrespect ordinary citizens who have served, in whatever capacity—who have given their lifeblood, their sweat and their tears to this land—you stand here and you speak about them as somebody from whom you have to dust cobwebs? That is an empathy deficit that we need to start correcting at this level because we cannot correct others if we are not prepared to correct ourselves. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: Yes. [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed: Mr. President, one Senator in this Senate was described—his physical features were cited and he was described in derogatory language because of his physical features. Why would somebody do that to try to heap scorn on somebody else? This is the example that we must never set from this honourable Senate. [Desk thumping]

Other phrases that I picked up from that particular contribution: “animalistic ferocity”, “alligators in the lagoon”—[Laughter] Mr. President, that lagoon is where my forefathers planted the rice that fed this country. [Desk thumping] and now you want to use it in a derogatory way, and that cannot be accepted, it cannot be accepted at this level.

Sen. Hinds: Nonsense!

Sen. Singh: You do not interfere with somebody in their maiden speech. [Crosstalk] No, you do not.

Sen. Hinds: All right, all right.

Sen. Coudray: You are afraid of the truth.

Mr. President: Senators, please be silent. Thank you.
Sen. Hinds: That does not mean she could say what she wants.

Sen. Singh: Do not.

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed: Mr. President, is this the language that we would use to describe our children?

Hon. Senator: Not at all.

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed: Is this the language that you would like to hear somebody else use to describe your children? No, Sir. No, Sir. We must begin now, we must begin here. Time is of the essence, Mr. President—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: Tell them, tell them.

Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed:—we do not have a thousand years. We have a short span—one generation 35 years and you have been here almost 20-something years already—and this is what you are bringing to this honourable Senate; derogatory language, trying to heap scorn on innocent people.


Sen. The Hon. R. Ahmed: Describing people as millionaires. Yes, yeah, we are millionaires of goodwill; [Desk thumping] we are millionaires of hope; we are millionaires of empathy. That is where we hold the millions; [Desk thumping] that is where we hold the values. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, I have learnt that when you point fingers at other people, there are also three fingers pointing back at you. Mr. President, I have learnt that people use language to describe others, and that language really is the language that describes themselves, and if the important people in our lives do not respect us [Crosstalk]—if the husbands and the fathers do not respect the women and the children; if people in the community do not respect others by constantly speaking and backchatting when in this honourable Senate there are rules of order; if this is the kind of crass lack of discipline, then what empathy deficit gap can we close? [Crosstalk]

It is important, as we try to impact the lives of the children—the lives of the young people, the disenfranchised, the people who have fallen upon misfortune—it is important that if we are to impact these young citizens in their formative years positively, then we must be the best role models, and the voting population will certainly vote for the best role models because they are looking on. [Desk thumping] In fact, they are streaming live on the World Wide Web looking at your behaviour. [Desk thumping]

It is hard to get ahead when our young people have little hope, and if the important people in their lives do not respect them then they are going nowhere, because they will expect nothing good for their own selves.

8.10 p.m.

So, Mr. President, in closing, regardless of background or misfortune, I want to say to the young people of this country, the youths, the children, the abused; I want to say, that regardless of whatever misfortune you have faced, regardless of whatever suffering you have endured, regardless of whatever mistakes you have made in your life you can learn, and you can grow, and you can change, and you can bring value to your country and you are born with the potential to be great and useful and just. We have to be the change agents that make the difference. The time is right, the time is now, and, Mr. President, the appropriate Government is in power.


Sen. The Hon. F. Ahmed: I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President: The Leader of Government Business.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President, I beg to move that this Senate do adjourn to Wednesday 25, at—[Interruption]

Hon. Senator: Nine.

Hon. Senator: Half past eight.

Hon. Senator: Seven a.m.

Hon. Senator: Let us follow the President, 8.00.

Hon. Senator: Eight o’clock.

Hon. Senator: Follow the President.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: What was the Presidential advice, 8.30?

Hon. Senator: Eight a.m.


