

SENATE

Wednesday, June 10, 2015

The Senate met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

PAPERS LAID

- 1 Annual Administrative Report of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (SPORTT) for the year 2010. [*The Minister of Sport (Sen. The Hon. Brent Sancho)*]
- 2 Annual Administrative Report of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (SPORTT) for the year 2011. [*Sen. The Hon. B. Sancho*]
- 3 Annual Administrative Report of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (SPORTT) for the year 2012. [*Sen. The Hon. B. Sancho*]
- 4 Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs for the year 2010. [*Sen. The Hon. B. Sancho*]
- 5 Annual Administrative Report of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation for the period October 2013 to September 2014. [*The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Marlene Coudray)*]
- 6 Annual Administrative Report of the Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago for fiscal year 2013. [*The Minister of Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Hadeed)*]
- 7 Annual Administrative Report of the ExportTT Limited for the fiscal year 2012/2013. [*The Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications (Sen. The Hon. Vasant Bharath)*]
- 8 Annual Administrative Report of the Evolving Technologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited for the fiscal year 2012. [*Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath*]
- 9 Annual Report of the Statutory Authorities Service Commission for the period October 2012 to September 2013. [*The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh)*]
- 10 Ministerial Response to the Nineteenth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group 2) on an

enquiry into the Administration and Operations of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]

- 11 Errata to the Ministerial Response to the Eighteenth Report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament of Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group 2) on the Administration and Operations of the Government Human Resource Services Company Limited (GHRM). [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
- 12 Transformation for Accountability, a forward-looking review of the 10th Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago (2010-2015). [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
- 13 White Paper on the National Minerals Policy, 2015. [*The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine)*]
- 14 Minerals (General) Regulations, 2015. (*Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine*)

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS
(Presentation)**

Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group I)

Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir: Madam President, I have the honour to present the following reports as listed on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Elton Prescott SC:

Environmental Management Authority

Sixteenth Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to enquire into and report on Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group I) on the Administration and Operations of Environmental Management Authority (EMA).

Outstanding Matters for the Tenth Parliament

Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to enquire into and report on Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group 1) on Outstanding Matters for the Tenth Parliament.

**Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group 2)
Outstanding Matters for the Tenth Parliament**

Sen. David Small: Thank you, Madam President. I have the honour to present the following report listed on the Order Paper under the name of Sen. Dr. Victor Wheeler:

Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to inquire into and report on Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group 2) on Outstanding Matters for the Tenth Parliament.

Trinidad and Tobago Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

Sen. David Small: I also, Madam President wish—I have the honour to present the following report as listed on the Order Paper in my name, and this is:

Report of the Joint Select Committee on Energy Affairs - Introducing the Trinidad and Tobago Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (TTEITI).

Foreign Affairs

**Relations between Trinidad and Tobago and
Central and South America**

Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir: Thank you, Madam President. I have the honour to resent the following report as listed on the Order Paper in my name:

Report of the Joint Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on Enlightening Members of Parliament and the Public on Initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs aimed at expanding the relations between Trinidad and Tobago and Central and South America.

**Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions
Outstanding Matters for the Tenth Parliament**

Sen. Anthony Vieira: Thank you, Madam President. I have the honour to present the following report as listed on the Order Paper in my name:

Report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to enquire into and report on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions on Outstanding Matters for the Tenth Parliament.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis: Madam President, under Questions for Written Answer, I would just like to know whether the Minister of Sport, having got away from Parliament a little earlier than anticipated yesterday, was able to spend some time reviewing the answer to this question, No. 19, that was due on January 05, 2015? He is not in his seat right now, but I do not know if the Leader would be able to say.

Before the Leader speaks, I would like to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He did give me the—the Minister of Finance and the Economy, maybe I

am predicting something, apparently. He did give me the answer to some of the questions that were asked, but he has said that they are still reviewing the other answers. I assume I will get it before the Eleventh Parliament starts.

Sen. Howai: We will see.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: We will see, all right.

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Madam President. I want to thank the hon. Member. We are in the same position as we were yesterday. However, question No. 72 and No. 73, were the other questions that will be circulated in the course of the day.

**Ministry of Community Development
(Cost of Advertisements and Public Relations Campaigns)**

45. Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis asked to the hon. Minister of Community Development

Could the Minister provide the Senate with the cost of advertisements and public relations campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Community Development in the Media for the period January 2011 to November 2014?

**Ministry of Public Administration
(Cost of Advertisements and Public Relations Campaigns)**

47. Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis asked the hon. Minister of Public Administration:

Could the Minister provide the Senate with the cost of advertisements and public relations campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Public Administration in the Media for the period January 2011 to November 2014?

**Ministry of Transport
(Cost of Advertisements and Public Relations Campaigns)**

49. Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis asked the hon. Minister of Transport

Could the Minister provide the Senate with the cost of advertisements and public relations campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Transport in the Media for the period January 2011 to November 2014?

**Ministry of Public Utilities
(Cost of Advertisements and Public Relations Campaigns)**

50. Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities:

Could the Minister provide the Senate with the cost of advertisements and public relations campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Public Utilities in the media for the period January 2011 to November 2014?

Ministry of Science and Technology

(Cost of Advertisements and Public Relations Campaigns)

52. Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis asked the hon. Minister of Science and Technology:

Could the Minister provide the Senate with the cost of advertisements and public relations campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Science and Technology in the media for the period January 2011 to November 2014?

Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration

(Cost of Advertisements and Public Relations Campaigns)

58. Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis asked the hon. Minister of National Diversity and Integration:

Could the Minister provide the Senate with the cost of advertisements and public relations campaigns conducted by the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration in the media for the period January 2011 to November 2014?

Answers lodged in the Parliament Library.

**FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015) BILL,
2015**

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai):
Madam President, I beg to move:

That a Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum, the issue of which was authorized by the appropriation financial year 2015 Act, 2014 be now read a second time. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, the matter submitted for the consideration of the Senate is a variation of \$2,189,563,690, sought by way of the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2015) 2015, Bill to fund important expenditure to September 30, 2015, which includes a variation of both recurrent and capital expenditure.

In light of some of the misleading reports in various media, I want to emphasize that this is not a supplementation request for more money, but rather a variation of current expenditure. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, the finance committee of the House of Representatives, met on Wednesday, June 03, 2015, and agreed on a number of proposals with respect to the 2015 appropriation, and this was subsequently approved in the House on June 05.

Before I get into the details of the report, allow me to set the economic environment in which the report resides. The global economy is said to improve marginally over the medium term. The outlook is somewhat positive for advanced economies particularly the US, where the increase in growth in 2015 is being driven by a rebound in advanced economies supported by the decline in oil prices, with the US playing the most important role. This rebound will contribute to reducing still sizeable output gaps in many of these advanced economies.

In emerging markets, growth is projected to decline in 2015. A variety of factors explain this decline. Sharp downward revisions to growth for oil exporters, especially countries such as Russia and Venezuela which are facing difficult investment environments in addition to the oil shock. The slowdown in China reflects a move toward a more sustainable pattern of growth that is less reliant on investment, and a continued weakening of the outlook for Latin America, resulting from a softening of other commodity prices. Madam President, the US is expected to continue a solid recovery where growth had rebounded strongly in the last three-quarters of 2014. However, the picture over the longer horizon is less upbeat with potential risk arising from the withdrawal of quantitative easing.

The euro area is also continuing to recover, but private investment remains weak, with Ireland, Spain and Germany being the notable exceptions. Lower oil prices, lower interest rates, and euro depreciation as well as a shift to a broadly neutral fiscal stance are projected to increase activity in 2015 and 2016, but for now, potential growth remains weak, a result of crisis legacies, demographics and a slowdown in productivity. The outlook for growth in the euro area is an expected increase from 0.9 per cent in 2014 to approximately 1½ per cent in 2015. This represents an average of several projections for the course of this year. Elsewhere in Europe, activity in the United Kingdom has been buoyed by easier credit conditions, and increased confidence. So steady growth is expected at 2.7 per cent in 2015.

10.45 a.m.

Growth in China is expected to decline to 6.8 per cent this year as excesses in real estate, credit and investments continue to unwind. The Chinese are now expected to put greater weight on reducing credit and investment growth. Ongoing implementation of structural reforms and lower oil and commodity prices are expected to expand the consumer-oriented activities and buffer the slowdown in China.

Madam President, in the Caribbean and Latin America, growth is expected to decline further from 1.3 per cent last year to 0.9 per cent this year, especially for major commodity exporters such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador, caused by lower commodity prices. The reduction in growth could range from as little as 0.5 per cent to 1 per cent. This reduction is mainly due to weak private-sector investments and reduced policy space in many of these economies. Overall, therefore, Madam President, throughout the world we are seeing a gradual slowdown or anaemic growth, with the exception of the United States.

Madam President, turning to Trinidad and Tobago, local macroeconomic indicators remain fairly solid, with international investors' confidence unchanged despite the recent downgrade by Moody's Investors Service. This is best measured by the price of our benchmark bonds which have remained stable, and where the spreads have even tightened somewhat since the adjustment in our rating. It is also worthwhile to note that Moody's rates countries using four quadrants economic strength, institutional strength, fiscal strength and susceptibility to event risk. In the area of fiscal strength, our rating has been ranked as very high by Moody's, and I think that should give us some measure of confidence going forward. [*Desk thumping*]

I should also point out that Standard & Poor's has maintained its rating for Trinidad and Tobago at A, stable. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, conditions remain in place for stable economic performance in 2015. Inflation remains in single digits at 6.7 per cent. There is reduced fiscal drag, strengthened balance sheets in our financial sector and an improving housing and construction market, which is expected to build momentum in the last quarter of fiscal 2015 and into 2016. Our projection for GDP at the end of this year is that nominal GDP of Trinidad and Tobago would have grown close to \$190 billion.

While the longer-term prospects for our energy sector continues to improve, the short-term results have not been as buoyant, with output in the gas sector contracting by close to 4.5 per cent, which has resulted in a contraction in the

overall sector by 3.3 per cent. The reduction in gas output has more than offset the marginal increase in oil output during the first quarter. This contraction in the energy sector was counterbalanced by growth in the non-energy sector, but given the weight of the energy sector the economy contracted by 0.5 per cent in the first quarter.

Madam President, the non-energy sector has grown by approximately 2.3 per cent on average over the last six quarters. In the third quarter of 2012, the non-energy sector grew by 2.3 per cent; in the fourth quarter by 1.9 per cent; in the first quarter of 2013 by 3.6 per cent; in the second quarter 2.6 per cent; in the third quarter 1.9 per cent; and in the fourth quarter 2.4 per cent; and in the first quarter of 2015 growth has been 1.6 per cent. So that there has been continuous growth in the non-energy sector and we expect this momentum to continue in 2015.

Madam President, the other macroeconomic indicators continue to perform exceptionally well. In the labour market the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development has advised of a reduction in the unemployment rate to 3.3 per cent, and I expect that the Minister would speak more to this in his contribution. This has to a large extent been the result of a strategy adopted by the Government to focus on the remedying of infrastructural deficiencies in several parts of the country. This, combined with the continued expansion in all sectors of the economy, has increased some pressure in the labour market and has resulted in the reduction in unemployment. Headline inflation, Madam President, continues to trend downward. The latest figures show inflation as 6.7 per cent, and core inflation, which excludes food prices, increasing to 2 per cent after having decelerated to 1.4 per cent at the end of last year. Food inflation, which dipped to an annual low of 3 per cent in September last year was up to 12.6 per cent. Consumer spending is, of course, up and it is an area that we continue to monitor closely. I am advised that motor vehicle sales were up 25 per cent and sales of cement, an indication of construction activity, continued to increase robustly towards the end of last year.

The country's fiscal balance continues to be healthy, registering a surplus of TT \$47 million after the first six months of the fiscal year. This position is expected to deteriorate in the last half as a result of the momentum of capital expenditure, but the deficit is projected to come in below initial projections. I emphasize, however, that the figures for the first half of this year does not include the receipt from Clico of \$4.2 billion. That number is still—if I can explain—recorded as a suspense item, \$750 million of which will have to be transferred to British American to meet the deficit in the statutory fund there, and the remainder,

part will be used to create a sinking fund for debt reduction and part will be used to fund recurrent expenditure, but this has not yet been brought to account as at the end of the first half.

Growth in the national reserves, Madam President, are an estimated US \$10.7 billion, equivalent to 12 months of import cover at the end of March 2015. Foreign currency deposits in the banking sector stand at approximately US \$3.5 billion and there is further US \$1.5 billion in mutual funds. Mutual funds and deposits, therefore, are on total, approximately US \$5 billion. The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund remains at over \$5.6 billion, and, as I said, Standard & Poor's has continued to maintain their rating for the country. Our overall debt profile remains stable with total debt, including guarantees, amounting to 41.3 per cent of GDP as at December 2014, well within the parameters for similarly rated countries.

Foreign direct investment remains strong, with the Mitsubishi-Massy plant expected to commence in early 2016, and construction continues on BP's \$2 billion platform for exploiting the Juniper field. Efforts are currently being made, Madam President, to accelerate the implementation and the start of construction on the Massy plant, and we are yet hopeful that perhaps the Mitsubishi-Massy plant could start earlier than my projection year of early 2016.

So, Madam President, are we out of the woods? It is all well. Well, let us begin first with the global economy. Growth everywhere in the global environment has been tepid and uneven. The risk of rising interest rates and the spectre of spiralling inflation, as a result of excessive liquidity in financial markets, and the concomitant implications for capital adequacy and a potential financial crisis in major international markets remain very much alive. The continuing slow rate of growth in Europe, with the possibility of a Greek default, also looms over the global economy.

In the region, slow growth, high debt burdens, and unacceptably high unemployment also cloud the prospects for the region. Here in Trinidad and Tobago while unemployment remains low, underemployment remains a major challenge. While progress has been made in the management of our fiscal accounts, much work still needs to be done in streamlining expenditure and improving revenues to ensure sustainability over the longer term.

Madam President, while progress has been made in a number of areas and a foundation has been laid for the diversification of the economy, this remains a challenge, and we shall have to accelerate this process over the next five years. This Government inherited a deficit in our physical infrastructure and significant investments will be required on a well-structured basis over the next several years

to address this challenge. In addition, our social infrastructure remains fragile and investments will be needed in institution building and policymaking.

However, I emphasize, Madam President, macroeconomic indicators remain sound. The fiscal outlook was in balance, or the fiscal out-turn was in balance at the end of the first half of this year. As I said, that is likely to deteriorate over the next few months but we expect that to remain well within the original projections that we had when oil was at \$80 a barrel. Inflation remains in single digits, employment is at record levels, foreign exchange reserves remain solid, strong, robust, and the debt profile of the country remains stable. It is no wonder that the Inter-American Development Bank expressed confidence in our ability to manage this downturn in oil prices.

I turn now to a few specific areas, the development of the capital market. Madam President, despite some of the negative publicity surrounding the First Citizens IPO, it cannot be denied that the IPO was a financial success. [*Desk thumping*] The Government's divesting of approximately 48.5 million shares in an eager investor climate generated over \$1 billion in revenue. Additionally, the demand created by the IPO had the effect of significantly increasing the worth of the rest of the shares in the bank, which were retained by the Government.

The initial share price was \$22, but currently the price of First Citizens shares stands at around \$35. At the time of the First Citizens IPO when the shares were offered at \$22, Government's stake in the bank was valued at \$4.3 billion. Today, with the share price increase to \$35, Government shareholding is now worth over \$6 billion. That, Madam President, amounts to close to a 50 per cent increase in value, and, indeed, Madam President, in my view, more important, some 12,000 citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are now shareholders in the bank; [*Desk thumping*] that is, 12,000 citizens directly benefiting from Government's divestment of a portion of First Citizens. Regarding the breaches that were identified, I remind this honourable Senate that a forensic audit was conducted by Price Waterhouse Coppers on behalf of the Government, and the results of that audit were turned over to the Attorney General, who, after reviewing the matter, referred it to the DPP.

The SEC itself has initiated its own investigation, and I understand that that process is drawing to a close. The Government will continue to develop the capital markets here in Trinidad and Tobago by launching the TTNGL IPO, which will essentially be the sale of shares in Phoenix Park Gas Processors Company Limited in the near future. This IPO will offer some 75,852,000 shares for purchase by the public. This IPO will come to market in the next few weeks

offering citizens an opportunity to invest their back pay. Madam President, to ensure proper compliance, both financial and operational, in the public accounts of the country, the Auditor General's office has been empowered with additional resources to strengthen their capacity, technologically and operationally, with a view to ensuring integrity of government accounting and getting better value for money, as well as in the pursuit of transparency and accountability. Madam President, we have seen the empowerment of the Auditor General from 2011 already paying dividends, in that the overall picture of the country's accounts has improved somewhat from 2012 to 2014—and, yes, there is still much to be done in making these accounting systems much more robust.

Madam President, the Auditor General's Report points to a number of areas, such as systems and procedures, training, culture, technology and accountability as sources of concern within Government Ministries. Madam President, this Government has, over the years, identified initiatives to help in having the country's accounts devoid of errors and any malfeasance. We have initiated a series of institutional strengthening and capacity-building exercises within the Ministries and departments of Government.

With the training and retraining of public servants in areas of accounting and finance, project and procurement management through private and public institutions, such as the Arthur Lok Jack Institute of Business—and the multilateral lending agencies, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank—we expect to see continuing improvements in reporting in the coming years.

11.00 a.m.

Madam President, in addition, corporate governance seminars and training continue to be part of the orientation for board members of all state enterprises and statutory bodies.

Progress is being made in the implementation of the new procurement legislation and with the establishment of the oversight committee, comprising members of civil society and chaired by the former President of the Senate, I expect this process to remain firmly on track and firmly within the projections which we have for overall implementation.

I turn now to foreign exchange. While we are seeing decreases in our foreign exchange inflows as a result of reduced commodity prices, I want to emphasize that the country has 12 months of import cover. Notwithstanding this, the foreign exchange market has been experiencing tightness. I want to make the point that periods of tightness in the foreign exchange markets are nothing new and, indeed, have affected the market ever since Trinidad and Tobago switched from a fixed

rate of exchange to a managed float.

Trinidad and Tobago's foreign exchange reserves have increased steadily from \$8.7 billion in 2009 to over \$10.7 billion as at the end of March 2015. The difficulty currently being experienced in our foreign exchange market, to a large extent, stems from the changes that were introduced in the allocation system, but those changes have since been reversed and that problem is now behind us. The Governor of the Central Bank has also given the assurance that funds will be placed into the market to supplement the effects of the changes in demand as the holiday season approaches.

Madam President, turning to the review of income and expenditure, one would recall that the 2015 budget projected a fiscal deficit of \$4.3 billion or 2.3 per cent of GDP. An overall deficit of \$3.9 billion was projected for the first half of this year. Based on actual revenue received and expenditure incurred, the Government recorded a small surplus of \$47 million in the first six months of the fiscal year.

Although we experienced a shortfall in revenue of \$1.2 billion, this was offset by a reduction in expenditure of \$5.2 billion—\$5,198.3 million. Again I emphasize that these figures do not include the \$4.2 million repayment received from Clico.

The decrease in Government revenues in the sum of \$1.2 billion was due mainly to lower than anticipated receipts from taxes on income and profits which was the largest shortfall—\$981 million—taxes on goods and services, taxes on international trade and reductions in unemployment levy. These shortfalls were partially mitigated by higher than projected receipts from other taxes, non-tax revenue and capital revenue. The lower than projected performance of taxes on income and profits was primarily due to the lower take from oil companies of \$2,064 million. This emanated mainly from three major exploration and production companies. However, this shortfall was partially mitigated by higher than projected receipts, mainly from other companies, which increased by \$667 million and from individuals, which increased by \$351 million. However, it should be noted that the lower collection of taxes in the categories mentioned above was partially offset also by higher than projected receipt under non-tax revenue of \$151 million, as a result of higher than projected dividends received from several state enterprises.

The shortfall in expenditure in the sum of \$5.2 billion for the first half of the year was due in part to the lower than anticipated implementation rate for Government's capital programme. The shortfall in spending under the

development programme is disaggregated as follows: Consolidated Fund, \$952 million and Infrastructure Development Fund, \$1.2 billion.

With respect to recurrent expenditure, actual expenditure in the first half of the fiscal year, while just under 2 per cent higher than last year, was \$3 billion lower than projected in this year's budget. The primary areas which contributed to the shortfall in recurrent expenditure were as follows: personal expenditure, \$303 million; other goods and services, \$1.1 billion and current transfers, \$1.6 billion.

You would recall, Madam President, that earlier this year the hon. Prime Minister had requested that capital projects which had not been funded would not commence and that reductions in recurrent expenditure would take place to realize a savings of approximately \$3.5 billion. We are well on course to achieving those particular objectives which had been established by the Prime Minister.

Turning to our overall fiscal performance, the Budget Division in its mid-year review, after taking into account the considerable savings under some Heads of expenditure as well as the need for additional funding in some areas, has estimated revised total expenditure of \$62.9 billion, i.e., \$1.7 billion less than budgeted. Lest, Madam President, the hon. Member, Sen. Al-Rawi, does not get the arithmetic right, the actual figure for the five years, assuming everything is spent, will be \$289.9 billion, notwithstanding the fact that he will say \$400 billion when he actually makes his contribution, so I am trying to perhaps pre-empt the number. *[Laughter]* This, Madam President, after bringing to book \$1.6 billion—*[Interruption]* I will respond in my winding-up—in salaries and wages for the period 2013, which was not included in the budget. So we will be coming in lower than we originally budgeted, after adding in the \$1.6 billion in back pay, which has to be paid and which is included as part of this overall total expenditure that is projected for this year.

Madam President, in presenting the 2015 budget in September 2014, the Minister of Finance and the Economy announced total expenditure of \$64.6 billion and revenue of \$60.3 billion, resulting in an overall deficit of \$4.3 billion or 2.3 per cent of GDP. The adjustments included in this proposed variation of the Appropriation Bill, which together with the projected shortfall in revenue, which we estimate at \$1.3 billion, and with the adjustments in Heads of expenditure will result in a decrease in the projected overall deficit on fiscal operations, we are saying conservatively, \$3.9 billion or 2.12 per cent of GDP.

The Central Bank, in their own projections, had suggested that this number would actually be significantly lower, coming in at just over \$2 billion or 1.1 to

1.5 per cent of GDP—[*Interruption*] no, the deficit, the total.

The majority of the variation of funding is in respect of personnel expenditure. Variation of funds is also required for goods and services, for current transfers and subsidies and current transfers to statutory boards and similar bodies, principally to facilitate salary payments. Accordingly, the Minister of Finance and the Economy is approaching Parliament for the variation of funding of \$2,189,563,690 for recurrent and capital expenditure. Again I emphasize, in light of some of the media reports, this is not a request for increased funding.

The proposed variations came about as a result of the review of recurrent expenditure and the capital expenditure, which was conducted by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy in collaboration with other Ministries and departments. The Finance Committee of the House of Representatives, as I indicated, met on Wednesday, June 03, 2015, and agreed on the proposals contained within the Finance Committee Report with respect to the 2015 appropriation, and the House approved these on June 05, 2015.

I wish to draw your attention to an outline of these variations. In the area of savings, under the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, savings of \$748 million are available because funds provided for capital projects in various Ministries and departments under the Infrastructure Development Fund will not be fully utilized and, in some cases, projects have been deferred.

Under the Caricom Petroleum Fund, Cabinet agreed, inter alia, to the establishment of a facility as a grant fund to provide relief to Caricom countries experiencing economic hardships due to high crude oil and petroleum product prices on the international markets. Given that the current balance in the fund is TT \$240 million, with the last withdrawal occurring in 2012, it is envisaged that the fund will be able to accommodate future requests for withdrawals, should the need arise. As a consequence, \$100 million in savings were realized.

In relation to the Constituency Development Fund, the enactment of legislation, associated regulations and implementation of the appropriate control and monitoring mechanisms have not been effected. As a consequence, the fund has not and will not be operationalized this year. This has therefore resulted in savings of approximately \$410 million.

Under Caribbean Airlines Limited, funds were provided to meet increased air subsidy and arrears of fuel subsidy; however no decision has been taken for the proposed increase of the air subsidy; and the outstanding fuel subsidy was much lower than was projected, thereby resulting in savings of \$150 million.

Under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the declining oil prices and its ensuing impact on petroleum product prices have resulted in a significant reduction in subsidy claims which translates into savings of \$693.8 million under the sub-item, Shortfall in Subsidy, sale of petroleum products. Further savings are expected during the course of this year.

As it relates to the Ministry of the People and Social Development, the Senate is asked to note that Cabinet agreed to the introduction of the Baby Care Assistance initiative identified under the sub-item, Relief of Underprivileged Newborn, with effect from fiscal 2015. It should be noted as well that the sum of \$120 million was provided in the 2015 Estimates of Expenditure to fund this initiative. Based upon an assessment of the demand for the facility, it is estimated that savings of approximately \$100 million will be realized. After allowing for virement of a further \$32 million within the Ministry, a sum of \$68 million will be available to defray expenses in other Ministries.

In the area of expenditure, the funds will be used as follows: \$1.4 billion goes toward the payment of salaries, wages, cola and allowances for members of the teaching service, officers employed in the civil service and statutory authorities, monthly and daily-rated employees of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as daily-rated employees of the Water and Sewerage Authority and of four regional corporations arising from new industrial agreements. The remaining \$788 million, approximately, will be spent on the various needs of the Judiciary, Ministries of National Security, Housing and Urban Development, Trade, Industry, Investments and Communications and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

Madam President, I will now like to give more details on these Heads of expenditure. In the case of the Judiciary, an additional \$27 million is required to complete the refurbishment of the Chaguanas Magistrates' Court and the old San Fernando Magistrates' Court in the sums of \$12 million and \$15 million respectfully.

In the case of the Ministry of National Security, an additional \$478 million is required for the acquisition of naval assets: four coastal patrol vessels, two utility vessels and six on-board interceptors.

In the case of the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, an additional \$148 million is required to meet the cost of desalinated water supply by the Desalination Company of Trinidad and Tobago, while the remaining \$126 million is required to meet the payment of liabilities to be incurred for contract

and short-term employment, fees, financial support of sporting and cultural entities and security services.

Madam President, after taking into consideration savings identified, as well as the variation in funding that is now being proposed, the Government now proposes a revised projected total expenditure of \$62.9 billion, i.e. \$1.7 billion less than originally outlined in my budget presented in September 2014. This decrease in expenditure is good news for all, especially when it comes to the overall deficit.

Back in 2014, I had announced total expenditure, as I said, of \$64.6 billion and a revenue of \$60.3 billion, yielding an overall deficit of \$4.3 billion or 2.3 per cent of GDP. Our revised expenditure as indicated will now result in a deficit of \$3.9 billion or 2.1 per cent of GDP, conservatively, and we project that we will be able to come in below these numbers.

In summary, Parliament is asked to approve the variation of the appropriation in the amount of \$2.189 billion. Over the past five years, Trinidad and Tobago has seen unprecedented development taking place in every quarter of the country. *[Desk thumping]* Madam President, 97 schools have been built with a further 91 under construction; 105 health centres have been refurbished; over 1,700 kilometres of roads have been rebuilt or repaved. Bridges have been rebuilt; the Diego Martin Highway has been completed; the Valencia bypass has been built. The Point Fortin highway construction is proceeding apace; the dualling of the St. Helena access is well advanced; the Diego Martin health facility is almost completed and the San Fernando Teaching Hospital has been completed. The Couva Children's Hospital, the Point Fortin Hospital and the Chaguanas Health Centre, as well as the Arima hospital, have commenced.

11.15 a.m.

Plans are well advanced for the cardiac and oncology centres. Water supply has improved, more houses are being built, more institutions of learning have been rationalized and revitalized, and the list goes on. In this context expenditure has increased, but so has outputs, benefits and services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]* Even so, we have been able to contain expenditure within budget this year and maintained all macroeconomic indicators at investment grade level. The country is well poised for further development in the future.

With those few words, Madam President, I beg to move. *[Desk thumping]*

Question proposed.

Sen. Dr. Lester Henry: Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me to lead off the Opposition's response to the debate one more time. This is my fifth year. I know the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, this is about his second or third time he has been through this.

I think back to the beginning when the hon. Winston Dookeran used to present the Appropriation Bill and so on, and one of the things that is quite interesting in terms of the change from that time to now is that when Mr. Dookeran presented numbers we actually could have some faith in it. We have absolutely no faith in any of the numbers presented by this current Minister. [*Desk thumping*] All kinds of statistics and talking about fiscal and medium term, and what was projected to be 1.5 and 1.7 [*Interruption*] and it all rings very, very hollow.

Back then, there was a certain credibility of the data that would come out of the Government that even as Opposition Members we really did not question, but things have changed drastically in the past three years, from 2012 to current. In fact, I did not write down any single number that the Minister mentioned. None. Because it is all wishy-washy, flimflam, you know. As one of our former colleagues used to say, gobbledygook, because it is really, really sad that we have reached a stage where this is the state of play of our country's national statistics and the Government's presentation of statistics. And in none of the Minister's presentation that he just did, did he ever mention the CSO. He talked about GDP coming from the Central Bank and so on, but we do not trust anything coming out of the Central Bank. Okay? We know what is going on down there. Okay?

So, there is no reference to the proper authority that is supposed to present our economic data, which is the Central Statistical Office, and a lot of what the Minister talks about in terms of revenue and expenditure, and so on, makes very casual reference to the whole question of economic growth, which is something I have been harping on and some of you may jump up and say, well, there goes Henry again repeating himself. Well, I will repeat it because you still have not learnt that increasing expenditure is not the same as increasing economic growth. [*Desk thumping*] That has been your formula, to expand spending without any commensurate increase in real economic growth.

The Minister mentioned a nominal figure of \$190 billion or something in nominal GDP expected this year. But there is always an expected. Just like the energy sector, some project is always coming. It is always expected to get on stream sometime later this year. We have been hearing that for five years, and then later on we hear not very much about anything. In fact, I used to walk around with a list of the projects that were in the budgets in 2011, 2012, 2013 and almost

all of them have disappeared, and we do not hear anything about any of them again. I remember from the top of my head the AUM plant, some liquid to propylene something, and these all sound very nice when it is read off and then when you look around six months after, nothing is happening.

So what you have with four and a half years out of five of better than average, in fact, excellent energy prices. Oil price averaging over \$100 during that period. One of the best periods in the country's history of energy prices. You have very little economic growth to show for it. You have the spending to show for it, but no growth, and once again even with their numbers that we are quite sceptical about, the Minister is saying there was an economic contraction of .5 of a per cent during the first quarter of this year, or late last year, whichever, because we know "six of one dozen, half a dozen of the other", it is some wishy-washy thing. But, nothing that suggests any real serious economic expansion.

So, what you have over five years is a lot of wasteful and unproductive spending, spending on social programmes to remain popular. You basically campaigned for five years in office while experiencing these very well, very, very high energy prices. You have done almost nothing in terms of adding to national savings, because you have run five years of budget deficits which you are proud of, apparently.

So, in spite of all, what should be better indicators, you come and you boast about almost the wrong thing in the sense that you should be talking about budget surpluses with the kind of energy prices you had up until late last year. Of course, we could expect things to be different in the last six to eight months because we know what has happened to oil and gas prices, but that is a separate issue. What were you doing from before?

So, there has been no real expansion of the economic pie which is what economic growth represents, and every budget, every mid-term Appropriation Bill that comes normally around April, June or around this time, those on the Government side get up and say, oh, well we are projecting economic growth of 2.5 per cent and two and a half, of two, three and a half, all kinds of things and quotes from some external source usually, and again, later in the year they come back and they say, well, you know what we really have was a negative. So, we told the Government over and over again why do you keep projecting two and two and half per cent growth, because I think that was the figure in the budget last year. What was the revised figure? I did not hear any projected figure for what we expect 2015 to come in at, or what was the final figure for 2014. I am sure it is going to be quite embarrassing once again.

So, when you have this amount of massive spending unlike what happened before—now it is very difficult when you look at the historical data to sit there and see what the kind of budgets were under the PNM in 2002, 2008, and the massive budget surpluses that were generated, and the high levels of economic growth that went along with much smaller budgets, compared to what you have done. In other words, as I have said before in this House, you have made a habit of normalizing madness. What people think would have been unthinkable, you have been able to do it in the negative way. [*Desk thumping*]

So what you come and you boast about, the low levels of unemployment—I think the Minister quoted some figure of 3.3 or 3.5 per cent for some quarter again. But this represents two things, a massive amount of underemployment, which the Minister did refer to, massive underemployment in the economy, meaning that people are not fully employed even though they would be counted as being employed; so they cannot be counted as unemployed. They are not working really meaningful jobs that could give them a reasonable level of existence, a standard of living. So, the IMF and others have warned about the increasing and the persistent problem of underemployment. So, you have people working half a day, you have people working a few hours, and they make some money, but they are just holding on. They are really not fully employed.

So you use CEPEP, the expansion of CEPEP over the past five years to drive down the level of unemployment. And it is there, even though I do not try, I still read the Central Bank report, they put it in a footnote. They put an asterisk and you have to look down in the footnote and read the fine print and say, well, you know the drop in unemployment was mainly attributed to the social sector, and with basically CEPEP. And they come back in this appropriation to get another \$75 million for CEPEP to expand it again to claim that unemployment is really low.

So, it is massive underemployment largely due to the expansion of CEPEP, something that they ranted and raved about. Well, actually, the first crew, since this is pretty much the end of this session now and it is kind of difficult not to reminisce that I could hardly recognize any face opposite me as to when we came in here in 2010. [*Interruption*] Well, Sen. Ramnarine.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Two men only, two survivors. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: So you had almost a clean sweep on that side. Some of you do not even remember what the Members on the opposite side used to complain about. [*Interruption*] Gerry, you are a late pick too.

Sen. Hadeed: “Ah coming at yuh, a setta bhaji talk yuh ha dey”.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: No problem, no problem.

Sen. Al-Rawi: “We fraid, we really shaking”.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: So you have massive underemployment due to the expansion of CEPEP and, of course, the Government’s phony driving down of the unemployment rate by this means, and basically we know this was planned since last year.

I know this was discussed in your Cabinet—to keep the unemployment rate down, you would go and hire everybody all over the place just willy-nilly and, of course, if you cannot find a real project, throw them into CEPEP, and you could run around and boast that your unemployment rate is still very low, at record lows and so on. That was explicitly discussed, that is your plan.

So, the hidden unemployment that I mentioned also plays a big role in this. This is with the expansion of GATE. So, you expand GATE, you put a lot of people into universities, which on the surface, of course, is not a bad thing. I am all for expansion of higher education.

11.30 a.m.

But, of course, once they go into this they are not counted as being unemployed, so they are off the register as unemployed persons. So you could drive down the unemployment rate further that way.

Now, of course, I could say a lot more about the issues and the problems going on with this expansion of GATE under the university programmes, because I know quite a bit about it from—many of my students teach at all these tertiary, COSTAATT, UTT. Many of my students teach there and they tell me what is going on, whether it is in south or north, with four people in a classroom and, you know, all the issues of people who really cannot even add two numbers properly and yet they are in a programme—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hadeed: And they are in UWI?

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yeah.

Hon. Senator: They cannot add numbers.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Not in my class. My students at UWI teach these people—

Sen. Al-Rawi: Who are not UWI students.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: You do not need to get discombobulated. [*Laughter*] No need. It is the fact. It is something that will face us as a country. It is not a UNC or

PNM problem, it is our problem, okay? Well it is happening and you cannot close your eyes to it, okay?

So we know that that is helping drive down the unemployment rate, and you do not have to take my word for it, you could read the IMF reports and so on, it is the same issues they point to and that is why, I am certain that is why the Minister was careful to make sure that he did mention the massive problem of underemployment. He did, and he did. Okay?

So in five years of budget deficits you have not added anything to national savings. So when we hear boasting about the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, this is a bit of a farce, because you cannot, if you run budget deficits every year there is no real national savings. It does not exist. It is a fiction. Once you admit to running a budget deficit there is no savings. Right? So get that clear.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Explain that for me.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: You are spending more than you earned. Whether the budget deficit is 1 per cent, 2 per cent, it does not matter. It is a deficit, so there is no savings. So you could twist yourself into a pretzel, you have to face the fact that you have added nothing to savings in five years. So do not talk about growth in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. [*Desk thumping*]

So, in effect, as the IMF said, not Sen. Henry, you are effectively borrowing money to put in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund because you must satisfy the law. So there is no real savings. So forget it. Do not boast about something that does not exist.

One of the things that I used to needle Mr. Dookeran, the former Minister, about was that in his budgets you would see revenue spending mentioned like 600 times, and revenue about two times. Because there was very little from day one in this Government by way of revenue generation for the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. And this is how you expand an economic pie. You have to generate projects. You have to come up with things that add to our foreign exchange earnings. That is what makes us able to lift our standard of living and double our GDP as was done from 2002 to 2008, [*Desk thumping*] and by bringing on stream LNG projects and so on. That is how you expand an economic pie. Not by willy-nilly spending and paying very little attention to revenue generation.

Once again we have heard nothing, no mention of any kind of property tax or anything that would add consistently and for the future to government revenue intake. So, for a full five years almost, everything has been abandoned in terms of the ability to raise taxes through that means, and—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Nicholas: Taxes, taxes, for PNM.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hear him, taxes for PNM. So what you call oil and gas revenue, boss?

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: If you are a Government and you are not interested in revenue from taxes then you might as well not be a Government.

Sen. Cudjoe: But they are not a Government.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: You know, that is what Governments do, at least responsible Governments.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is why Moody's spoke about it.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: At least responsible Governments have to balance revenue generation with expenditure. But in your case now you are going to sell off some state assets to help balance your budget and when you fall further, well, you borrow the money. And on that score, one of the main grey areas in this Government's reign has been the borrowing. The amount—I have been searching, I have been trying, I even contacted my few friends in the financial circle, and yet to ascertain the true level of government borrowing that is taking place. Very difficult. Because some of the things that you hear about in the papers, you do not see any accounting for in the official documents.

Supposedly, take for example, this Government has gone into arrangement with the Chinese on certain projects. It might be good projects, I am not even questioning the project itself. I am just saying where does that show up—were they grants? Was there money borrowed for those purposes? Where do we see that in the numbers? I have been looking, I have been trying to, because they are not local bonds where you could say you put a bond and it shows up on the bond market and it is registered with the SEC or the Central Bank. So that is easy to see, to know that has happened. But what—some of the borrowings that we have been hearing about are not easily accounted for.

And then, of course, you have the problem with the borrowing from the state enterprises and statutory bodies, like my good friend the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources. They are borrowing at WASA and those things. We have not had very good accounting. How does that show up on the Government, in the books? So only after you are gone, which will be very soon, [*Desk thumping*] despite your delay, we will have to go search and find out how much money you really owe and how much money—yes. We know you have

entered a private arrangement for the \$600 million last year. But that is going to show up as a government debt at some point, okay? [*Crosstalk*] He is claiming he did not get it.

So what is basically going on is another negative figure reported for the energy sector, once again. A few years ago the Minister, he is still here, one of the few as we saw, surviving ones, used to come and say, “well, maintenance in the energy sector, that is why we have contractions”. And that maintenance was due to end since 2011/2012 or something, and I am not hearing that excuse anymore. Because the oil companies have come out and said, well no it really is not maintenance, we pretty much had covered all our maintenance by now so something else is at play. So, another negative reported for the growth in the energy sector.

So again, what is really happening? You have a lot of apparent issues that seem to be quite unresolved or somehow unresolvable in time to see productive and positive growth in our energy sector, which is the breadbasket that we know of for the country. So when you do not have growth in the energy sector, where really does any kind of growth come from? The easy answer is, the non-energy sector. Well in this case, what really is the non-energy sector?—government spending. That is what it is. Government spending. Of course, with the spending as the Minister pointed out due to the coming in around \$64 billion revised somewhere, or thereabouts, to a lower figure. As I often said, even by accident you should see some economic growth with that kind of spending. [*Desk thumping*] It is a tremendous mal-accomplishment for any Government to spend \$60 billion and see no economic growth. In fact, I really do not understand how you could do that.

Sen. Cudjoe: Unprecedented.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yeah, good word. Unprecedented, unimaginable, totally without precedent. As I said, normalizing madness once again. And you have a situation where you completely have a set of problems confronting the country, including things like the Moody’s downgrade and what they mentioned in that downgrade, that is not going away. In fact, the behaviour of the Government since the announcement of that downgrade really, to me, means that, look out for another downgrade soon, because all they have said is full speed ahead, we are going to keep doing the same things that we are doing. We are going to make no real serious adjustment. We might pay lip service to it, but no serious adjustment is going to follow, so more of the same.

Now there are a couple of specific issues I want to touch before I get towards

the end. As I said, we have been here three days; well, today is the third day and, you know, the heavy loading is taking effect, that is, fatigue is cumulative—

Sen. G. Singh: I sent you home early last night. What did you do?