Hon. Senator: “Allyuh go ahead.”


Hon. Senator: Let us follow the President.
Sen. Hinds: Remember you have staff at the Parliament too “eh”.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Mr. President, before I do so, I think that it is fitting that we pay tribute to the fact that we have Republic Day tomorrow.

Mr. President: Yeah. I did not get what time—[Inaudible]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Yeah, oh, what time—10:00 a.m., Mr. President, if that is a convenient time for all the parties. I would like to invite on our side to bring greetings on behalf of Republic Day, and I have had discussions with the minority leader on this matter—[ Interruption]

Sen. Cudjoe: Minority? There is no minority leader in the whole land. [Crosstalk]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh:—Sen. Gerry Hadeed. [Desk thumping]

Greetings
(Republic Day)

The Minister of Communications (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Hadeed): Mr. President, what a joyous occasion it is for me to be able to speak for the first time in this honourable Senate, to bring greetings to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago from the Government.

Mr. President, my colleagues, Senators, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, as our country celebrates another Republic Day, tomorrow Tuesday, September 24, 2013, we take the time to reflect on our journey over the years, our struggles and our achievements as an independent nation. Even though Trinidad and Tobago may still be considered a fledging nation there is much to celebrate, and still much more to be achieved.

We are a resilient people who are accustomed to hard work and sacrifice. These two attributes helped to propel us to independence 51 years ago, and then on to republican status 37 years later. Republican status means that we are no longer under the umbrella of the monarchy, we are masters of our own destiny, thus, the onus is on us to weave our own progress. The Government cannot do it alone; it is up to every individual to take responsibility for our children’s future and their heritage.

The values and attitudes of our ancestors which sustained us throughout this journey we must now nurture these values and attitudes in our youth. Republican status is more than a Head of State and a Coat of Arms; it is an accumulation of social capital, individuals and communities coming together to build a stronger, more cohesive nation—a nation capable of holding its own in the international arena.
Greetings (Republic Day)  

Monday, September 23, 2013

May almighty God bless us all as we continue on this journey of self-discovery and nation-building. Happy day to all of our citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds: Thank you very much, Mr. President. The Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary defines a Republic as a state or nation in which the supreme power rests in all of the citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by representatives elected directly or indirectly by them and responsible to them. Mr. President, no longer it is the Queen in whom this supreme power rests; it is all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. No longer are we subjects, but now all citizens.

In 1962, of course, we became independent, an independent nation and that was the beginning of a process. In 1976, August 01, we passed in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Act, Chap. 1.01, which was then of course Act 4 of 1976. We celebrated Republic Day on September 24, 1976, and this date came to be celebrated after the meeting of the first Parliament after the passage of the Act to which I have just made reference. The Senate actually met, completing the meeting of the Parliament and, therefore, September 24 was the day that we chose for the celebration.

We, therefore, perhaps very uniquely, have and can boast of having had two Constitutions in this Republic; one of 1962 which was repealed and replaced by the 1976 Republican Constitution, and that Act was passed for the purpose of repealing the old 1962 Constitution, and it was done by proclamation of the then Governor General under section 4 of the very Act.

Interestingly, Mr. President, and many citizens may not recall, that the celebration of this holiday was obliterated, removed in 1999 and we had no celebration of Republic Day between ’99 and 2001, under the command, the stewardship of the UNC then in Government. Of course, God and fate would have it, that we return—the PNM returned to Government; at any rate, in 2002 this celebration was reinstated.

I remember, we all remember, those of us who are old enough, the notes and coins before 1976, upon which bore a bust image in royal garb and crown of the Queen. The uniforms of the military and other institutions in Trinidad and Tobago carried the same insignia; these were replaced by the Coat of Arms. Dr. Williams and Sir Ellis Clarke, the founding fathers of this nation, two of them at any rate, the architects of this new constitutional arrangement leading all of us citizens, and in furtherance of the process of independence, led us, took us to republicanism.
I myself was a police officer, Mr. President, and I was able to see and feel the changes that I have just described. My own batch of police officers at the time, the “9600 police” as we would say, we were in training in 1976, completed our training and we were held back in order to conduct the parade, to do the parade as we would say, in September of 1976. We too made history by being the longest batch—we stayed the longest in the training college as a batch of recruits for that purpose. It is very fresh in my mind. This development represented some groundbreaking of sorts, because we became then, the second nation of the Caribbean to engage republican status.