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: I went and studiously prepared my contribution.
[*Laughter*]

So what has happened, again—I must touch on this, as you know—the Minister talked about tightness in the foreign exchange market being a normal thing. I mean, nothing could be further from the actual truth. There is tightness in the market on two occasions or so every year going back 20 years. The Minister made it seem like if what is happening now is a normal situation. This is not true. There has been tightness in the foreign exchange market for over a year now, at least, continuously not seasonal. We know this is the time when people go on vacation, end of June, and there is a high demand, and he knows that very well too. And then later on when people order their Christmas goods, and so on. So that we know of. But this situation started just over a year ago and I am glad the Minister made mention to the changes in the allocation system being the trigger for this. And it has not abated since.

11.45 a.m.

People are still complaining about getting small amounts of foreign exchange. Of course, all of us probably know a few people well who are having that problem, and people who are going to have that problem as they seek to go for holidays and travel during the summertime.

So this particular problem is going to be one of another own goal scored by the Government that seriously affected businesses. Again, you could ignore it if you wish, you could pretend that somehow it is not as big an issue for you, but it is a real issue for the people on the ground, and the fact that we have been hearing well, you know, you are going to put more foreign exchange in to make sure people get, it is not happening because the problem is that you destroyed confidence in the system beginning last year around this time and a little bit earlier, and once that confidence is broken it is very difficult to get it back and you create an artificial system where people decide to hoard for future use and it is very difficult to break people out of that habit. Added to the fact, as I have explained to several people in the media and on the other side who have asked me, that if you are buying foreign exchange at \$4.45 or \$4.46 [*sic*—and you are accustomed buying at that, which was the case up until around April, May last year—and you wake up in the morning and it is cheaper, \$6.35, will you buy

more or less? That is it.

So the exchange rate was revalued from \$6.43 to \$6.35 overnight. All the businessmen decided well wait, it is cheaper to get a US dollar and I need as much US dollars as I can get. I will take more and I will keep going and take every available US dollar I can get. That has gone on continuously for over a year now, and that is what the problem is. That is how it started and is not very easy to reverse that by just making simply pronouncements, well everything is okay. Cool. No, it does not work like that.

Before I finish, I must comment on the absolute crazy decision that was taken in the past few days to dismiss the chairman of Clico and the managing director. I wonder if people understand that these are the same people who would have been given credit for anything positive that was happening inside of Clico, where people were saying, certain individuals were saying, Clico is now made whole. I think that was a reference someone used to describe Clico a few weeks before that. How did that happen? These are the same individuals who stood with the company, appointed by your Government, did what they were supposed to do and they were embarrassed, thrown out, treated like common criminals and no one in the Government says anything.

Of course, not to mention the obvious conflict in terms of what is supposed to have happened, one minute being defended and next minute being summarily dismissed. This cannot be well because Clico, although it is not issuing any new business—and make that clear people, understand it is not issuing any new business since last year, since they changed the plan to bring Atrius, the replacement company. The company stopped issuing new business, laid off all the agents and really now the portfolio has to be sold. My information is that it is in a state where they are waiting on the valuation of the portfolio to come in and then has to be sold to someone else, another company because Clico is going disappear off the face of the map. It will no longer be a company.

So these people have stood there with the company and handled the operation from all reports quite well, to the point that even members of the Government could have boasted about it. I think even the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy himself was quite pleased. So what happened overnight? We await the explanation, but this I am certain is going to expose somebody to a massive lawsuit filed by either one of the two people who have been mistreated—and they have been mistreated very badly. So we await the outcome of that. But I must say, Madam President, that was actually quite a shocking development and I would like to hear the Minister of Finance and the Economy actually say whether he

approved of this or if he was even informed of this.

So as I wrap up, Madam President, the legacy of this UNC Government, despite the flowery language that you will hear and more to come from the usual suspects, what has been the legacy in the five years of this Government? Almost zero economic growth in five years. Most of the figures negative. One time you get a little 1.1 of 1 per cent positive. Almost flat economic growth in five years. Massive spending, unprecedented levels of spending year after year—and they talked about squandermania back in 2010—borrowing to put money in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, no real additions to national savings, expanding CEPEP and GATE to drive down unemployment to artificially low levels with no meaningful really job creation coming out from any of their policies, no new revenue-generating measures. We told them from since 2010, when we started off in the Red House, that the only thing that will save them is high oil and gas prices when they had certain Ministers who were famous for diversification talk at the time, that the PNM did not diversify the economy and they were going to do it in six months, so oil and gas would not be as important.

So we find today, nothing has changed. It is the same high oil and gas prices that you depend on to carry out your wanton spending. So in addition to the above, an artificial foreign exchange crisis that should have never been and continues unabated today, of course a failed, useless and economically damaging state of emergency, and also the destruction of the CSO to the point that it had to be put into a Moody's report that they could not rely on the quality and availability of macroeconomic data in this country. As usual, someone from the other side is going to jump up and say I am going to fix it. You did not know I signed a note this morning, or yesterday, that something is going to happen here, there and there, and they are going to move into a new building. They have equipment and all kind of mumbo-jumbo that we have heard since 2012. Three years later, nothing substantial.

In sum, Madam President, the Government has been an economic danger to the people of this country from day one, and they have continued to spend and borrow, sell state assets to cover up the real issues, which is going to emerge post-election regardless of who wins. There is something in economics—I am sure my colleague behind me will be quite happy that I raised this—0, 0, 1. There is no such thing as a free lunch. Whatever you spend you are going to have to pay for it eventually. No such thing as a free lunch. So you could mask it as much as you want till the general election comes and pretend that everything is okay, but eventually the true story will come out.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Madam President: Hon. Senators, at this time I seek your indulgence to revert to item 3 on the Order Paper for the purpose of an announcement. Please join me in acknowledging 25 students accompanied by the principal and teachers of Cedar Grove Private Primary School who are here with us today to view first-hand a sitting of this honourable Senate. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me also acknowledge in the public gallery the presence of a former Minister of Education and the former Minister of the Environment, Dr. Adesh Nanan [*Desk thumping*] and his wife.

Sen. Dr. Mahabir. [*Desk thumping*]

**FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015) BILL,
2015**

Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam President, for granting me this opportunity to contribute to this Variation of Appropriation Bill. And as a prelude, let me say that it is indeed fitting that we should have students, young students coming to the Parliament today, because I think it is indeed heartening to see an interest by that age group on what people of our age do.

We are a generation, Madam President, that is different from theirs, different technologically. I have never sent a tweet, and the only hashtag I know is the tag that I see on hash brown potatoes in the supermarkets. This I call the hashtag revolution, and I think it is fitting that they are here to see how we make rules and how we legislate for them. In 10 short years I am sure that many sitting behind me will be sitting in front, and it is I who will have to hear how they are legislating then for me as I am an old man. [*Desk thumping*] Let me assure all the students in this country, all the young people, that we do not always get it right and we try all the time not to get it wrong. Madam President, let me focus on the issue at hand. We must in this Variation of Appropriation Bill ask ourselves what really is the economic problem that we are trying to solve. I am happy that this might be perhaps my last contribution for this session of the Parliament, and it is in an area in which I feel somewhat comfortable. Last week I had to get into the area of law, again of interest to the children when we spoke about the children's court and issues such as school bullying and so on, which we are concerned about. But today, we are dealing with matters of the economy, matters of the economy dealing with how we generate the resources that we need to finance all of our

needs and, in particular, at the level of the state, at the level of the Government, at the level of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

When I look around, the economy around me, I see that there really is one economic problem. It is not unemployment, it may be underemployment, it is not the fact that we have an interest rate environment that is unacceptable. It is none of those things. Madam President, the problem for us, as indeed I am sure the Minister of Finance and the Economy will admit, my colleague Sen. Henry will also admit, is that there is a stagnation in our economy, a stagnation that has started since 2008.

12.00 Noon.

We have, for the last seven years, not been able to achieve the kind of economic growth, that is a growth in real income, real purchasing power, real command of goods and services that we achieved from 2000 onwards; from 2000 to 2008, we achieved a level of economic progress that caused us to be amongst the higher members of the middle income countries. Our GDP was growing rapidly, and then the collapse of the financial economy in the United States, associated with the collapse of the Clico mammoth in January of 2009, sent to us a shockwave that we have not fully been able to recover from.

Economic growth is a problem. We have been trying desperately to advance our economy, and when we thought that we could grow with further activity in the energy sector, not so long ago this phenomenon of shale oil, of which my colleague, Sen. Small, will have much more to say, emerged quietly like a silent, silent killer, and before we knew it, shale oil emerged in the world and not even countries as powerful as Saudi Arabia were able to use their influence in the oil market to prevent the collapse of oil prices.

We find ourselves, since perhaps the beginning of this country as we know it, victims of being a small bit player in the global economy. We have always been price takers for the products that we have sold. We have never been able to control the prices. We have always had to accommodate, in a number of ways, to the machinations of the global powers—a matter that I will come to—and to adjust. And once again, we have not been fully economically independent.

It appears, Madam President, that political independence has not been associated with economic sovereignty, with an ability to say regardless of what happens in the globalized space, Trinidad and Tobago will be able to secure its economic independence. The problem for us, Madam President, is stagnation. We have not grown in our per capita GDP for the last seven or eight years in any measurable way. In fact, we have declined more than we have advanced, and associated with that is now the matter of uncertainty. Where is the energy market

going to go over the medium term? We are not interested in where it will go next week or next month, but certainly for the next few years; for the next five years. We normally plan on that particular basis. That is our horizon.

Where is the energy market going to go? What is the prognosis for our energy-associated products, our methanol, our energy, our steel, et cetera, over the next five years? At this time, it is now impossible to predict. So we are existing in an atmosphere of uncertainty and stagnation. And this, of course, is the reality. Given this reality, given the fact that we have been struggling with a high level of liquidity in our banking system, not surprising—liquidity is simply associated with stagnation. Individuals out there are simply not taking the risk to borrow and to invest because of the uncertainty. So high liquidity is a function of uncertainty, known—as my colleague Sen. Dr. Henry would say—as the liquidity trap that we have identified many, many eons ago.

So we have the high liquidity; individuals are not borrowing; there is a stagnation in the non-oil economy; there is a depression in energy prices internationally; we do not know if we will ever find a new oil well that will generate 10,000 barrels of oil more per day in the medium term. I am sure it is there. I am sure Sen. Ramnarine will say it is there. But will we be able to bring that to the surface in the next five years? This, again, is a matter of uncertainty. We are trying to manage our economy in this environment that we cannot now control.

Despite that, Madam President, could we craft some solutions on how to handle the current reality? The first solution I would recommend is this: We cannot continue to budget in the way we have budgeted. Madam President, it would be nice if Sen. Ramnarine, when he makes his contribution, could tell us that he knows for sure there will be 10,000 barrels of oil coming per day in Trinidad and Tobago's oilfields over the next three years. It would be nice. It would be lovely.

Sen. Ramnarine: From one well.

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: From one well, yes. It would be nice if Sen. Ramnarine can tell us when we will get back to producing 150,000 barrels of oil per day. I do not know. I do not know if my colleague, Sen. Small, will be able to advise. I know it is nice to have. Will we get it? I do not know. The chances are rather on the downside that it may not materialize any time soon.

And it is the medium term I am concerned about, and in the medium term we will have to budget. We will have, in this country, to learn to live with less. We absolutely must do that over the next few years. If we do not, this is going to be

the outcome. We will be finding ourselves spending, and spending, and spending, and as my colleague, Sen. Dr. Lester Henry mentioned, we are going to be hard-pressed to identify where the additional sources of revenue will come from.

I am someone who is anti-property tax. My position on the property tax is so total that I do not think that there could be compromise. I do not think that we would advance if we tax those individuals who have displayed the kinds of qualities we want to build the society, in acquiring property. I want to tax income. I want to tax other sources that might not be as injurious to the future of the country. We will have some debate, Sen. Dr. Henry, but as an old public finance man, we will have to talk about the property tax.

I want to axe the tax, but at the same time, while I axe the property tax—because I want people in this country to have property. I want people in this country to move away from being renters, to owning their own property, and once they own their own property by the sacrifices they make in the postponement of consumption, I want them to be rewarded for it because, for me, a property tax is a subsidy to rent, and I do not want our nation to be a nation of renters. We must own our own property. We must have our own wealth. We are a capitalist society and in a capitalist society, it is only who has capital: money capital, liquid capital, portfolio capital like shares in Phoenix Park and so on, together with real property, that we will be able to advance materially.

But that is an aside. What I want, and to recommend for budgeting, is that we look at our pattern of expenditure and we change the way in which we make allocations. If I were in the position of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, this is what I would do. I would ask each particular Ministry asking me for funds for the next budget cycle, to “tell me what will happen if I were to reduce your allocation by 1 per cent—1 per cent”. So the Ministry of Education is asking; the Ministry of Health; The Ministry of Local Government. I ask you: “Ministry of National Security, suppose I reduce your allocation by 1 per cent, Ministry of National Security, how much less criminals are you going to catch?” “Suppose I reduce your allocation by 1 per cent to the Ministry of Health, how much less sick people are you going to cure?”

And if, in fact, I, as Minister, can live with the outcome, what that will do is that we will gradually force all line Ministries in this country to really eliminate their waste, the misallocations and the inevitable bureaucratic slack which exists in the Ministry, and we will be able to discharge our economic functions at the level of the Ministries with the reality of less resources. Because if we do not do that, what will happen is simple. We are going to build a pattern of expenditure,

up and up and up. Our revenue base is going to stagnate and decline, and the deficits which the Minister has indicated, will be eliminated by 2016; will become a permanent feature of our economy.

What happens when deficits become a permanent feature of the structure of government operations? I will tell you what happens. What happens is that our credit-worthiness becomes compromised. No one would wish to lend us when we need it, and our international ratings will then suffer a decline. We have seen what has happened with Moody's. We must reverse the trend. We must balance our budget as a matter of priority. And my position is, let us cut expenditure rather than raising taxes.

We want to ask ourselves whether the tax structure is optimal. If it is, that is a tax rate that we currently pay, could we now ensure greater efficiencies at the level of the Government? Could we eliminate the waste? Could we eliminate Life Sport? Could we go through each Ministry, line by line, and ask ourselves—as was pioneered by New Zealand, called zero-based budgeting there—do you really need all this money? If I were to cut you back a little bit, how is the public interest going to be injured? And if we think in this way, I am sure this country will be able to balance its budget, even run a surplus—I will have to come to that—run a surplus, but, Madam President, we know that we need to change the manner in which we budget.

Hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, I will be looking to see what is going to happen because it cannot be business as usual in this time of uncertainty. I would like to know. I would like to have a crystal ball. I would like to have an “obeah man”, Madam President, to tell me, “Don't worry, your econometric models are failing but I know what will happen to oil prices next year.” British Gas cannot tell me, BP cannot tell me. The major players—even as eminent an energy economist as Sen. Small cannot tell me what will happen to the energy prices next year. He cannot. I know, and Sen. Small knows his business better than most. He cannot tell me what will happen. Uncertainty—let us take evasive action so that we will be able to change our *modus operandi*.

I think Sen. Ramnarine thinks he knows. Senator, even you do not know. Sen. Ramnarine, you do not know what will happen.

Hon. Senator: Only God knows.

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: Yeah, only God knows, and right now he is not telling. I was advised by my hon. Minister that God knows and he says I should ask Sen. Abdul-Mohan. But Sen. Abdul-Mohan is not God. She may think that she talks

for God, but you “eh” talking for God. You cannot talk for God. *[Laughter]*

Madam President, we need to change the way in which we budget. This is, unfortunately, the reality that is upon us and we do need to learn to make more with less. If we do not, we will never achieve the goal of the balanced budget and we will be piling up unnecessary debt.

We have always spoken about changing the modus operandi of budgeting in this country. The time for action, of course, is now. Let us look at what other solutions might be in this time of uncertainty for Trinidad and Tobago. We have to understand that we need well-functioning institutions to solve some of our problems so that the public interest may be protected and promoted. In the past we have struggled with institutions that we have built. One institution that we have is an institution called the Integrity Commission. Well, I want to indicate, quite clearly, no one can legislate integrity. You cannot, via a law, and asking all of us—Senators with portfolio and Senators without portfolio—to file a form with the Integrity Commission and expect us to behave properly in public affairs.

Madam President, integrity is not determined by law, not the Parliament. Integrity is what our parents teach us. Integrity is what we learn from our communities. Integrity is what we learn from our churches. Integrity is what we learn from our societies. Integrity is what we learn from our culture. We have an Integrity Commission that is there, using resources, but has done nothing, and can do nothing, for generating integrity in the country. If I had my way, I would abandon that institution completely. *[Interruption]* Yeah, we get rid of it. It is doing nothing yet it is a drain on the public purse.

12.15 p.m.

We are creating new institutions. We are creating institutions upon institutions and until and unless these institutions work—the SEC is one of those. We need the SEC to produce that report on the FCB IPO before we get on with other IPOs. *[Desk thumping]* We want to see where the wrong was, how are we going to correct it, and the wrongdoers must be punished. We cannot have institutions that we are financing year after year—SEC might be close to 20 years now.

We have had wrongs in the securities business, no one has been prosecuted, and when that happens, the institutions are there, just simply as a drain on the Minister of Finance and the Economy, not contributing much to the public welfare. We take some solace in the fact that we have this institution but we are not in any way benefiting at the level of the economy. We need to look at all of them. And if I had my way—I do not have my way but if I have my way, I can

persuade the Minister of Finance and the Economy, let, as far as is practical, or as the lawyers say, as far as is practicable, all these institutions should be financing themselves.

Take regulatory agencies. I do not want any regulatory agency in this country to depend on the Minister of Finance and the Economy for a subvention. If you are regulating the banks, of course, earn some money from the banks; if you are regulating insurance companies, earn some money from the insurance companies. If you are regulating waste in this country, I would say let us make some money from those who produce the waste. Let every agency that is—if we are regulating the environment, those pollutants via what they pay for pollution permits and for their certificates of environmental clearance and so on, they should pay for those, so that every agency as far as is practicable should be a self-financing organization.

Since it is these firms which are benefiting from operating under our structure of laws and as in the case of waste management, since it is these firms which are producing the waste, they are benefiting from the fact that they can produce waste freely. Let us tax them, let us impose a waste tax on each bottle that they produce so that when we come to look at their regulation, they do not have an agency regulating waste in this country or any other activity, should be self-financing. I would like the SEC to be self-financing. They have not brought anyone to prosecution in the last 20 years. It is about time they pay their way in the society as all of us have to pay our way. We need absolutely in this country for agencies which can generate its own funds to so do and not be a drag on the public purse.

When resources are abundant, we can write the cheques. When resources are flowing, the Minister can approve. I have seen in every law, over my two last years, whenever an agency comes up and we are looking at the structure of this agency, they have a capacity to borrow. If I was the Minister of Finance and the Economy, “I eh lend dem none”. They want to borrow—any agency which borrows, will never repay, and that is a fact of life. Basically, we are saying, go ahead, borrow, everyone can borrow, the Minister of Finance and the Economy will write the cheques and underwrite the cheques as they come due, because we know none of them will have any discipline to generate their own funds. They cannot repay, Minister. So whenever you see a caveat in the Bills before us, know that someone is going to ask you to build up our stock of debt. Again, that is contingent liabilities.

And in this regard, we need to understand, the Moody’s report is an important report. Let us look at it. Petrotrin has a huge debt. This is not central government.

These are debts that if these agencies do not honour, it is going to be our Minister of Finance and the Economy who will have to find the funds. The more he has to pay in debt—debt servicing, debt amortization, interest payment—the less he has to finance the GATE Programme, the less he has for health care, the less he has for old age pension, the less he has for the myriads of social services that we need.

So let us look at, as a second solution—first solution, let us change the way we budget. Let them justify everything. Second solution, build up all those institutions which are coming to be now a claimant on the public purse. Let us develop a policy position that you must now know from where the funds will come so that we could finance you. If we are going to have an agency to collect plastic bottles, then, of course, every plastic bottle should have a fee, 25 cents. Let the company, every company—left up to me, every company that produces a litre bottle or a half litre, or even a little chubby bottle, you have to pay that agency 25 cents off the bat. So that—[*Crosstalk*] Yeah, pay them 25 cents so that people who collect that money will then be able to recycle and obtain.

We did that as children. We collected bottles. It used to be, Madam President, let me tell you the rate. The rate was one cent for a nip, two cents for a flask and five cents for a rum bottle. One, two and five. I rather loved the drunkards in the village of Cunupia. I actually said to myself, I hope they will buy the rum, throw the bottle on the side and I could recycle it. I did that on a number of occasions. They generated income for me. We need to go back for the plastic bottles now. If we can do that, monetize, we will be able to generate—not that I condone the activity, but I said to myself, out of evil, cometh good; out of those in the drunken stupor, I will get their empties, I would recycle it and I will make some money.

At the time, however, a cent that you got for a nip was enough to buy you two dinner mints and I linked that economically. If at the time, a nip paid a cent for two dinner mints, now two dinner mints, I understand, is 25 cents, every Chubby bottle should have a 25 cents reclaimable fee. We have to just look at the time and for the young, they would think I am telling a nancy story. There was a time when dinner mints were sold for two for a cent. That was in the 1960s; 25 cents for two dinner mints, so that we can just keep pro rata. So we need to develop our institutions and make them self-financing.

And we have now to look at the institutions that we have in this country and make sure that we preserve them. We have one institution that we need to preserve, the Judiciary. No one in this country, no one—I mentioned this before, I will mention it again, let there be continuity in my position. The Judiciary in this country is an institution of which we should be proud. The Judiciary in this

country is the final arbiter when wrongs occur and we have been fortunate to have some of the finest minds in the legal profession occupy the position, all positions in the Judiciary.

But, yet we did not see, returning to this Parliament, the Bill which was aimed at making sure that retired judges do not live in conditions of abject poverty. [*Desk thumping*] I would like to see that if we allocate to the judges, as we are doing in this variation, let us look at that as well. Why? It is not a matter of doing that which is right only but it is the matter of building an institution. If we are not sending the correct signals to members in the legal profession, that you are going to get a decent pension, we run the risk of industry paying large sums per hour for the brightest corporate and criminal lawyers, and the Judiciary being denied of the brilliant talents.

So, I would want the hon. AG, looking at me intently, I want to be clear, I want judges to have the best pension possible. When I calculated the pensions of retired judges, I found that some 35 judges getting “ah lil \$30,000 ah month” for them to live comfortably, was going to cost less than what we had paid as prizes in two competitions. So, Leader of Government Business, that particular Bill that has been in abeyance, I hope it will come back as soon as possible and we will correct the wrong and build that institution.

Madam President, I have now started, you know, and today, I need two hours but I know—because today is my last day, it is the last over, and in the last over, you want to have plenty bouncers coming down. But let me look at another institution that we need to build.

Sen. G. Singh: “Tell me if yuh batting or bowling.”

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: No, “ah bowling, ah bowling”, because I am bowling against you. You all will have to be—and I am telling you one time, I am bowling bouncers—

Sen. Karim: Plenty run-up.

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: No, “it bowling straight to yuh head now, yuh have to know it is”—[*Crosstalk*] Your head is safe. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, your head is safe. In fact, I am not bowling at any head, I am bowling at the captains of the whole team when they have to bat in the next session. Whoever the team is, I want to tell them what the pitch is.

We need to tell you because if someone had told the West Indies what the Queen’s Park Oval pitch was like in 1971, Abid Ali would never have bowled Roy Fredericks first ball. Someone had to tell the West Indies how their own pitch

on Queen's Park was playing. First ball of that test, Abid Ali, coming down with a "whoof" and "licking" away the stumps of Roy Fredericks. Understand the pitch. That ball crept rather low and that is because the Indians understood the pitch, but we decided, in our territory, we are going to leave that pitch alone. The Queen's Park Oval is "ah funny kind ah Oval". [Crosstalk] Yeah, it crept and I do not want any ratters to come and rat any Government. Let it not be said I did not tell "allyuh" how this pitch was playing.

So, Madam President, let us look at another institution. The institution I want to focus on is the institution of Parliament. We need to understand that Parliament is much more than what we do here. This is what the people see. The people do not see what we do in camera. They do not see what, in fact, happens usually in our committee stage, not on the floor but when we have our joint select committees. The Parliament is now becoming more and more an oversight body. And I have seen the value of the Parliament as we investigate Government Ministries. We have had a number of reports this morning. The report I presented, I will focus on, on the Foreign Affairs Committee, but I have seen my colleagues, Senators, present the reports.

What happens in these committees? What we have seen over the last two years, as at least since I have been here, is that there are agencies of the State. Our Ministers of Government feel they have the power. Well, let us tell the population. The Ministers have the responsibility, but you see the power, the power resides in the public service. The power resides from the Permanent Secretary down. I can say that clearly as an Independent. They are the ones who are in charge of the day-to-day operations. They sign the cheques, they pay the money. If the public servants want to make your life miserable and not comply with you, they have a way of delaying, and if you want to get something done, they will find 1,001 ways to ensure that you do not get it done. That is the nature of the public service.

Having been a Member of a few joint select committees, Public Accounts Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee and Joint Select Committee I, I have seen the amount of mischief that can be done by the bureaucrats in this country when the Minister sits in this Chamber and in the other place, and they come to attend to legislative business, the Executive function is now in the hands of individuals out there who know how to get away with things. There is a lot of waste, there is a lot of inefficiency. We need stronger—to ensure that this oversight of Parliament is, in fact, recognized.

All we can do now is to shame. Perhaps, they are "unshameable". I have seen

institutions like the National Insurance Board. One of the subsidiaries, even being “brass-face” and boldfaced: “I doh have to come to you”. Well, “leh me tell you something”, I am the Vice Chairman of that committee—“ah tell you, if I am the Chairman of that committee, I hauled them”. The Chairman is “ah gentle kind ah fella”, I can be “bad like yaz” when the public interest is concerned. An agency of the national—a subsidiary—[*Interruption*] Oh yes, and I want to commend my colleague, Sen. Balgobin. Could you imagine committee on national security, we have had policemen in this country, police officers shutting down this country, insulting my intelligence. Madam President, I am not the smartest man in the country but I am not the most “dotish” either. “Yuh shut down the country” and then you are saying you really do not—and under the cloak of national security.

Let me tell you something, Minister of National Security, if that happened in the military, men would have been court-martialled; that is mutiny. And long time, whenever I read books, it used to be, he was court-martialled and shot. I always thought, Madam President, at the moment somebody is court-martialled, he faces the firing squad all the time, until some lawyer said, “Well, no, it is only in serious cases”. But shutting down the country, shutting down the corridor, under guise of protecting—the police officers are supposed to protect us.

Madam President: Hon. Senator, I have absolutely no desire to shut you down, but in this time of uncertainty, we shall take the lunch break. The sitting is now suspended until 1.30 p.m.

12.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed*

Madam President: Hon. Senators, before we took the break Sen. Dr. Mahabir was on his feet. He spoke for 34 minutes and has 11 minutes remaining in original speaking time.

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam President and thank you much colleagues for that very warm, warm re-welcome back after lunch.

Sen. Maharaj: I would transfer my time to you.

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: I am getting some support from Sen. Devant Maharaj, who has offered me kindly his hour, but I do not know if in the new Standing Orders that would be permitted where we can share time.

In pollution regulation now where there is something called pollution permits, where a firm that is a non-polluter can actually sell its permit to a firm that is a

polluter and so we get what is known in economics as optimum pollution rights in the economy. If in fact there are some Senators with a surplus of time who are willing to trade, of course, we can trade those times so that we can get that. [*Desk thumping*]

As Senators without portfolio—and I would be coming to Senators without portfolio shortly—we have to live by our wits because that is all we have to live on. There is nothing else.

Madam President, let me get back to the theme of the discussion and that is, thus far, I think few will dispute that we need to change the manner in which we engage in public administration; budgeting is one. We absolutely cannot continue. If we do, we will not be able to balance our budget while discharging our responsibilities to the general population. Institutions need to be strengthened. Too many of our institutions are simply not functioning efficiently. They exist on paper. They are not existing in practice and we need to get the institutions to work for the people of our Republic. They are there for a purpose.

We would like the Integrity Commission to see to what extent it could generate an environment for more integrity; the SEC to ensure that there is little or no securities fraud; the Environmental Management Authority to really control noise pollution in this country. And if it does not have the power to so do, as in fact it was indicated to us in the Joint Select Committee, then in this Parliament we can change the law so that we can use these institutions to really address the burning needs and the issues which confront all members of our society.

I am at the point, Madam President, where I am also looking at the Judiciary as an institution, and my colleagues have indicated that we do need to look also at building up our position with the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which is in fact an arbiter for our Caricom dispute, a matter in which I have much to say. So I may take up Sen. Maharaj's position of time extension.

But let me focus on the Parliament. You see, Madam President, this is the last over I have and after that I am done, my innings is finished. I want to really bowl. I do not know how many wickets I will take but I want six bouncers. Yes, I want six and if I bowl a no-ball I might even get seven. Let us focus on the institution of Parliament. We have seen, over the last couple of years, the Parliament itself acting as watchdog and as an institution that is holding the public employees to account in the knowledge that a Cabinet Minister simply issues instructions and he tries to implement Government's policy. But when that cat's away the mice will scurry all over the place and we need, for example Public Accounts Committee, Joint Select Committee, the committee of Sen. Balgobin, the recently

constituted committee on National Security.

The country has seen the benefit and I am not referring to any report issued by Sen. Balgobin's committee because I do not wish to be in violation of any Standing Orders. I am referring to what was televised. Like every other citizen, I saw how police officers would look brass-faced at the Minister of National Security, that is their Minister, and they will tell him things I know are not accurate and they will try to question the intelligence of we the people. In fact, if in the military there is that behaviour people will be court-marshalled, and they will be shot, as I was advised, before 6.00 a.m. in the morning.

In the other agencies of national security where police officers and the police service is supposed to use their power of arrest, their power of detention, they are armed, they are given wide powers. They are supposed to use that power to protect the general welfare, not to harass the people. And we need Parliament. We have seen the strength of Parliament in exposing that kind of malfeasance.

Madam President, yesterday we were debating the Motor Vehicles Bill and I do hope that many of those changes are saved because a lot good work went into that. We need to change the structure in which we issue licences and administer the motor vehicle sector of Trinidad and Tobago. But we know there, we have officers who are as corrupt as they come. I know of that which I speak. I am not speaking out of imagination. Five hundred dollars is the fee for a driver's licence. I know that. This is not a fabrication.

The issue of corruption. They need to come to Parliament and we need to find out, okay, we know you do it. What are you doing to stop? And from there, we can craft solutions. It is not only we in this Parliament who should be subject to filing to the Integrity Commission. When people in Customs are building these huge mansions and having all of their condos in Miami and abroad, I want to know in the Al Capone era, exactly. Let me look at your taxes. Is your income such that you could have a house here, a house there and a night house in One Woodbrook Place and a day house somewhere in central as a customs officer? Somehow, somewhere you are taking money which belongs to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, and you are using it for yourself. This is called theft. All of these things we need to look at now in this country, especially because we have a tightening of our finances.

And this institution of the Parliament, the oversight bodies of Parliament, is something that we need to strengthen and I will urge the Government, whichever government is in office, to come back to ensure that while it can get away

administering the affairs of Parliament with the old generation, with the new hashtag generation that I spoke about you will have to pay them properly.

And Senators without portfolio, and so on here, who are defenders of the public interest, and let me emphasize, my interest is not a specialized interest. I represent not one constituency. I do not represent the constituencies of the Government nor the constituencies of the Opposition, I represent 41 constituencies in this country. All of us here represent that and my view is sometimes I will agree with Members on my Bench on what is in the best interest of 41 constituencies. We agree that whenever we feel that there are issues such as money laundering and issues such as wire fraud and major white-collar crimes, we will have agreement. Sometimes we disagree.

I supported the Government in that constitutional Bill. Why? Not because I am supporting a vested interest, I supported the Government because I believe firmly that the public interest, 41 constituencies, would be better served by majority rule and whatever could be done to ensure that every representative in Trinidad and Tobago comes to Parliament with the majority of support of the constituents, I think that is going to be better for the democracy.

We will disagree amongst ourselves but the reality is, in the Parliament now and in the Parliament of the future, we need to attract trained individuals and given the compensation package and given the pension arrangements, in order to build the institution of Parliament, we will have to change it and let us give serious consideration now, not only to those who hold portfolio but those who do not, so that the business of this Parliament can in fact be conducted efficiently, fearlessly, independently and in the interest of the public.

Madam President, let me come now to an issue that is of importance, in my mind and in everyone's mind. Those of us who understand public administration know that we need to reform the public service and by reforming the public service, I do not simply mean a training programme here and a training programme there. I would like that there be given serious consideration to the rules under which public servants operate, the rules which give them this amount of power, the rules which give them this amount of authority without the responsibility. The politicians have all the responsibility and when you try to get these public servants to do things well, the public service regulations say this, that and the other, which gives them the power. I want to inspect that, because unless everyone is subject to scrutiny, everyone is subject to discipline, we will not be able to have a public service efficiently discharge the policies, which are in the interest of the people.

So those who are in their comfort zones, those who feel that: well Ministers come and Ministers go, they are there permanently, that is why they are called Permanent Secretaries, the Permanent Secretaries will have to be under scrutiny.

We have seen what has happened in LifeSport, in all the other institutions, because, as you know, the autonomy there is great and it is only when the accounts come before us, Public Accounts Committee, from the Auditor General's office—and I am happy that the Minister of Finance and the Economy has given the Auditor General's office some more resources—we need to see exactly where the malfeasance occurs, because in every institution you can think about, the moment an employee gets comfortable, once he is secure, he is going to look after himself, knowing that few people will be looking over him. We in the Parliament must do that and we do need to look at all those regulations so that the individuals who have the responsibility will also have some more at greater authority in the day-to-day affairs of the organizations that they run.

The recommendation is this—now every time I criticize I would like to think I give a recommendation—in every government department I think it should be the objective of Ministers of Government to create a pole of excellence because it is only when we create this nucleus, this pole of excellence, in the Ministry of Health, the Minister of Health may want to look and see where his organization seems to be excelling more than most. Is it at the primary health care system, what we know as the health offices? Do we have a couple of excellent health offices?

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: Thank you very much, colleagues. Thank you very much, Sen. Dr. Balgobin for that kind request for extension. Thank you colleagues for granting that extension.

Madam President, there is much to say on this the 11th hour, 59 minutes and 59 seconds of the Parliament. But really, I think, we do need to create the centre of excellence in our public service. The public service is responsible for discharging a significant amount of services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And how do we develop the centres of excellence so we break out of the bureaucratic mode?

In every organization, there are those who are programmed to fill out the forms and in every organization there are those who are programmed to challenge why we have the forms in the first case. We do need to get the people who have seen—it should not only be the private sector getting the innovators. It should be the public service itself, people who can change the way of doing things, people who can get their ideas implemented. Let us identify. Peters and Waterman called “In Search of Excellence” as one of the foremost institutions that will guide business in the new millennia. Every organization, whether you produce computer chips or potato chips, you need to have a centre because it is for that centre of excellence that you are going to get the others to gravitate.

If I were, for example, the Minister of Health, a future Minister, I would want my infant mortality rate to change. I would want to comply with international standards. I would try to develop a unit in our primary health care system dealing—it appears to me to be easy—educating mothers with new-borns, so that from the time the baby is conceived to the time the baby is a year old, they must visit a health centre. It is easier to get at that small level excellent institutions, a midwife centre looking after these mothers and after a three-year period be able to say that I have been able to lower the infant mortality rate from 19 per thousand to 10 and lower, further. But you get that when you get individuals with a passion for excellence.

1.45 p.m.

When it comes to the saving of life, I think you would find a lot of people in the nursing profession who would have this particular passion. We simply have to identify where our passionate individuals are in our public service. This is the next generation. This is not a bureaucratic generation. If we do that we will be able to have a nucleus around which the excellence will revolve, and gradually over time, our public service can approach that of the Canadian public service, and ultimately our destination would be the public service of Singapore.

Madam President, let me examine—and I know I have to rush. I am rather disappointed in my colleague, Sen. Dr. Balgobin. I thought he was going to ask me for an extra hour, but I only have 15—you could have broken the rules today, the last day in school. You know, normally, the last day in school, you know, what you did—[*Interruption*] the last day for school this is what you did. No, no, no, we stayed away from Manuel the last day for school, right? He was dealt with the day before, but the last day for school, you went to school, in my time, with a T-shirt under your school shirt and by twelve o’clock, you took off your shirt and you went to Jubilee Cinema in Chaguanas, and you looked at movies in the

evening. One day Bro. Lenard came, I was not there, God, I was not there, and he picked out all the fellas from pit; after that, the habit stopped. Sen. Ganga Singh is looking on, maybe he was one “ah dem”, [*Laughter*] who went with their jersey. Last day we tend to break the rules, but notwithstanding, let me come back to the position, Madam President.

Sen. Ramnarine: I will sign your shirt for you.

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: You will sign my shirt? [*Laughter*] Well, Sen. Singh seems to have a little miscreant qualities coming out the last day.

We have solutions. Let me continue with the solutions, the map. We know that we have to grow our economy. We have to build our institutions, and we have to grow our economy. When I look around me, what do I see? I see that we are now more and more in a globalized world, but we keep confined to a Caricom trading space. Madam President, the world is too big for us to handle, and Caricom is too small for us to engage in a process which will expand our economy.

In a previous debate, I had indicated that it is about time, in this region, we are confined no longer by an accident of history, but rather by the reality of geography. For this reason we do need now to look in a serious way at forging closer links with Cuba, the Dominican Republic, all the Central American countries. Create for us a kind of a Central American union, all countries washed by the Caribbean Sea, with a border on the Caribbean Sea, become naturally part of our geographic economic space. Let us be ruled by geography.

In this regard, once we begin to expand our trading space to look at our natural geography, we see the potential for entrepreneurship. The future belongs in this country as the past was on a vibrant manufacturing sector. A sector that is going to add value. Why is manufacturing so important? When we look at our early 1950s and '60s period, the early stages, we saw that manufacturing created opportunities, for a range of individuals with a number of skills.

We have focused on services, but the services sector, Madam President, gives rise to opportunities for two: those who are highly skilled and those who are highly unskilled. There is very little by way of an intermediate growth pole, for the middle-skilled individuals. It is for this reason that the United States is looking once again at expanding its manufacturing sector. So you create jobs now for the supervisors, the foremen, individuals who can rise from the floor to the middle. So that they will be able to occupy positions at all stages in the manufacturing

chain, and really earn decent incomes and make careers in the middle; manufacturing offers us that opportunity. We need to ensure our entrepreneurial base and our manufacturing sector is given every opportunity.

I would recommend, not only do we cultivate our entrepreneurial base, but we begin to socialize our country, to look towards our geographic neighbours in close proximity. So that a ship leaving Trinidad can reach Honduras in a relatively short space of time. We exploit the geographical advantage of Central America. Overcome the accidents of history where we had English colonialism, and benefit from the realities of geography. I think, Madam President, if we can do that, we would stand a better chance of stimulating our non-oil domestic economy. Entrepreneurs will be producing items for export. We will have to understand those markets very well.

We have a pioneer on our Bench. Sen. Dr. Balgobin is one of the pioneers in his field. He does not have to be an entrepreneur. He could have been a professor of business quite comfortable. The only other person I knew like that, Madam President, was a gentleman by the name of Prof. Eric Herrens of McGill University. This man was a professor of economics before my time. He would lecture in economics during the day. On weekends he would become economic advisor to Pierre Elliott Trudeau. On his way from Montreal to Ottawa, he would stop at a town, I think it was Belleville, at a plant that he owned, that made Bulldog Glue. So he was a glue maker, professor of economics, advisor to President Trudeau. Sen. Dr. Balgobin reminds me of this fella. When we asked how did Prof. Eric Herrens do all of that? I was told by some people later, the man enjoyed working hard, and he used to train a great deal to write his papers, formulate Canadian policy and project sales for Bulldog Glue, which was the precursor for what we now know as contact cement. So that we do have the academics getting in the field.

Madam President, we have had academics getting into business. If we ever had a Bose speaker, Amar Bose, professor at MIT in engineering, decided well, he likes nice music. So he created Bose systems, becoming one of the most powerful companies in the world in aeronautical sound systems.

So once we can get our space, we will be able to encourage academia to get into business. These are the people who will be able to use technology, not just to teach it, but to implement things and monetize it, to create opportunities not only for their students, but for their employees as well. This is the new era we are talking about. This is the new generation. My time is an old time. That was a time when we just sat and we looked at business people, as a different kind of people,

“they only there to make money”. We are looking at a new generation of the intellectual entrepreneurs. That is where I think Trinidad and Tobago will have to go, because we have a combination of intellectualism and entrepreneurial talent, which can be combined now, to ensure our economy grows more and more in the future.

Madam President, I do not know how much time—I could do with two hours, but I know I only have two minutes. I have six minutes, lucky. Let me make the best of the six minutes—

Sen. Ramnarine: Last ball.

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: Last ball to score. We in this country need to change our culture, culture of thinking. I am saying this because the future is now uncertain. When the future is certain, that is when you can predict the price of cocoa and sugar, and you know the acreages and you know exactly how your plantation is going to be financed, and you can take into account some of the aberrations of world prices, and you have your credit facilities with Barclays Bank and so on. Life was very simple.