We established, at that time, the Office of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, replacing again the monarchy, the Queen. And, of course, very importantly, Mr. President, in section 81 of this document, this new Constitution, we see a provision where the Prime Minister, as head of the Government, is duty-bound under section 81, to keep His Excellency, the President, abreast of all matters as it relates to the business of the State, a very important provision. It might certainly have been to do so to the Queen prior to that occasion.

We would remove the Governor General, Sir Solomon Hochoy being the last of them, may he too rest in peace; he served this nation and served us well. We maintained, at that time, the Privy Council as our final appellate court, but, of course, Mr. President, the Hugh Wooding Law School was established in 1973, graduating its first batch of students in 1975, so by 1976 when the architects and the founding fathers maintained the Privy Council as our final appellate court, there was no doubt an eye kept of the potential of Trinidadians and Tobagonians in the field of law and jurisprudence, and the wider Caribbean. So that sometime, in the not too distant future, I would think, we would assume the responsibility of developing and managing our own jurisprudence, and out of that came the concept of the Caribbean Court of Justice, which I might say en passant, the PNM fully supports—[Interrupt]

Hon. Senator: Hear! Hear! [Desk thumping]

Sen. F. Hinds:—and we encourage our accession to the Caribbean Court of Justice in the pursuit of culminating the process of independence. And we do so as my learned friend, Sen. Dr. Henry is pointing out; we do so in Government and outside of the Government. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: That is right.
Sen. F. Hinds: Mr. President, by way of an example, on criminal matters on indictment in the high courts of Trinidad and Tobago, [Crosstalk] you would find, Mr. President, that prior to republicanism, you would have found that you would see cases noted as R vs John Doe, [Crosstalk] today it is the State vs John Doe. Senior lawyers—[Interrupt]

Mr. President: Senators, let him read, please.

Hon. Senator: Thank you.

Sen. F. Hinds: Senior lawyers, lawyers of the so-called inner bar, like my learned friend—[Interrupt]

Hon. Senator: I beg to move the speaker time—[Inaudible]

Sen. F. Hinds:—Sen. Prescott SC, would have been Queen’s Counsel, today they are properly known as Senior Counsel.

I want to take this opportunity on the celebration of yet another occasion to mark our republican status, I would like to thank our founding fathers. I would like to thank, on behalf of the Opposition Bench and the People’s National Movement, all of those who have gone before us and have laid a very sturdy foundation upon which we must now build. I would like to congratulation all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and enjoy—and engage them—sorry—encourage them to celebrate this occasion, and to conduct their affairs with civility, conduct their affairs [Crosstalk] responsibly, conduct their affairs in true love for mother Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, on this occasion we say congratulations to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, happy—[Interrupt]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: What about Ellis Clarke?

Hon. Senator: You want to go? [Crosstalk]

Sen. F. Hinds:—republican celebration 2013. I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President: Sen. Dr. Mahabir. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: Ah! [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: [Inaudible]

Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir: [Laughter] Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you very much colleagues on the Independent Bench, and the colleagues in the entire Senate for asking me and giving me the honour of addressing the nation, addressing the Senate, and addressing the entire union of Trinidad and Tobago on this very momentous occasion of our Republic Day.
Greetings (Republic Day)  Monday, September 23, 2013

[SEN. DR. MAHABIR]

The question, of course, on the minds of the citizens is why should we celebrate any public holiday that we celebrate, and I think it is important to re-emphasize what my colleagues earlier said, that republicanism really means, Mr. President, that we are fully in charge of our welfare and well-being; there really is no paternalistic power that is looking after us anymore, and the future, really, is ours to make.