The Senate, I understood met on a Tuesday at one o’clock, and finished at six o’clock. It finished at six o’clock because they did not have current or electricity all the way to the plantations in Mamoral. So you had to finish at six o’clock and the fellas will take the carriage and go home before dark. In that way, Madam President, Senators were not deemed as legislators. Well, I do not know if I am not a legislator, and if do not make law, what am I doing on this Bench? I am “liming”? Sen. Dr. Balgobin said, if I am not a legislator, then I am card player, because we are now making laws. When we look at all the laws we have made, since I first came in two years ago. The first Bill was that Municipal Corporations Bill. I think over the last two years, I have contributed to making a lot of laws. Let us hope most of these were good laws. Let us hope the errors that we made are minor and liveable.

But the Senators as law makers lived in a simpler time then. We live in a much more complex time and, Madam President, we know that the time has changed. We need to change our culture on how we actually chart our way for the future. Let me close by saying, that as we chart a course for the future, there is much in this country that is good. We have to keep that which is good. We have to discard that which is not good. What is good, we have to keep and we have to maintain now. This country has little or no culture in maintenance. We have to preserve our buildings. We have to leave a legacy for the next generation.

The Magnificent Seven should be seven gleaming buildings. The President’s House should be—as former Governor General House—should be one of the

most outstanding places in the country. We should be able to go and have tea on the grounds of that house and say, we are proud to be appointees of His Excellency, because the man has a real good house.

I have been to the President's house where he lives, that is a small two-bedroom "kinda ting", that is not a place for a president to live, but that is another matter. The issue before us is that we need to maintain. We need to have a public-sector maintenance programme. We need to maintain, because if we do not maintain, not only are we not leaving anything as beacons for the next generation, they will condemn us for it, but really, if we do not maintain our plant and equipment, Petrotrin oil spills, threat to life and limb will occur. We will be injuring our environment. We need to get into the mindset, Madam President. Not only must we build capital, but we must keep that which we have. I did not see much in the variation on maintenance expenditures. We need to have a crafted public-sector maintenance programme, where our capital stock that we have, that we operate with, our hospitals, our schools, our roads, our buildings, our ports, our quays everything, our ships. We need to maintain those so that we could really leave an expended capital stock, to allow us to grow our economy.

Madam, President, I thank you kindly for allowing me this extra time, and I want to say it has been a pleasure serving in this Parliament for the last two years. I have plenty more to say, but it will have to wait for another time. Thank you.
[Desk thumping]

The Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications (Sen. The Hon. Vasant Bharath): Thank you. [Desk thumping] Thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to contribute to this Finance (Variation of Appropriation (Financial Year 2015) Bill, 2015.

Madam President, there is no doubt in my mind that the Government sees this Bill as an opportunity to be able to report to the people on the progress that we have made in the last five years, not just in managing the affairs of the country, but also improving the quality of their lives over that period. Given the unprecedented advances that the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration has made over the last five years, I consider it indeed a pleasure to be here this afternoon to account for our stewardship. I am also happy, to be acknowledged as one of the usual suspects, that would stand and speak on behalf of the Government, as Sen. Dr. Henry alluded to. [Desk thumping]

Madam President, Sen. Dr. Henry stated that when the Leader of Government Business adjourned the House early yesterday, he went home to studiously prepare for today's debate. Well, sadly, Madam President, he needed a lot more

time at home, because [*Desk thumping and laughter*] his contribution again, today, was really just a rehash of what he had said over the last five years, since he has been in this Chamber. I have said before, and I will repeat it, that the student who would have written Sen. Dr. Henry's speech five years ago would have been a very wealthy person had he been getting royalties, because of the number of times that Sen. Dr. Henry has repeated those very same words.

I want to just state , just really for the record, that repetition does not establish validity, and it does not matter how many times that Sen. Dr. Henry and those across on the other side continue to say the same things. It will not change the facts that we have faced.

2.00 p.m.

Madam President, let us not delude ourselves or fool ourselves about what we inherited in 2010. What we inherited in 2010 was a weak, fragile, crumbling economy, with institutions falling about us all over the place, and this Government in 2010 set about the careful repairing of that economy to undo all of the damage that had been caused up until 2010. We did so with some very strong fundamental guiding principles: they were poverty eradication, prosperity for all, economic prosperity for all, personal and national safety, creating a knowledge-driven society, creating a diversified economy; and, also, at the same time, ensuring that we had a strong foreign policy in place so that we could leverage our strength as a Caricom nation with the region and the rest of the world. Today, Madam President, today, I think it is undisputed that after a short five-year term this country has risen like a phoenix out of those ashes. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, for the avoidance of any doubt, let me state for the record—because there may be some doubt created outside of this House, and maybe some within may attempt to do that—that this debate centres on Government's request for a provision of \$2,189,563,690 to fund urgent and critical expenditure until September 30, 2015. Let me reiterate and reinforce that this is a variation, it is not an increase in a request for further funds. This is a variation. We have come here today, not to ask for more money, but simply to move funds around from one Ministry to another. Of the \$2,189,563,690, Madam President, the Minister of Finance and Economy would have stated that \$1,401,709,609 is actually required to meet the cost related to back pay and to revise the remuneration packages for public servants.

So, 65 per cent of what we have come here today is as a result of asking for funds or moving funds to be able to make payments to public servants. Let me

just—because the Minister, although he mentioned the actual amount, he did not give the detail of those agencies that would receive these funds, or certainly not the amount he gave the agency: the Civil Service and Statutory Authorities, \$545,867,690; the Teaching Service, \$585,118,000; monthly and daily-paid employees of the Port Authority, \$69,200,000; daily-rated employees of WASA, \$110 million; and hourly and daily-rated workers of four regional corporations, \$91,524,000. The Minister then went on to indicate where the savings would have come from, and he went on to talk about the Infrastructure Development Fund, Caricom Fund, Constituency Funds, et cetera, and I would not go into that.

Madam President, you will recall, and this honourable House will recall that on January 08, 2015, the hon. Prime Minister addressed the nation and she highlighted certain measures that would have been undertaken by the Government to offset falling oil and gas prices on global markets. At that time the Ministry of Finance and the Economy had already started an exercise of making a determination with regard to monitoring and evaluating these decreasing energy prices. The Prime Minister made a concerted effort to reaffirm her commitment to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago when she addressed the nation, and she said this, and I quote—she made it very clear, and I quote:

“The times...call for taking full responsibility, as we always have, and ensuring that we put people and country first.

In this way we can confront our challenges and together we will emerge stronger.”

Notice, Madam President, we did not throw our hands up in the air. The Prime Minister did not throw her hands up in the air and call an early election, like others may have done and had done on two previous occasions. We actually accepted full responsibility for the situation that confronted us, and we are responding to the challenges that we were faced as a direct result of these decreasing energy prices on global markets.

The Prime Minister in her presentation said that the budget will be recalibrated to US \$45 for oil and US \$2.25 per MMBtu for gas, but she was also very clear that there would be certain things that would not be compromised in any form or fashion, and they were: protection for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society; two, maintaining the existing pace of business activity; preserving the jobs and incomes of our citizens and that there would be no new taxes; intensifying our efforts to make ours a safer nation; maintaining investments in education and training; continuing the policy of improving the quality of health care delivered to citizens; and holding firm to our commitment to critical infrastructural projects, for example, roads and bridges, and she mentioned

the San Fernando to Mayaro one, in particular, and our housing programme, as well as hospitals and schools.

Madam President, five months on from that presentation to the nation, we find ourselves in a situation where having projected, as the Minister of Finance and the Economy would have said, a budget deficit of \$4 billion for the first half of this fiscal period, we have not only maintained all of the commitments set out by the Prime Minister on all fronts, but we have also managed to deliver a surplus of \$47 million, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*] Let me be more explicit, despite the challenges and the adjustments that we have had to make, our developmental agenda has stood very firm and very strongly with regard to creating economic prosperity for all. As a result, Madam President, today, we have become one of the only nations in the world to have achieved the millennium goal of universal preschool education. [*Desk thumping*]

We have delivered over, or close to 100 newly constructed schools. We are almost finished with the San Fernando to Point Fortin Highway, promised almost 50 years ago by the then Government. We have continued our housing policy of delivering 100 homes per week. Thanks to the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources and Leader of Government Business, and WASA, over 70 per cent of the population today gets running water 24 hours a days, seven days a week. Let me put that in perspective, because it is easy for those on the other side to forget, when this Government came into office in 2010 only 18 per cent of the population had water 24 hours a day, seven days a week; today, it is over 70 per cent, Madam President, that is a phenomenal achievement. [*Desk thumping*]

The Couva Children's Hospital is almost ready for use. The Oncology Centre, which had previously been a chunk of concrete in the ground is now a reality. As the Minister of Finance and the Economy would have mentioned when he spoke, we have now broken ground for both the Arima and Point Fortin hospitals, both of which had been promised many, many decades ago by previous governments. We now have a brand new aquatic centre and sporting velodrome to be opened soon by the Minister of Sport, and we have seen investments, both in the energy sector and in the non-energy sector, flowing into Trinidad and Tobago, which will mean that where in 2010 we had investments into the country of US \$570 million, in 2015 that will be over \$3 billion.

The financial services sector and the manufacturing sectors continue to grow and increase their contributions to revenue and GDP. Madam President, many of my colleagues will add to that list of achievements when they have the opportunity to join the debate, but what is very essential is that we have kept at

the forefronts of our minds, that despite the challenges and the adjustments we have had to make, we have not in any way been hampered as a direct result of those challenges. Madam President, the Minister of Finance and the Economy alluded to a report from the IDB when he spoke, and it was this report highlighted on the *Business Guardian* of May 31, 2015, and the headline reads, IDB Official Praises Government: Trinidad and Tobago navigating downturn well—this is the headline, Madam President. In the inside the official headline reads:

“IDB official: Difficult to criticize T&T’s handling of the downturn” And if I am permitted, Madam President, I will just read a little bit of it, it says:

“A senior official at the Inter-American Development Bank...has praised the way in which Trinidad and Tobago has handled the economic downturn as a result of the decline in the prices of the country’s hydrocarbon exports.”

He goes on to say:

“Trinidad is navigating this downturn pretty well, as far as I have studied.

If you take the energy exporters in Latin America and the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago is the country that has not been forced to make strong adjustments as a result of the falling price of oil (and natural gas)...”

He goes on to say that it is as a result of two things, one, he talks about our long-term contracts, and he says, secondly:

“...the country has a fair amount of reserves, about US \$10 billion, and a Heritage and Stabilisation Fund that has about US \$5.6 billion. This is a war chest that gives Trinidad an advantageous position, vis-à-vis other oil and gas exporters in the region.

I am confident that the Trinidadian authorities know what they are doing. So they will know what they have to do. I am not managing the budget of the country.

What I can say is that looking from outside, what I see is a country with strong reserves, large”—Heritage and Stabilisation Fund—“with solid numbers that I can compare with other countries and I can say that it is in fair shape.” [*Desk thumping*]

Finally:

“Looking at the numbers from outside, it’s an economy in good shape. It’s very hard for me, especially in the context of the Caribbean, to criticize the economic management of T&T.”

Madam President, this a glowing report from Alexandre Meirada Rosa, Vice President for Countries for the IDB group, speaking to the *Sunday Business Guardian* newspaper.

Madam President, but I want to come back to this lingering discussion that comes from the other side every single time when they hurl accusations of crisis management and excessive spending, because that is a song that they continue to sing. Madam President, but I want to give you some background because it is said, and I have said this before, that facts are stubborn things, but, clearly, statistics are open to manipulation, and that is what they attempt to do, manipulate statistics to suit themselves. Madam President, a gentleman called Professor James Duesenberry, he is an America economist with a Keynesian slant, he once said:

“It is harder for a family to reduce its expenditure from a higher level than for a family to refrain from making high expenditures in the first place.”

What was he saying?

2.30 p.m.

He was saying that when you get accustomed to spending a lot of money, it is very difficult to be able to reduce that expenditure and accommodate the reduction than if you had not gotten to that point in the first place. So when we are criticized continually for expenditure, I want to give you an indication and a history of how we have arrived where we have today.

The last budget of the UNC in 2002 was \$14.428 billion. The budget of Prime Minister Patrick Manning in 2003, his first budget, was \$20,507,153; 2004, \$22 billion; 2005, \$27 billion; 2006, \$34 billion; 2007, \$38 billion; 2008, \$42 billion; and 2009, \$44 billion. They went from 2002 at \$14 billion, to \$44.2 billion in seven years. They started this expenditure, this squandermania, these programmes of transfers and subsidies, these make-work programmes. They started it. So, of course, as Duesenberry says, it is very difficult, once you are spending a certain amount of money, to suddenly turn around and stop spending that money, because what you have done is created expenditure that is perceived as now necessary.

In addition to that, again, when one looks at government expenditure from the year 2000, you would see that in the year 2000 under a UNC Government, government expenditure was \$10.99 billion; in 2001, it was \$12.59 billion. It went up steadily: 2002, \$13.7 billion; 2003, \$15.8 billion; 2004, \$18.45 billion; 2005, \$22.45 billion; 2006, \$27.1 billion; 2007, \$31.57 billion; 2008, \$36.1 billion; and 2009, \$36.75 billion. So their expenditure went from the year 2000 at \$10.99 to

2009, it went to \$36.75 billion.

Now, to be fair, let me give you the expenditure under this Government: 2010, \$37.7 billion; 2011, \$42.1 billion; 2012, \$45.19 billion; 2013, \$49.74 billion; and in 2014, \$53.04 billion. If one were to analyze those figures, you would see as far as annual growth of the expenditure is concerned, for the period 2001—2009 under their watch, the average growth rate, taken across all of those years was, 14.53 per cent per annum—average. Their expenditure rose. Do you know what it was from 2010—2014, 7.66 per cent, half. [*Desk thumping*] Our average expenditure growth was half what theirs was in the previous time. These are facts; they cannot be manipulated.

But the achievements today can only be fully appreciated when one reflects, again, where we started off in 2010. I want to refer again to facts, because these can be checked. I want to dispute completely and totally what Sen. Dr. Henry would have said earlier on.

I refer to the 2010 *Review of the Economy*, and I quote:

“The performance of the Non-Petroleum sector during 2010 continued to be weak.”

This is 2010, *Review of the Economy*:

“Following on its 7.2 percent contraction in 2009, the sector is expected to record statistically negligible growth in 2010. Given this outcome, the Non-Petroleum sector’s contribution to real GDP, is expected to fall to 55.7 percent in 2010,...”

That is what they referred to as having left an economy in good shape. Let us compare that to what the *Review of the Economy* said in 2014. I quote again:

“Growth in the non-petroleum sector is expected to strengthen to 2.5 percent in 2014, from 1.6 percent in 2013. This marks the sector’s fourth consecutive year of real growth, which has averaged 2.4 percent over the 2011 to 2014 period. The sector’s contribution to overall GDP is projected to increase to 60.9 percent in 2014,...”

This is what they call a crisis.

On another note, Sen. Dr. Henry went out of his way to talk about the situation with the production of oil in Trinidad and Tobago. He made a lot of hay regarding the drop in production. I know that my colleague Sen. Ramnarine will deal with it later on in the debate, but I wanted to touch on it because it is an important perspective and gives you an indication again about the depths to which the Opposition will plumb to misrepresent the facts.

Both here, Sen. Dr. Henry, and in the other place another Member talked about the reduction in production and the fact that production has fallen. In fact, when we came into office oil production I think was about 98,000 barrels in 2010, and today it is at 81,000 barrels. So there has been a drop of about 16,000 to 17,000 barrels per day.

But what Sen. Dr. Henry conveniently forget to tell us, and so did the Member in the other House, was that in 2005 oil production in Trinidad and Tobago was 145,000 barrels per day. By 2010, production of oil in Trinidad and Tobago had fallen to 98,000 barrels a day. So in other words, under their watch because of the neglect for the sector, because of the lack of investment in the sector, which we have inherited, and Sen. Ramnarine will talk about the work we have done to encourage investments and what is happening in that sector, when he gets the opportunity to speak. Because of that, our production of oil fell by 50,000 barrels a day, but they did not speak about that.

They spoke about the fact that it fell by 17,000 barrels a day since 2010—50,000 barrels a day, not a word. We are now having, like in every other aspect of the economy, having to correct all of the bad work that we inherited. That is what they call leaving the economy in good shape. Today, for the first time in almost 10 years, because of the policies of the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration, we are now seeing an upturn in oil production in Trinidad and Tobago, increased drilling and an upturn in oil production in Trinidad and Tobago. But I will go further.

They talked about revenues. In 2010, our recurrent revenue was \$43.6 billion. Do you know what it was in 2014? It was \$58.6 billion; that is \$15 billion more. Our tax revenue in 2010 was \$37 billion. Today it is \$47.7 billion. Our non-tax revenue was \$6.6 billion in 2010. Today it is \$10.9 billion. You know, Madam President, the one that I am always very gratified about—because they talk about diversification of the economy—the non-energy revenue in Trinidad and Tobago in 2010, and it can easily be checked, was \$26 billion. At the end of 2014, that figure was \$39 billion; that is an increase of \$13 billion—[*Desk thumping*—\$13 billion outside of the energy sector.

Again, if I were to just continue on that issue of economic diversification, this Government has moved beyond just talk about economic diversification and we are now building new sectors for the future economy. Financial services and the real estate sector now contribute 15 per cent of GDP. The manufacturing sector is 10 per cent of our GDP. Let me read for you what the *Review of the Economy* in 2014 says:

“The services sector is expected to record real growth of 3.0 percent in 2014, an improvement on the 2.2 percent expansion in 2013. Strongest growth are projected for personal services (11.0 percent); construction and quarrying (7.1 percent); and finance, insurance, and real estate...the largest sub-sector, which is expected to grow by 5.5 percent, up from 3.3 percent in 2013.”

When you compare that with 2010, according again to the *Review of the Economy*, output of the services sector:

“...is expected to contract by 0.8 per cent in 2010...”

—contract by 0.8 per cent in 2010.

This result has come about primarily on account of an expected decline of 3.1 per cent in distribution and restaurants, the second biggest services sector. The finance, insurance and real estate sector, the largest services sector, expanded by 0.9 per cent in 2010 after having contracted by 4.7 per cent in 2009.

So these are the facts.

If I were to be able to sum it up, it would be in the last five years—this is what it would be: economic growth has been restored. In 2009 we suffered negative growth of 4.4 per cent, the first time in 17 years that this country, since 1993, has suffered negative growth. Revenue has increased by over \$16 billion since 2010. [Desk thumping] The energy sector which was in decline is now starting to expand yet again. The non-energy contribution to GDP has increased by over \$13 billion since 2010, and the non-energy sector has grown by approximately 2½ per cent on average over the last six quarters.

Madam President, I was really quite alarmed when Sen. Dr. Henry made a specific point relating to keeping students in university so that essentially we could prop up the unemployment numbers. That is a disgraceful comment to have made in this Parliament, from a Member of Parliament serving in this country. It was a disgraceful comment, quite frankly. I only hope that is not the policy of the PNM Government, because there are many young hearts out there today who may have been listening to that, who tonight will sleep very uneasily if they ever felt that that might be PNM policy—God forbid if they were to ever see the corridors of power.

One of the pillars on which we have continued to build this economy is that we want to take people out of low-paying jobs into higher paying jobs through education, and we have spent a tremendous amount of time and effort on ensuring that we create that environment whereby all of our young people have an equal

opportunity, regardless of their social and economic circumstances of being able to be educated free of charge in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, there are very few countries in the world today where you can access education from primary all the way through; in fact, from early childhood all the way through to university free of charge, like we do in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.30 p.m.

I want to read for you an excerpt as to why we have that philosophy. And it was a publication of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) entitled “Education at a Glance 2012”. And it gave a very strong answer to the question of how education impacts on an economy, and it said:

- “More than half of the GDP growth in OECD countries over the last decade is related to labour income growth among tertiary educated individuals.
- Employers”—on average—“pay almost twice as much for a 45-54 year-old worker with tertiary education, than for someone without...secondary education.”

And these are precisely the reasons why the Government has maintained such a high consistent level of investment in education. So, I am really quite shocked, and I hope that when the next speaker from the Opposition gets up they are able to get up and vehemently deny that that is PNM policy whereby they would ensure that vast numbers of children do not have—or young people do not have access to tertiary education, because they may feel that that is padding the unemployment numbers.

Madam President, it is also why we understand very clearly that young people today need both democratic and economic liberty, and that is why we continue to press on with our drive to educate more of our young people, and opening up schools across the country and educational institutions across the country. Many schools today are being opened up in rural areas that we were told previously that “douens” and parrots dwelled, so therefore we ought not to be opening schools in rural areas of Biche and Barrackpore. But not only that, we are today opening also schools in Laventille and Carenage, in urban areas where those same MPs have been begging for schools for decades; today this Government, the People’s Partnership Government, is opening schools across the country. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, I want to continue with regard to education because we are fervently of the mind that if we educate our people we would be able to take them

out of poverty. So, therefore, again, you would see the number of early childhood learning centres that have been opened up across the country. In fact, Dr. Gopeesingh reminds me that over the last five years he has built over 50 of these schools and there are another 50 being constructed currently. In the nine years that they were in office, they built 22. They promised to build 600. The former Minister of Education, every time she had the opportunity would get up and say they are going to build 600 ECCE schools by 2012. They built 22 in the nine years they were there.

Today also, Madam President, we have 25 special needs schools, 14 of them are private, and 11 are Government, providing education for special needs students such as those with dyslexia, autism, ADHD, cerebral palsy as well as visual, hearing, emotional, behavioural and psychological abnormalities, and providing care and education to approximately 2,500 special needs students.

Madam President, I also want to talk a bit about the social safety net, because, again, a lot has been said about that, and there is a lot of discussion with regard to cutting the safety net. I want to also mention, and it has become a topical issue for discussion simply because \$75 million has been transferred in the variation Bill that is before us to CEPEP. But, I want to also say, Madam President, that between 2003 and 2009 the subsidies and transfers figure moved from \$6.4 billion to \$20.5 billion under the PNM Government. From \$6.4 billion in 2003 to \$20.5 billion in 2009, an increase of 320 per cent, deliberately and systemically entrapping thousands into dependency, and that was their plan. The more people they kept dependent on them, it was their hope that those people would be brought out on election day to vote. That was the philosophy. That was the policy. It is the reason why many of the constituencies that they have controlled for 50 years have not evolved. Look at the services. Look at the goods and services and look at the living conditions of people in Laventille, and East Port of Spain, controlled for 50 years by the Opposition. Look at the conditions under which many of these people live. Look at the social and economic conditions under which they must survive on a daily basis.

I hear Sen. Dr. Mahabir when he speaks about social programmes, and I understand very clearly that we must make adjustments in certain patterns of expenditure. We must reprioritize. But, Madam President, let me read you a few of what subsidies and transfers make up:

Public Transport Corporation—I will read some of the bigger ones:

- The GATE programme, \$650 million.

- University of the West Indies, \$684 million.
- University of Trinidad and Tobago, \$430 million.
- CEPEP and URP together, \$1.1 billion.

Out of a total figure for transfers and subsidies—which actually the Minister of Finance and the Economy gave the correct name—over \$30 billion. \$1.1 billion goes to CEPEP and URP. Social services and pensions, disability grant, funeral grant, housing grant, pensions, \$9 billion; \$9.05 billion. The fuel subsidy, \$6 billion. How many of these can we actually touch? The Infrastructural Development Fund, which is actually what goes into building roads, schools, hospitals and bridges, \$4.3 billion; regional health authorities, \$3.055 billion; the Tobago House of Assembly—Sen. Cudjoe, should we stop giving them?

Sen. Cudjoe: You cannot.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: Exactly, that is the point—\$2.20 billion; and local government bodies, \$1.89 billion.

So, when one looks at the makeup of subsidies and transfers we have to be very careful where we touch and what we cut because it impacts severely and directly on the quality of life of people. And I raise that, of course as I said, because there was this issue that Sen. Dr. Henry raised, and I know it was raised in the other House, about CEPEP being given an additional \$75 million. But the CEPEP of today is not the CEPEP of 2010. The CEPEP of today is an organization that affords people an opportunity to be trained in many different ways. [*Desk thumping*]. It offers them training in areas where they can come out of the CEPEP programme and be productive members of society.

Madam President, today we have things like CEPEP marine in which they are responsible for cleaning up all of the wetlands, the inland waterways and marine space. I heard Dr. Moonilal in the other place talk about the fact that CEPEP marine cleaned up over 185,000 thousand bags of rubbish. Very recently, Madam President, myself and Sen. Dr. Balgobin and others from the private sector met, mandated by the Prime Minister, to determine how we can bring CEPEP workers into the private sector. In fact, very shortly we intend to have a pilot programme where we are going to take about 750 workers out of CEPEP and move them into the private sector, whereby Government will fund part of the wage structure and the private sector will fund the other part of it for a period of six months, and then those people would transition permanently in good-paying jobs, into the private sector. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, it is not well-known that when the Minister of Finance and the Economy stood up and said that 105 health centres across the country had been refurbished, it is CEPEP and URP who actually did all of the refurbishment work on all of those centres. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, I just want to move on to the issue of national security, because one of the other areas that the Government has been criticized for is the purchase of the Damen boats. We are purchasing 12 vessels—four coastal vessels, two service utility vessels and six fast-patrol interceptors—at a cost of TT \$1.3 billion. That is \$1 billion less than we would have been paying for the OPVs. But, we have come in for a lot of criticism for the purchase of those boats. I am not quite sure why, because when one looks at what the previous Government had bought over the years, and there are catalogues of purchases that I want to highlight here today, because again it puts into context the financial prudence and the proper management of taxpayers' funds by this Government, and getting value for money. I would just briefly run through a couple of them. Remember, Madam President, the MV *Su*? Headline, \$127 million lost with the MV *Su* as well as the sale of four water taxis, and I read from the *Trinidad Express* 2015:

More than \$127 million of taxpayers' money has been lost following the sale of four water taxis purchased under the People's National Movement administration including the controversial MV *Su* that was never used. Documents obtained by the *Express* show that some \$55 million was spent to buy and repair the MV *Su* which is up for sale now at a figure of \$548,000 scrap iron.

The MV *Su* never sailed a day since it was bought. Twenty-seven million dollars more was spent on repairs alone after it was bought. Documents on the sale of the vessels showed that capital expenditure, which includes the cost of acquisition, amounted to \$133,310,510; whilst only \$6,000,038 was recovered from the sale, resulting in a total loss of \$127,272,248.

Sen. G. Singh: Somebody should be sued over the MV *Su*.

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

Motion made: That the speaking time of hon. Senator be extended by 15 minutes [*Sen. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. G. Singh: Let us hear more about the *Su*.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: No, I have more to talk about other things so I will leave the *Su* for now.

Madam President, another botched purchase. The purchase of four helicopters AW139 medium twin turbine helicopters. These four helicopters cost the Trinidad and Tobago taxpayers \$2,191,000,000; \$500 million for one. Madam President, let me tell you, according to the official website for this company, it says that the 2013 prices of a new AW139 helicopter costs US \$12 million. That is \$80 million, let us be generous. Each of these cost \$500 million per piece, and as Minister Ganga Singh says, they cannot even pick up a Bambi Bucket. Madam President, let me tell you about the unsuitability of the AW139, because they are not used at all. First of all they retrofitted it with equipment. It says:

“The equipment ... on the AW139 does not lend itself to independent off-shore operations in the maritime surveillance role. The helicopters lack”—these are helicopters that were bought for the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard—“search radar...”

This is the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard, it lacks search radar.

“The helicopters have been delivered with a civil registration 9Y and as such can carry no armament despite being fitted with attachments...”

2.45 p.m.

“A 9Y registration means that there are severe limitations on the operational usage of the aircraft...”

Concerns have been raised about the pace and the nature of training local pilots as 3 years of training have not delivered any local Pilots...”—at all, Madam President.

This is what they bought. That is the AW139. Well, of course, we all know about the famous blimp that was sold for US \$50,000.

“The blimp was purchased by the former administration”—this one was purchased for—“US \$15 million”.

It was sold eventually for US \$50,000.

“Sources revealed”—according to, this is Trinidad and Tobago *Newsday*:

“Sources revealed it was costing government...TT \$1.4 million...per month to maintain the blimp...”

This is just whilst it was down, okay?

“Last August, a company hired by SAUTT to carry out maintenance work on the blimp was fired because government felt it was too costly...The total cost of maintenance from the date of acquisition June 2006 to December 2009 was \$19,714,314.”

And this is the important part:

“The first blimp was purchased by the PNM administration at a cost of US \$12 million. Months after the purchase was made the Skyship began experiencing difficulties. Government then took a decision to lease a foreign...blimp...”

So they already have one blimp for \$12 million. They:

“...took a decision to lease a foreign used blimp at a cost of US \$100,000 per month...”

Then they got a third blimp. They:

“...purchased for US\$15 million...”

So they had one for US \$12 million. It did not work. They leased another one for US \$100,000 per month, and that was giving operational problems and then they went and bought another one for US \$15 million:

“Additional cost was added to that US\$15 million to outfit the...blimp.”

Today, Madam President, we have no blimps in Trinidad. And the last one, Madam President, was the purchase of some Austal vessels out of Australia for the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard at a cost of \$400 million. This is a report that I have from the Ministry of National Security:

In 2010, the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard received the Austal which again proved to be totally unsuitable for Trinidad and Tobago waters in that the high free board and that the vessel carried jet propulsion instead of the propellers. And that meant on the north and east coast of Trinidad and Tobago, the vessels skimmed across the water and were not very stable. They were difficult to steer. Worst still, the vessels which were supposed to be 30 metres in length, when they arrived were only 24.6 metres in length.

Sen. G. Singh: Where the metres gone?

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: [Laughter] And the water line. And only if you include the swim platform over the stern then it gets close to 30 metres. In addition to the structural inefficiencies the vessels proved to be exorbitantly expensive to maintain and parts and spares were not easily sourced. The radio and communications package proved challenging and was not compatible,

integration friendly with operating agencies in the maritime domain. It is safe to say—

Listen to this, Madam President, it is safe to say—this is a report from the Ministry of National Security, eh.

It is safe to say that a proper feasibility study and needs analysis was never conducted. And the due diligence was inappropriate as the vessels began exhibiting signs of unserviceability long before its operational timeline.

Sen. G. Singh: How much money was spent, 400?

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: Four hundred million. So, Madam President, that is what our predecessors did with regard to the purchase of naval assets, and they have no moral authority whatsoever to criticize the purchase of the Damen boats, which are now being used by the US Coast Guard, by the Bahamas, by Barbados, by Jamaica and by many others. In fact, they have been in Trinidad for 40 years. Forty years they have been doing work with the NEC. Twenty vessels I believe they had in Trinidad for the last 40 years.

Madam President, I just want to briefly, in the few minutes I have left, talk about trade and industry for a moment, because what we have been doing in the last five years in trade and industry is really setting the stage to create an enabling environment to allow manufacturers like the TTMA and others to be able to strive, to be able to do business, to be able to be in a position whereby they are not hampered or hindered in any way or hamstrung in any way by the bureaucracy that they previously faced.

So therefore we set about creating an environment that makes it easy to do business. I want to say, Madam President, as a direct result of the work, and I want to congratulate the employees of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment, as a result of all the work they have done in the last five years. In 2015, Trinidad and Tobago was rated and ranked by the World Bank as one of the top 10 reformers in the entire world, out of 189 countries, [*Desk thumping*] for ease of doing business.

Also, Dr. Mahabir spoke about the extension of markets into countries bordering us. I want to say that we already have bilateral agreements with many of our Central American partners—Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador. We are now starting negotiations with Chile and, of course, it is well known already we have an arrangement with the European Union under the European partnership agreement.

I am also happy to say, Madam President, that the Canadian Government is going to the WTO in July of this year to get an extension on the arrangement for CARIBCAN between the Canadian Government and the Caricom Governments to allow duty-free access of goods from Caricom into Canada. And we will continue to negotiate that agreement.

I want to also, very quickly touch on the issue of the IPOs, Madam President, because that has also taken up some time and some discussion. Sen. Dr. Henry spoke about selling-off of state assets. Well the fact is, we are, on this side of the Senate, of the firm belief that we must empower our citizens, that we must give them every opportunity to seek economic freedom. We feel that one of the ways that we can do that is to allow them to enjoy access to state assets when that is possible, and the fact that 8,000 people would have enjoyed ownership and do enjoy ownership now of First Citizens Bank, I think it is a tribute to the philosophy of this Government.

In fact, the share price of First Citizens Bank in the last two years since the IPO has increased by 95 per cent. So that it means that those ordinary citizens who previously had not invested on the stock market, ordinary people, Madam President, ordinary citizens of Trinidad and Tobago now have the opportunity to invest in the energy assets of Trinidad and Tobago. And much has been written on this matter, but I do want to read just very briefly some of the perspectives, I know that many on the other side are against it, but Anthony Wilson, in an excellent column last week, said:

“How is something that benefits the NIB, pension plans, mutual funds, credit unions, trade unions, NGC as well as the population”—at large—“advocating an ‘eat ah food’ mentality?”

Clearly it is those who are in favour of delaying the IPO at this time...who are promulgating the ‘eat ah food’ mentality.”

And he goes on to argue that:

“...in favour of...the...IPO”—and in favour of further divestments of public assets, that it is the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Those people who will soon be getting all of the back pay that we are passing here today, [*Desk thumping*] all of those people will have that opportunity. Rather than buying material items, going out and spending money on fridges and stoves and motor vehicles, which have a short-term gratification time frame, they would be able to invest and save in the country’s assets.

Madam President, it is clear for all to see, the work and the achievements that this Government has made in the last five years. It is also clear to see what the philosophy and the policy of those on the other side are. They have gone from taking booms in the past and very efficiently turning them into busts. That is their *modus operandi*. And you know it is clear, it is very clear when one looks on at how they have operated, that a senior Member of their team, someone in the other place made it abundantly clear when he spoke on September 22, 2014 on a CNC3 programme with Hema Ramkissoon. In fact it was the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East and he had these very poignant words to say. He said and I quote:

What happens with the PNM is that we become arrogant. We stopped listening and we got voted out. We go into the Opposition and we listen.

One of the problems that we have as a party, and I think I have a responsibility to change that, is that when we get back into Government we stop listening again.

The words, Madam President, of a very senior Member of the Opposition. And that essentially gives a good indication of their pattern of behaviour over the last 50 years.

Madam President, I know my time is running very short, but when one considers again, as I say, the achievements that we have made, the fact that the 95,000 laptops we have given to children across the country. We have won unprecedented recognition throughout the region and worldwide for that. The fact that we have broken new ground in Tobago by delivering the first ever integrated campus of UTT on the island of Tobago. We have instituted the first ever drilling academy in Trinidad and Tobago and we have launched, of course, the Children's Life Fund and we have the Couva Children's Hospital to deal with children that is going to be opened very shortly.

And, Madam President, we have now put an end to all the grandstanding by previous governments. We have now gone ahead and we have delivered constitutional reform as far as local government, as far as central government and as far as the law and procedures for public procurement is concerned. And no wonder, therefore, in the latest Nigel Henry poll, the only one that looks at confidence levels, you will see that in every area in education from 2011 to 2015 we have moved from 46 per cent to 61 per cent. In the health institutions, from 10 per cent to 27 per cent. In the judicial system, from 18 per cent to 22 per cent. In the media, from 26 per cent to 42 per cent. And the police very importantly, Madam President, we have moved confidence in the police from 2010 to 2015. It

has moved from 18 per cent to 30 per cent. That is a testament, all of those confidence levels growing in the work that we have done.

So as I wind up, Madam President, what I have attempted to do today is really to give a very clear picture of how we have taken a system that was in tremendous decline and created a roaring economic giant in this part of the world. Have we made mistakes? Of course we have. Have we learned from them? The answer is yes, a resounding yes. We have learned from them. And, Madam President, as a Member of this Government, for the past five years I have had the rare privilege, not just being a bystander, but as a participant in building a nation's future, and with the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and the continued commitment of my colleagues not just here, but in the other House, and institutions across Trinidad and Tobago, I think we can firmly say we have made Trinidad and Tobago a better place for all of us.

All of the time it is with the people at heart. Those people who spoke with us in the dark hours of 2010, who held their children's hands, Madam President, and they promised us their support asking that we keep our promises. Madam President, we have kept our promises. We knew what those promises were and we have kept them and we dedicated our best efforts to making Trinidad and Tobago a formidable nation of people that have the opportunity to be all they can be and to be a proud people once again.

Madam President, I thank you for the opportunity. [*Desk thumping*]

3.00 p.m.

Madam President: Sen. Cudjoe. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe: Thank you, Madam President. I want to thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution to this Bill before us this afternoon. We are doing a variation of the 2015 Appropriation Bill. Now, before I proceed, I must state on the record that I am always befuddled, even amazed, by this Government's ability—or Members of this Government's ability—to make these spurious allegations and propositions with a very serious face. If somebody—a listener—was not aware of the history of Trinidad and Tobago, they would believe that the People's National Movement had been in Government for 50 years in this country and had done absolutely nothing for Trinidad and Tobago, and we all know that that is far from the truth.

We have had the benefit of the beginning. We built this country, Madam President. When we started out in 1956 we had a vision for this country to make the best for our people with our resources, and we have worked assiduously over

the years to develop Trinidad and Tobago. It is the People's National Movement that is responsible for the booming oil industry in Trinidad and Tobago, for building the schools, for education for all in Trinidad and Tobago, and the list goes on and on and on.

But, I want to respond a little—because I do not want to spend so much of my time on Trinidad; I have some Tobago issues I want to treat with. But, Madam President, Sen. Bharath would have spoken about the People's National Movement and the way that we would have expanded social programmes. The thing is, this Government spent all its time in Government, and even in Opposition, complaining about the People's National Movement, about the social safety nets and squandermania and we have spent a large amount of money. But at the end of the day we have to ask ourselves: what do we have to show for it?

I remember when we were working on the Waterfront Project, the people were saying we were wasting money and so on. It is the same Waterfront Project that is responsible for the Hyatt, a booming hotel being operated right across the street, and we are here now in Tower D. If it were not for that same Waterfront Project, where would we have been today? [*Desk thumping*]

[SEN. DR. ROLPH BALGOBIN *in the Chair*]

So there are a list of achievements that we could speak about. Half of them over there, educated from the GATE Programme of the People's National Movement, and the list goes on and on, Madam President. But there is something, there is much to show—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Not Madam President, eh.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: Mr. Presiding Officer, I am sorry, Sir. So, Mr. Presiding Officer, there are so many accomplishments and achievements to speak about that is the hallmark of the People's National Movement, and I am afraid that we cannot say the same for the UNC or this People's Partnership, or whatever they are claiming to be today, because there is something to show for it. If you ask where the money was spent, we could say, "Okay, here is this programme or here is that building". But under the leadership or under the stewardship of the UNC and the People's Partnership, or whatever you call yourselves today, what have been your accomplishments? What do you have to show for it?

You complained about inefficient programmes and ineffective structures and weak institutions when you were in Opposition, and when they came into Government they expanded and exploited the same projects, programmes and institutions that they once complained about. So he talked about CEPEP and he

said that the People's National Movement created a dependency syndrome relating to CEPEP and URP, and I could remember, very clearly, on the day there was the Motion against the Opposition Leader, there were hundreds. I sat in the Hyatt and I looked out the window and saw hundreds of people—political supporters—in yellow came out to support the Prime Minister, to support the UNC, all in front of the Parliament. And they told us that they had to sign their time sheets before they got on the maxi to protest in front of the Parliament. For your five-year convention, or celebration, CEPEP and URP workers were threatened that if they did not attend this convention they would not be paid or they would be fired.

These are the complaints of people. I remember the protest in front of this Parliament. There were people showing up for URP and CEPEP saying, “We come to support Miss Awai”. And I said, no. They probably want to say “We come to support Mr. Howai”. But they kept repeating, “We came to support Miss Awai. Yes, she is the best URP foreman”. Then I got to realize that people from URP were reporting for work. So I am sorry, Mr. Howai, that support was not for you. It was actually for the URP contractor, Miss Awai.

So, this dependency syndrome, and CEPEP and URP, there is much to talk about on this, but I do not want to waste my time on this. Further, I would like to say that in the five years that this UNC, or People's Partnership has been in Government, they have wasted more money than any other administration in Trinidad and Tobago over the history of this country, or over the history of this region. Because we talk about spending money in sport programmes and LifeSport. Whatever happened to the \$34 million that was paid for the maths classes that never happened? Sen. Bharath spoke about wasting money on helicopters, when day in, day out, the representative for Tobago East is using helicopters like they “pulling bull”, back and forth—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Shame.

Sen. S. Cudjoe:—between Trinidad and Tobago. And somebody would have the audacity to stand here before us and speak about money paid for helicopters and wasting of money? Mr. Presiding Officer, they took on a paving project somewhere in Port of Spain that ended up into being a huge sinkhole. And who could remember the rehabilitation centre that was built around the time of the state of emergency? A couple weeks after, the roof caved in and this Government continued to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in rent for that same building.