We know as we make this future, there are many negatives facing Trinidad and Tobago. These negatives are well articulated by Members of this honourable Senate, as in fact we must always recognize our limitations and our shortcomings. But at the same time, Mr. President, it is important for us to send a message to the general population, that while we focus on correcting the negatives, we never forget what really are the positives of our Republic. [Desk thumping]

The first is, in my mind, Mr. President, that Trinidad and Tobago remains one of the most politically stable countries in the entire world, [Desk thumping], and this is on a—despite the cut and thrust of our politics, we have had changes of Government seamlessly and smoothly since before we became an independent country. We have had elections prior to 1956 for our legislative council, all the time elections by the ballot, and all the time ensuring that there is a smooth transition of power to ensure that there is continuity in political stability, and something that is enviable, and I am sure the envy of the entire world for how we have been able to manage our democracy despite the differences we sometimes tend to extol.

8.25 p.m.

Mr. President, secondly, I think we need to remind those in our country that we are a model of multiculturalism in the world. [Desk thumping] The rest of the world with difficulties dealing with their various sectoral interests, can look to Trinidad and Tobago and see some of the successes we have been able to reap, and let us be a model always to the rest of the world. We can teach the global village on how really to ensure that we can coexist, we can live and we can thrive peacefully despite our differences. In fact, I think that one of the highlights of Trinidad and Tobago’s society is that we have been able to benefit from our differences culturally, religiously, ethnically and otherwise, and that is something to celebrate.

Also, we are an extremely original, creative and innovative society. This to my mind is something that will always have to be at the back of our minds as we chart our course for the future. We must remind ourselves too that Trinidad and
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Tobago remains a very jovial society, despite the cut and thrust of politics in this honourable Senate, despite some of the crosstalk that we might see. I think the general population ought to be reminded that underlying it all is the fact that Members on the Government side, Members on the Opposition and Members on the Independent Bench all have one common purpose and one common goal, and that is to improve the quality of life of everyone in Trinidad and Tobago, and despite our differences the objective is to make the best law. [Desk thumping]

I think as we celebrate tomorrow this important occasion, and we realize more and more that the future is ours to make, that we are in charge of our own destiny and welfare for the future, we know that we have much that is going for us that we need to build. We need to pay homage to those who went before and to those who really paved the way for us. But to the future we owe the greater debt, and that debt is to make responsible decisions.

In the few days I have been here, I feel confident that we in this honourable Senate will really do the best we can to make the best law for Trinidad and Tobago, so that the future will be a bright one and that the future will be the one that is deserving for all our talents in this country. [Desk thumping]

I thank you, Mr. President. Happy Republic Day to all.

Mr. President: Before joining Senators in paying tribute to Republic Day, I would like to pay tribute to Sen. Ahmed on her maiden speech this evening. [Desk thumping]

As we approach the eve of Republic Day, I think we celebrate the rich, vibrant, cosmopolitan culture that we have, and, as a Senator has said before me, we must not forget the importance of that. Nonetheless, we also see that there has been a breakdown in the value system in Trinidad and Tobago. That is not to despair. I certainly am one of those who believe that a critical mass of the law-abiding citizens, those of us who say that we are law-abiding, can turn back the tide to a value system that will uphold and make us more confident about our Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

So today, as we celebrate the coming of Republic Day, I think as masters of our own destiny there are some values each of us: each of us here and each citizen within the country, need to profess, need to go beyond the “jingoism”, of “I love my country”. We need to say that each of us will be productive; we will have discipline in our lives; we will cherish family life and, of course, we would be tolerant and respectful of each other.
Greetings (Republic Day)  Monday, September 23, 2013

[MR. PRESIDENT]

I think with those value systems entrenched within our communities, we will again restore the value system that perhaps has fallen away, and each of us then can proudly say, “We are Trinbagonians, we wish to celebrate and look forward to many more Republic Days.”

Thank you. [Desk thumping]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.31 p.m.