Let us talk about wasting money. Let us talk about the Gopaul contract; let us talk about the \$9 million spent to remove a fire truck, and the list goes on and on.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs would tell you about—what is it—NEC, the transfer of over \$60 million of money to accounts in Dubai and to other foreign accounts. NGC, spending millions for—hundreds of thousands for Carnival fete tickets.

Hon. Senator: Millions.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: Millions for Carnival fete tickets. So while you spend all your time talking about the People's National Movement, there is a lot of nonsense going on right under your eyes and right under your nose.

So I do not want to waste too much time responding to—no, I want to speak on one more thing. And if you think the problem is related to just wasting money, or wasting public funds on ineffective programmes or wasting public moneys just to give to friends and family, I think the biggest problem, or the largest case in mismanagement of any state resources in this country has to deal with the mismanagement of state lands. But somebody else would expand on that. I want to speak some more about these things, but not tonight, or should I say, not today. I am going to move right on to dealing with Tobago.

Mr. Presiding Officer, today we find ourselves in an unfortunate position. We are here, seven days before the dissolution of Parliament, debating what I like to refer to now, as a dead beat Government [*Desk thumping*] that is obsolete. They have overstayed their welcome. They have expired their shelf lives—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. A. Singh: Squatting. Squatting.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: According to Sen. Singh, they are squatting in the Parliament right now—

Hon. Senator: He would know.

Hon. Senator: Yeah, he would know.

Sen. S. Cudjoe:—Mr. Presiding Officer, and they are pretty much ready for the trash. So I want to say we are debating with a dead beat Government that is in desperation to prove their relevance as we approach a general election, [*Desk thumping*] and I am forced to ask whether the proposals that are being made here today are based on really improving the economic status of the country or is it based on political expediency?

Because when you look at the virements or you look at the variations, you see more CEPEP, the same CEPEP that they complained about. You see more grants, more giveaways and more short-term employment. And we really have to wonder what is the priority of this Government. What is the priority of this dead beat

Government at this time? Is it about improving our economic situation, or is it about political expediency?

I want to turn my attention to Tobago. You may well be aware that at this point in time the Tobago House of Assembly is pursuing the option of legal action against the central government in response to this People's Partnership Government's decision to withhold \$102 million of the Tobago House of Assembly's budgetary allocation for the third quarter. Now, let me remind you, Mr. Presiding Officer, the third quarter started on April 01, 2015 and ends on June 30, 2015. So we are approaching the end of the third quarter.

Hon. Senator: Serve the people, man.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: We are getting ready to go into the fourth quarter that starts on July 01, and we are still short of \$102 million for our third quarter allocation.

There is one more thing I wanted to respond to Sen. Bharath as it relates to Tobago and it comes in right now. Trinidad is doing Tobago no favour. So when Sen. Bharath asked: "Do you want us to withhold this, or do we have to give that to Tobago"?—Tobago is not a ward of, or a child of Trinidad. Tobago is joint in a marriage, an equal partner with Trinidad. So you are doing Tobago no favour.

Hon. Senator: That is right.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: Just like you have maritime resources, we have maritime resources. [*Desk thumping*] Just like you bring benefits and resources to the table, we bring benefits and resources to the table. Whenever Sen. Ramnarine speaks about gas exploitation and we have found gas 23 nautical miles north-east of Trinidad, Tobago is 11 nautical miles north-east of Trinidad. And when we speak about Block 22 and gas finds in Block 22, we speak about gas finds in Tobago. So we do not come here as mendicants; we do not come to Trinidad begging. We are not a ward or a child of Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*] So do not feel like you are doing Tobago any favour, we do not owe you anything.

So allow me to proceed. We are approaching the end of the third quarter. Now, according to the Tobago House of Assembly Act, 40 of 1996, the budgetary allocations are supposed to be distributed on a quarterly basis en bloc in the beginning of the quarter. Now, \$102 million represents at least 20 per cent of the allocation that is due for the third quarter. Now, this is on the eve of a general election and I find this vindictive. I find it evil, even malicious, Mr. Presiding Officer, and I want to lay my case out to the national community because I am not so much speaking to the Government because they are well aware of what is

taking place. They know what they are doing and why they are doing it, so it is my duty today to educate the public. So I am speaking to you, Mr. Presiding Officer, and, through you.

So allow me to turn to Act No. 40 of 1996, the Tobago House of Assembly Act, and I am reading from section 47 that states:

“Monies appropriated by Parliament for the service of the financial year of the Assembly shall be credited to the Fund in quarterly releases in advance *en bloc*.”

So, as a whole—quarterly. So if the allocation was \$200,000, each quarter you give us \$50,000. I am breaking it down so people could understand. Now, the amount that was supposed to be transferred for the third quarter was \$555,641,815. The sum of \$384,750,677 was received. That is a deficit of \$170,891,138. And I would like to also state that the figure for revenue that we collected in the previous quarter was \$68,389,564. Now the reason why I am mentioning the amount of revenue we collected in the previous quarter, which is the second quarter, is because, according to the Tobago House of Assembly Act again, section 49—now the taxes or the revenues we collect in Tobago, if we collect, let us say, \$50,000, the allocation for the following quarter—that amount that we collected in revenue is deducted. Right? So I will read what the Tobago House of Assembly Act says.

3.15 p.m.

“49 (1) Notwithstanding section 13 of the Exchequer and Audit Act, all revenue collected in Tobago on behalf of the Government and payable thereto in respect of activities undertaken or discharged in Tobago shall be paid into the Fund.”

Okay? So I want to go back to the figures again. We collected \$68 million. That represents the total revenue collected in Tobago in the last quarter. As a result, the deficit that I mentioned before of \$170 million will now be \$102 million if we collected \$68 million in revenue. So the moneys we received for the third quarter is short \$102 million.

Now, Mr. Presiding Officer, the Tobago House of Assembly Act is very clear. There also a circular from 1997 that instructs the central government as to how to treat with this matter of setting off the amount of money we collected in revenues. It is important that I state this because the Tobago House of Assembly has been communicating or appealing to the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his officers, complaining and seeking their cooperation to have this \$102 million transferred to the Tobago House of Assembly, and I heard in an interview

between Fazeer Mohammed and the Minister last week—it was last week or the week before. I think last week—the Minister said, “Well yes, the money is short but it is short because of the whole set of provision where they have collected moneys in taxes. So we do not have to provide the full amount.”

Now all we have collected is \$68 million. If you were supposed to provide \$555 million for that quarter and in the second quarter we collected \$68 million in taxes, you are short \$102 million. The circular speaks clearly as to how to handle this matter. So whatever moneys we collect in the third quarter, it will be set off against whatever we are supposed to get in the fourth quarter. It is very clear. It is so simple. It is not rocket science. So that is why I am befuddled and confused. I am taken aback as to why the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his workers, or his support team, are not adhering to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, and they are providing no formal response to the Tobago House of Assembly. They are just ignoring the Tobago House of Assembly.

Mr. Presiding Officer, I have before me a list of emails, and this is not a new case of emailgate. These are emails between the Minister of Finance and the Economy and the Secretary of Finance trying to plead Tobago’s cause. An email was sent on the 15th informing the Minister about the situation. The Minister’s response was on 19th that said, “Although we spoke earlier, I only just saw this as it went to my junk mail folder. I have asked the PS to advise. He is expected to be back in office tomorrow”, and that was April 19. On April 21, the Secretary of Finance wrote to the Minister again, stating the cause, saying exactly how much we received and so on, and what is outstanding.

The Minister’s response on April 22 was, “I need to speak to the PS and will get back to you.” So you have April 22, May 22 one month, and now we are in June. A whole month and a half. The quarter is about to end and that \$102 million is still outstanding and has not been transferred to the Tobago House of Assembly. You talked about unprecedented, this is unprecedented because there has been no other administration, no other Government that has tried this stunt before, and there is no other Minister or Ministry of Finance in a Government that has been so unreliable, and might I say, disrespectful.

Mr. Presiding Officer, I often told the Minister of Finance and the Economy—he came in after Minister Dookeran, and I would tell you I like the guy. I used to say, “You gonna go down in history”—[*Interruption*—no, I am telling you. I always say—and the people who were here could attest. I always used to say, “Minister, you gonna be remembered for being the most good-looking Minister of Finance.” I used to say it all the time. [*Crosstalk*] Yes. I used to always say,

“You are cute. Yuh go be reminded for the most good-looking Minister of Finance.” But I am afraid that the people of Tobago are now going to remember this Minister for being the one most unreliable and most disrespectful to the people of Tobago.

So I am asking the Minister to reconsider his position because we are approaching the end of the quarter in a couple days. Today is what? We are about three weeks away from the end of the quarter and we have been begging and pleading with the Minister and the Ministry, and this really cannot work. This is untenable.

Hon. Senator: What Delmon do about it?

Sen. S. Cudjoe: And this is true. What has been the position of our representatives who we have sent to Trinidad, to sit in the Cabinet with their colleagues and they negotiate and communicate on behalf of the people of Tobago, to represent our cause?

You have a Ministry of Tobago Development, we have two Ministers—*[Interruption]*—I will not be distracted. They are trying to distract me, Mr. Presiding Officer, but “water cyar drown turtle pickney”, so I will go ahead. So the Tobago House of Assembly is allocated 4.03 per cent of the budget each year, and you are well aware that this represents the lower limit of what is recommended by law because the law recommends 4.03 per cent to 4.69 per cent. So we get just enough. Just enough from central government to avoid a legal challenge.

We do not get bonds. As much as we have asked and begged to be allocated 4 per cent or some of the grants that you receive from the IDB and from international funding, we do not get any of that. We are not allowed to borrow. The least a decent central government could do is to transfer the moneys allocated to the Tobago House of Assembly in a timely fashion because you do not give us anything extra. You do us no favours. We get no sympathy money from you. So the least you can do is allocate in a timely fashion and in the appropriate amount, and when we send you an email, respond. It is not hard. It is not rocket science.

So, Mr. Presiding Officer, I want you to also remember that any project the Tobago House of Assembly undertakes is based on the budgetary allocation because we get nothing extra. Not a red cent. So this unfortunate, uncouth and sinister act of the Government cannot be interpreted as anything else but malicious, vindictive, spiteful, evil and venomous. One hundred and two million dollars shortfall has serious implications for the operations of the Tobago House

of Assembly, the development of our people and the advancement of our economy. This cannot work. This impedes our ability to pay workers, to pay suppliers and to finance and complete our projects in a timely and effective manner. This cannot be in the best interest of the national economy. This cannot be in the best interest of the people of Tobago, and I think it is safe for me to conclude that this is mere electioneering and cheap politics. This cannot be in the interest of the advancement of our economy.

Mr. Presiding Officer, allow me to, in the same vein, examine this central government posture towards the Ministry of Tobago Development. I want us to pay attention to the magnitude and the mandate of the Ministry. Now this Ministry recently boasted that it employs 700 people. Now that is very small in comparison to the Tobago House of Assembly that employs thousands of workers—thousands of Tobagonians—but every time variations and supplementations are made, adjustments are made upwardly for the Ministry of Tobago Development and the bulk of the pie is being allocated to goods and services and rentals, and last but certainly not least to short-term employment.

If you check the records—I have checked the records—you check the variations and supplementations of 2011, 2014 and now 2015, short-term employment is allocated somewhere in the vicinity of \$4 million. This year, 2015, the variation says \$4.6 million for the Ministry of Tobago Development, for short-term employment for the period of May to September which coincidentally is the election period. Am I to suppose this is about the advancement of the economy? What is the priority of the Government?

So, I am no fan of short-term employment. It is something being practised by central government, by the Tobago House of Assembly also, and it is something that is very popular especially in the Ministry of Tobago Development where you have roughly 90 per cent of the people employed in that Ministry are on short-term contracts. I think that short-term employment fosters low productivity and foments low staff morale. I think when you have a situation of 90 per cent of your staff on short-term employment, I think that is deplorable. That is a really deplorable and despicable dilemma. And on top of that, over 50 per cent of those workers are dissatisfied and unhappy.

You have young people who claim they report to work with absolutely nothing to do. There are young people reporting to work to go to swimming practice and driving practice, and there are young people who complain about having to dodge the cameraman who sneaked up on them, begging them to testify about the goodness of the Minister and the relevance of the Ministry. Ninety per

cent of workers on short-term, and Sen. Bharath speaks about dependency and—what do you call it, safe-work pockets? Ninety per cent of the staff in a Ministry. That is what I am told. Hired and fired based on the mood of the Minister, disciplined and dismissed due to the whims and the fancies of the Minister's minions. These are the reports coming out of the Ministry of Tobago Development.

So, Mr. Presiding Officer, I think this practice—well, the whole Ministry of Tobago Development is insignificant and irrelevant to the wider scheme of the whole fight for internal self-government for Tobago, based on the way that they conduct their business, but that is another story that we will talk about at another time. But I think the ways that these short-term workers are being treated and the whole issue of short-term employment is being handled in that Ministry, should be deplored and condemned, and even decried.

I am concerned about what is the Minister or the Ministry or central government doing to provide meaningful and sustainable employment to young people. Because it is one thing to provide short-term employment or political employment, and after the election season you have absolutely no time with these people, or you make them to believe that you are doing them a favour so they are indebted to you. I think more must be done to ensure that these young people have meaningful and sustainable means of employment, [*Desk thumping*] even go off to learning skills so that they could start their own businesses and things of that nature.

So \$4.6 million for short-term employment, May to September, I do not have to do any more explaining. I think the people will decide whether that is about political expediency or about really improving the economy.

3.30 p.m.

From the get-go, from the very beginning, when this Ministry was established in 2010, the people of Tobago had cautioned that this is a mischief Ministry. This Ministry is going to do nothing but cause chaos and confusion in the Tobago environment and so said, so done. We were told in 2010 that this Ministry was established to assist the Tobago House of Assembly, to coordinate central government responsibilities, and those are responsibilities that fall under the Sixth and Seventh Schedule of the Tobago House of Assembly Act.

We were told that this Ministry would assist in expediting the process to grant to Tobago full internal self-government and to improve the Assembly's authority and to enhance our autonomy. Mr. Presiding Officer, what do we have today?

“Ah ridiculous sham, ah mockery, ah farce.” This Ministry has done all in its power, has gone above and beyond its call of duty to undermine and emasculate the Tobago House of Assembly. They have become so proficient at that, that they have neglected their responsibilities, their own mandate, which is to coordinate and take care of sixth and seventh matters.

I was lucky enough to find a newspaper report written by no other than Mr. Andy Johnson, Executive Director of Rapid Response and Current Affairs, Ministry of Trade, Industry—a-a, Sen. Bharath’s Ministry. I am reading from the *TnT Mirror*, Sunday, May 31, 2015 and the title of the newspaper clip is “Building a better sister isle” by Andy Johnson. He boasts about the accomplishments of the Ministry of Tobago Development and I want to name some of them and I want you to tell me if any of these responsibilities—I want the people of Tobago and the people of Trinidad also, even the people in Government, the Ministers and the Senators, to tell me: what part of these items are under the responsibility or the remit of central government? They are all under the Tobago House of Assembly.

So, we have a Ministry established, that we were told is supposed to expedite the autonomy process for Tobago but instead has focused on being a competitor or to compete with the Tobago House of Assembly. Let me name some of the things brother Andy Johnson is talking here about. Mr. Johnson reported that the Ministry of Tobago Development under its IDEDS Programme has distributed:

“...3,500 fruit trees and more than 50 lbs of plant seeds of various species to registered members of the Tobago Agricultural Society...”

Agriculture falls under the remit of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Next item, they are training people in:

“...swimming”—and “CPR”—and—“life guard services and driving.”

Youth development is under the remit of the Tobago House of Assembly. There is a unit in the Ministry of Tobago Development that is fixing people’s roofs.

“...roofs, renovation of buildings, installation of plumbing systems and fixtures...”

This is a Ministry doing this in Tobago.

“...casting concrete foundations to dwelling homes in Mason Hall, Castara, Bloody Bay, Speyside, Culloden and Scarborough.”

The Division of Settlements and Labour under the Tobago House of Assembly is responsible for this. The Ministry of Tobago Development is distributing funding to NGOs.

Over "...200 such groups...providing much-needed support to..." these groups.

I can recall a couple of months ago, the Ministry contacted a friend of mine who is the President of a defunct organization, and no matter how much this young lady tries to tell the person on the phone, "We are not operating right now", they are asking her, if "yuh still doh need the money". Community development and youth development, again, falls under the remit of the Tobago House of Assembly. There is a paragraph here dealing with the distribution of 177 temporary food cards and providing service to 3,433 households across Tobago; 714 of these homes were referred to the National Commission for Self Help.

Now, Mr. Presiding Officer, the list goes on and on as to how this Ministry of Tobago Development has encroached on the territory of the Tobago House of Assembly. Whenever the Tobago House of Assembly complains or raises a red flag, their response is "We are helping the people of Tobago and we are operating under the assistance or the direction of the Prime Minister".

Now, I could remember some of these same people who are working in the Ministry of Tobago Development were very active in the NAR and the DAC under former Prime Minister ANR Robinson who told them to stand up for the Tobago House of Assembly, and stand up against anything or anybody that tries to emasculate the institution that our forefathers have fought to build over the years. But I am appalled by what is passing for the Ministry of Tobago Development in Tobago now. Now, this Ministry has neglected its mandate and has chosen to compete with the Tobago House of Assembly. All these responsibilities fall under the remit of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Now, do not get me wrong. Tobagonians, we have never been "ah gimme gimme people". These grants and these food cards, they do not mean too much to us. Now, we are not "ah stupid people and we doh fraid money", so we will take what assistance you offer to us, but when the time comes, we know what to do. Very early in the process, the representative for Tobago East told us that this would be a matter of who have more corn, feed more fowl. "Fowl gonna eat, fowl gonna do whatever it hata do, when the time reach"—and as a matter of fact, "we eh no fowl". Mr. Presiding Officer, so while all these goodies come and we take them, because take them we will, but you know what we do after we take them.

The fact that you are giving—[Crosstalk] "What we gonna do? No, we doh

talk about wha we gonna do, we just does do it”. Yeah, and it is what you do after when the Prime Minister left Ashworth Jack in Tobago with the cold food and the empty—in the uptown market square. Anyway, “ah not gonna go there”, that gone already and you have another rounds to come. [*Desk thumping*] “Wey you say?” One good term deserves another, we say “four good cut tail” deserves another so wait on it, it coming.

Mr. Presiding Officer, so while they have spent all this time and energy and resources competing with the Tobago House of Assembly, they have left their work undone, and there is absolutely no excuse that the People’s Partnership or the Minister of Tobago Development, or any of these representatives, could give us for abdicating their responsibility and leaving Tobago’s business undone. Tobago is still crying out for representation on the national platform today as I speak, because you have senior citizens still struggling to resolve matters relating to pensions and NIS. That is under the remit of the Ministry. What are they doing in that regard?

We are still experiencing problems in regularizing permanent positions in the public service and in the Teaching Service Commission. What is the Minister and our representatives doing about that? This Ministry of Tobago Development that we pumped this money into for short-term employment.

Old Grange Police Station, Roxborough Police Station, I remember Minister Sandy, former Minister of National Security, that spoke about the—the contracts were already given and this Government would have rescinded the contracts, and Minister Sandy told us that the stations are going to be built soon. Every time I issued that question, the response was very soon. You will be out of office very soon and nothing has happened.

The airport and the seaport are still in deplorable conditions. All these are under the remit of central government. So while you are busy competing with the Tobago House of Assembly, you have left your responsibilities unattended to. I spoke many times in this House about the responsibility of fixing the operations of the port so that business people could bring in their goods and transfer it to Tobago in a hassle-free manner. Today, we are still plagued by these problems. All of this under your remit but you are busy competing with the Tobago House of Assembly. Inter-island transportation on the airport and the seaport, both in a mess and we have to sit on the airport and watch our representative from Tobago East fly back and forth on the chopper, the same chopper Sen. Bharath complained about.

And let us talk about public utilities which is still under the remit of central

government. I know you saw the news last night, CNC3 news. CNC3 news reported and for the last two days: Pigeon Point Heritage Park has to remain closed because there is no water. Hotel operators in Tobago have to refund visitors and their guests their money, no water in the hotels. I sat in the Hyatt this morning and looked out the window and watched the gentleman in front of the Hyatt spray the sidewalk and spray the lawn. He sprayed the sidewalk because he wanted it to look wet and nice. Nothing was wrong with the sidewalk, and hotels in Tobago cannot operate. Whatever happened to the thank you WASA advertisement? I remember the people in Biche: “Thank you, WASA”. [Crosstalk] I am sure you will have a chance to speak.

Sen. G. Singh: But you would not give way to get proper information.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: Go ahead. You know what? “Ah like yuh”, go ahead.

Sen. G. Singh: I am happy that you like me. [Laughter] Thank you very much, Sen. Cudjoe. I just want to indicate that the water problem in Tobago is as a result of the extended dry season. The Courland Water Treatment Plant, which produces 2 million gallons per day on a daily basis, is down to 34 per cent. It is producing 688 million gallons per day.

As a result of the work we did in laying pipelines and increasing capacity and drilling wells, there has been some level of stability. But in the Crown Point area, we have drilled a well, bedrock drilling, by Lennox Petroleum Services Limited which is another innovation we brought into the Tobago domain in terms of water treatment and harvesting of water, and that 500,000-gallon well, which is deep into the bedrock, within the next week and a half, will come into being. But the fundamental problem is that you do not have sufficient rain in the local sources and that is impacting. I hope that you can use your influence to get the THA to join with me in dredging the Hillsborough Dam which has lost 25 per cent of its capacity because of silting up.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: Thank you, Senator. Now, it is amazing that everything is now going to be done while they are on their way out. And this speaks to the priority of this Government too, eh, this speaks to the priority. Tobago had been on the back burner under this Government [Desk thumping] and I know you have control—[Crosstalk] I will tell you, if it was the PNM in Government with this happening, you would have heard them on the TV lamenting the PNM. But anyway, I would not deal with it politically and I know my history, so I am very aware of the work that was done in Tobago relating to pipelines and water supply under Penelope Beckles-Robinson, eh. So I know my history, “doh try that”.

Anyway, Mr. Presiding Officer, allow me to proceed. Pricing: when this Government came into power, we had the representative for Tobago East, and I think West too, they created this committee to treat with the problem of price differences in Trinidad and Tobago, because we spend more money. We pay more for—goods and services cost more in Tobago and they wanted to bring that side by side with Trinidad. This is the end of their term, what is the situation with that?

Mr. Presiding Officer: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

3.45 p.m.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: Thank you, Mr. Presiding Officer. I want to thank my friend, Sen. Ganga Singh, Leader of Government Business, and I want to thank the handsome Sen. Larry Howai. Mr. Presiding Officer, I am friends with "all ah dem. Dey on dey way out. Oh God I am making Sen. Maharaj jealous. Anyway, let me proceed. All yuh must be think I want to give Sat Maharaj ah heart attack."

Mr. Presiding Officer, land title, the final matter I want to deal with. Land title, that is a serious issue in Tobago, and that is the cause of the majority of our problems because the business people are not allowed to operate as freely as they would like—parents who would like to take a deed to the bank to get a loan to send their children to college and to do business so that Tobago could advance, as it relates to private sector development and issues of that nature. This issue of land titles and deed registration has been a long-standing problem in Tobago and any government, anybody who is interested in Tobago's development would treat with that.

I remember the People's National Movement would have created an omnibus package, they called it, of three pieces of legislation to treat with this issue of land titles and registration in Tobago. It appeared on the Order Paper in year two of this Government's tenure. It was in 2011, and I was humbly awaiting to contribute because I felt like this was our time and it just disappeared off the Order Paper and never came back. Now I heard, I understand, or should I say I am advised, that the Minister of Tobago Development in the Ministry of Tobago Development is now trying to re-establish that department while they are on their way out. Five more years? To waste five more years? Not under our watch.

Mr. Presiding Officer, all these items, Sixth and Seventh Schedule items, that are under the remit of central government that the Ministry of Tobago Affairs, back then, and the Ministry of Tobago Development now, is responsible for treating with, all left undone while the Minister and the Ministry are preoccupied with competing with the Tobago House of Assembly. But Tobagonians would speak to them once again and again and again and again.

So this marriage of inconvenience with this People's Partnership was forced upon us by Ashworth Jack, leader of the TOP and he said that he joined this Government because they were serious about Tobago and we would finally get the respect that we deserve and they will grant Tobago full autonomy and authority. They love us so much that they gave us a Ministry of Tobago Development.

Five years later, Mr. Presiding Officer, this Government refuses to meet with the Tobago House of Assembly team. Since April, there was a meeting due in April to treat with the matters of internal self-government and our team has been ready, has been doing its work and this Government keeps postponing the meeting to treat with internal self-government, from April to date. So this tells you how serious they are and they are on their way out.

Mr. Presiding Officer, five years later, we have watched a Ministry of Tobago Development morph into a "Ministry of Tobago Extinction" and as Ashworth Jack told us, has now become a "Ministry of Tobago Forwards". What is Tobago Forwards? That has no place here but it is a breakaway faction of the TOP.

Now I would tell you how sinister and crazy this thing is. I want you to know this is straight politics and this has nothing to do with economics because I remember the comment being made, I think by Ashworth Jack, about the Ministry of Tobago Development being the headquarters of the Tobago Forwards, which is this new political party headed by a former UNC Senator, Christlyn Moore, who is the advisor to who the Prime Minister wants us to believe is a TOP Minister, Mr. Delmon Baker, who is nowhere around the TOP. That is a lot to deal with but I am not going to go down there.

What is crazy and sinister, Mr. Presiding Officer, is that the Tobago Forwards claims that it wants nothing to do with the TOP and nothing to do with the People's Partnership Government, but you have the leader advising the Minister. So you have a TOP Minister operating a Ministry of Tobago Forwards. It is not hard to figure out, you know, Mr. Presiding Officer but as Chief Secretary, Orville London said: "Yuh big and yuh have sense." And while Christlyn Moore

and Ashworth Jack compete for the attention of the Prime Minister, I would let them do their thing.

Mr. Presiding Officer, I just want to say the actions of the Government towards Tobago, over the past five years, have been unfortunate. I would even like to call it reckless and I want to say that this People's Partnership Government, or should I say this UNC-led coalition, is not fooling the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is certainly not fooling right-thinking Tobagonians and I wish that they would tell us the truth as to how they feel really about Tobago. As a matter of fact, they do not need to tell us because we have seen by their actions. Five years, and what does Tobago have to show for this, for this union, for this involvement with this UNC coalition? Nothing! Nothing but disrespect.

So they are not concerned about Tobagonians. They are not concerned about our institutions and they are not concerned about our economy. So I say today, again, that this is not about economics or economic advancement. This is about cheap politics, electioneering and political expediency and I want to call on the Minister once again to follow the law, to adhere to the law. No other Minister or Ministry has tried this before. We are still short \$102 million and this is a major hindrance to the operations of the Assembly and the advancement of the Tobago people and our economy.

Sen. Bharath would have spoken about democracy and respect for democracy but, in my opinion, I do not see too much of respect for democracy or respect for the rule of law based on the actions of this Government, because you could speak glowingly about all kinds of transparency and accountability and democracy and so on, but we know you by what you practise. As the Bible says: we know you by the fruits you bear. So we are very well aware because we have seen it all under you. But thank God, you are on your way out. And as Sen. Dr. Mahabir would have said earlier, they remind me of the last week of school, as we are winding down. I am reminded about the last week of school where everybody reckless and doing anything, rushing legislation, doing as you please, making all kinds of promises, giving people keys to houses that do not even exist. Head nice, loose and looking for it.

Mr. Presiding Officer, I would not be surprised if I pull the drawer over there and I see things like "somebody was here". You know in Standard Five, students use to take a pen or a compass and carve into the desk "somebody was here", "KPB was here", "Free World Cup Boss was here." I would not be surprised if I pull somebody's desk and see that. I would not be surprised if they take off their jacket upstairs and I see permanent markers write up "Peace out, Howai". I would

not be surprised. Because this is the attitude of the Government right now as they are on their way out.

I want to say thank God we survived five years under this Government. As I said they are now unwelcomed, overstayed their time, expired their shelf life, ready for the trash, obsolete, a deadbeat Government, and we look forward to seeing the backs of them.

While I am on my feet, I want to thank you for the time to contribute on this Bill. I want to thank my colleagues. I want to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition, still is the Leader of the Opposition, in or out of Parliament, the next Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley PhD and he did not give it himself, he earned it.

I want to thank him for the time and for the opportunity and God bless this nation as they get ready to embark upon a new chapter and to make the right decisions.

With those few words, Mr. Presiding Officer, I sincerely thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Helen Drayton: Thank you, Mr. Presiding Officer. As the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy said, this Bill seeks to vary the appropriation in the budget in the sum of about \$2.189 billion from certain Heads to others. The variation is primarily to satisfy wage negotiation settlements, and so I have no problems with this Bill at all.

Suffice it to say, I think the Minister will agree with me when I say that wage settlements at the rate of 14 per cent going forward with the consequent increases in pension liabilities and the effect on every sector of the economy is unsustainable without the attendant increases in productivity. And, of course, this is said with the full recognition of the need to value jobs, based on the worth of each and for efficient performance management systems.

I want to strongly recommend to whoever is in the saddle over the next five years that they must take the lead and the responsibility to pursuing a robust quadripartite arrangement—not tripartite—of Government, Opposition the private sector and labour to share a vision, and this is a vision of a well-trained and highly skilled workforce, proud of their contribution to nation-building through their excellence for productivity and excellence in service quality.

Now, in the past we have heard about tripartite arrangements and that will not work or even get off the starting block, because I think it ignores the realities of

politics that create divisions. So I am well aware of the divisions within the labour movement and of Government and Opposition politics.

And one may ask: well why do I choose such a complex and challenging platform to rally the advancement of our nation? First, I feel that there could be no better platform to rally our country than the people themselves, through the people themselves.

Second, I think there is no better platform to hang the country's flag than on the talent and excellence of its people. And third, there is no better platform than productivity and productivity cannot be achieved by the Government alone. It cannot be achieved by labour alone. It cannot be achieved by the private sector alone. It is a national priority.

In sharing a vision of excellence in nation-building, I think there should be a focus on the training and development of human resources and I think that was well articulated earlier on.

4.00 p.m.

Yes, we need fair and competitive wages in all sectors of the economy. All too often we hear about the shortages in the public service, in the Judiciary. We hear about it in the health sector, and a major reason has to do with uncompetitive wages. We certainly need enlightened labour laws as we move forward. We need job security for our citizens and a need that must be linked with performance management and, of course, a focus must be on the dire labour shortages. I do not think we can look at the labour shortages in isolation of immigration policies, given the size of our labour force, and the rate at which we would like to grow this economy and diversify the economy. These are a few ideas in no order of importance, but certainly all must be anchored in wise macroeconomic and social development planning. You cannot talk about labour, we cannot deal with the shortages and we cannot deal with productivity outside of, you know, realistic macroeconomic projections and goals.

As said, current strategies in wage negotiations in isolation of productivity, and a broad economic and social development planning, that is unsustainable, and that is what has been happening over how many years, for eons. You know, it is a vicious, vicious circle. There is a lot of acrimony between labour and management, poor relations, no focus whatsoever on serving the public, who people are there to serve, and paid to serve. That situation really has been bringing no value whatsoever to the nation either its basic psyche, or the economy as a whole. As a matter of fact it has had nothing but a deleterious effect.

Some other comments I wish to make, I want to take the opportunity to commend the Government for taking measures to implement the procurement law. I want to hope that this will proceed smoothly and systematically, and the Government will ensure that the committee has all resources that it needs to do an efficient job. It will be a fairly lengthy process to get the law fully operational, and it may well remain a work in progress, as the committee deals with issues as those arise. I think it is one of the most important pieces of legislation this Parliament has completed, and if I may say so, completed within the past four decades. I certainly feel privileged to have served on that joint select committee, and to be part of the Parliament that ushered through that legislation.

Secondly, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy outlined the health of economy, and the progress in reducing the annual deficits. Hopefully over the next five years, there will be thoughtful efforts as to how we could reduce the cost of transfers and subsidies that account for over 60 per cent of our GDP.

Now, any Government, for political reasons, would be shy of reducing the cost of social welfare. But I think in the interest of the continued health of the economy, and in the interest of building resilient communities, it is prudent that we devise strategies to wean able-bodied people from the dependence of Government. This is why I am pleased to hear about the partnership with respect to CEPEP, Government and the manufacturing sector. That is very important, but what I hope—I observed from the budget that, yes, there is need for more funds with respect to CEPEP. So what I hope is that we are not going to see the hole in the bucket effect. That is, as the manufacturing sector acquires these people, that on the other hand, we are not now building up the pool in CEPEP once again.

I think that reducing the dependence on Government need not be a painful exercise, if it is pursued gradually and consistently and systematically, adopting two strategies. One of these I would say is natural attrition, meaning, the normal migration of people or normal reductions from say, make-work-programmes, as the case of CEPEP, to the manufacturing sector.

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

As people get opportunities for higher incomes, again, mentioning the CEPEP, and also I would say in touching on GATE, as we graduate students from GATE, we need to be very thoughtful as to how we are going to invest those GATE dollars, given the numerous shortages of the labour that we hear about across various sectors, and I would mention—I would come back to that later.

Through natural attrition for whatever other reason, people no longer need

support of the Government. Of course, the other way whilst you are reducing through natural attrition, you are also seeking to increase revenues through the stimulation of diversification strategies. I think what the Government needs to look at here is any opportunities to further “incentify” the manufacturing sector and probably agro-based industries.

I think that another strategy is to focus social spending on people who genuinely need the assistance as we go forward, such as the elderly and children. Coming back to GATE, it is focusing expenditure on health, on education, national security, building the capacity of your police service, the judicial system, public service management and administration—given the importance of all these sectors to the economic and social stability, the development and growth of the country.

Just a while ago, I had mentioned labour and productivity, and I think we need to tackle urgently the labour shortages affecting both the private and public sectors. We hear about thousands of vacancies, as I mentioned. As we seek to diversify the economy, we will need new sources of labour, more so when we factor in that we are an ageing population. So it is evident there has to be a clear strategy linking labour and immigration. This is another reason to have some sort of arrangement between the major players, which is Government, Opposition, the labour movement and the private sector.

Madam President, there are just a few other remarks I wish to make in closing—to say that it has been a great honour to serve my country through the Senate. I want to say that all of my colleagues and friends in this place, all 30 of you, are amongst the most dedicated and committed people that I have met. I have had the good fortune to work with you, never mind the cut and thrust in debate. We each come here whether it is to debate, whether it is for a meeting, whether it is for joint select committee, to do one thing, and that is to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am really convinced and I am genuine about that. I have seen all the hard work that goes in—not only in preparation for these debates, but also for committee.

So as I wind up, I want to take the opportunity to remember two people who became friends and sisters. I sat alongside them for more than five years. I have missed them a great deal, which is Sen. Seetahal and Sen. Mc Knight, both of whom as I said, were dear friends and sisters.

I thank each and every one of you for your friendship. I want to say a special thanks to the Independent Senators for their wisdom, their camaraderie, and the fun that we have had. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Madam President, for the opportunity to contribute on the Finance (Variation of Appropriation (Financial Year 2015) Bill, 2015.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training was not listed under the schedule for either a decrease or an increase in expenditure. I would like to, in this regard, thank and congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Sen. Larry Howai, the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie and, of course, the Permanent Secretary, members of staff, heads of division of the Ministry, director of projects and programmes, the accounting department, and the various chairmen and CEOs of state agencies under the Ministry.

Madam President, I want to start my contribution by saying, and I wanted to make a few remarks about what was said by Sen. Drayton, when she returns. In sharing those kind sentiments with colleagues, I want to say that I share those sentiments as well. It was a pleasure being here and listening to all of us.

But, I want say, in my view, this is five years later, we have witnessed five years of unprecedented growth, and five years of progress in the tertiary education sector. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, when Sen. Drayton spoke—and I want to just make a few comments on what she would have said. She mentioned that we should focus as well on a highly skilled and productive workforce; that highly skilled and productive workforce must be influenced in some significant way by the quality and the level of education and training.

Sen. Drayton spoke about the manufacturing sector, which I will come to shortly. She spoke about the GATE Programme and that we need to be thoughtful. Well, I want to say that this is evidence, [*Holds up a large picture of a chart*] of what we have done as a Government, when I said five years later, five years of

unprecedented progress, where we have moved the tertiary education sector and skills training, from where we met it at 42 per cent. It had tapered off when we came into Government, for two years it had tapered off. We took it from 42 per cent to 65.23 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Drayton mentioned the fact, and I agreed with her, that we have to ensure that the manufacturing sector is well serviced with the workforce, the productive

workforce, the appropriate workforce, the workforce that is required to ensure that the engines of growth and the economy turn consistently. That is what this Government has been doing over the last five years. I want to say as well that what we have attempted to do, with the guidance of the hon. Prime Minister and Minister Howai, is to ensure that the GATE financing is aligned to the economic development strategy of the country of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to tell you that never before—and I know Sen. Small will reiterate this—there is absolutely no excuse for anyone in this country who wants to pursue quality education and training. We have never had that before.

When we speak about the manufacturing sector—I too have heard, I was reading in the newspaper—about the fact that some people were saying that we might have to have immigration, to support the shortage of labour. I decided that I will not simply sit in my office, but I will walk the shop floors of the major manufacturers, and I continue to do so every Friday morning, to listen to them to hear what is this shortage; to hear why we should have immigration alongside the fact that we have people who are unemployed. Why should we continue to have the mismatch of skills? Why should we continue to have the graduate glut or the discouraged graduate? We have done something significant, and I am going to tell you a little more about it this evening, not tomorrow and tonight, tomorrow night. *[Desk thumping]*

I want to tell you that in my walkabouts and my discussions and conversations with the manufacturers, leaders and captains of industry as they are, they were saying to us that we do not have certain types of technical labour. We do not have some at lower level, the entry level worker. I want to announce to the Parliament and to the country that over the period of time, couple weeks before, I have visited approximately nine or 10 manufacturers: Associated Brands, Advance Foam, Matouk's, FT Farfan, Blue Waters, Thomas Peake, a number of them, and we will soon be visiting Coca Cola and some of the others. I want to tell you that arising out of those visits—and we had signed an agreement with Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin, for the first time, and they would tell you that, and he will say that. We signed an agreement to ensure that we have the requisite and the competent workforce to service these manufacturers. *[Desk thumping]*

Yesterday I gave—through the MIC Institute of Technology, and I want to congratulate the two chairmen who have been arranging these visit: chairman Dr. Lee, chairman of MIC; chairman Feroze Khan, of the NESC. Yesterday, we offered 18 scholarships, free of charge to the manufacturers who have been touring in the area of mechatronics.

4.15 p.m.

That is going to go on to a diploma, a one-year, and we want to do that for them consistently. You are only going to find out what is required, not when you read a book or you come and you listen, you have to walk the floor, and what you have to do is, you have to do the labour market information survey. Hence the reason why—I want to give Sen. Drayton the assurance that we will be launching very shortly, the first of its kind, the CWRD, the Centre for Workforce Research and Development. As Sen. Balgobin returns, I want to congratulate him and the TTMA for the excellent work that they are doing in partnering with the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

What is the CWRD?—the Centre for Workforce Research and Development will tell us real-time data and information in terms of the requirements of the labour market. That is how you are going to train. That is how you are going to ensure that you are not being misguided in the data and, therefore, what you will do—the risk is education and training cannot, must not, and should not, and in my view will not be supply-driven, it has to be the demand-led. It is not what you think is required, it is what the employers and the manufacturers say is required.

Sen. Roach: Sir, could I ask you a question? Could I?

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: “Um huh.”

Sen. Roach: Minister, inasmuch as you are—just on the point of advancing and increasing capacity, what is the control mechanism used to influence the quality, the control of quality?—because, today, I listened to the radio, and I listened to a number of persons call in and talking about the GATE programme, that, you know, in order for people to get GATE money people are lowering the standards for admission to these institutions. So how do you, you know, contain and ensure that what comes in and out is qualitative?

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Thank you very much. The quality of delivery of the curriculum, the quality being delivered by tutors, facilitators, instructors and faculty, and the quality of the institutions are all requirements and regulated by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. It is not simply a matter of—let us decide to find a name for a school and advertise for students. That is why, for example, in the United States of America—if I may just give you another opportunity to understand what we are doing—let me just first of all say, to access the GATE programme you must be registered as an institution and there are a number of criteria. But we go further than that to ensure that the quality as well, while this is requisite for registration, quality is further enhanced through the accreditation process. There are a number of institutions, including the University of the West Indies, COSTAATT, MIC, UTT, among a number of them who are all

accredited. It is a rigorous quality assurance regime, and it is not a “one and done”, it is continuously monitored, accessed, verified, certified for re-accreditation.

Therefore, as I was indicating before, I was talking about the CWRD, the Centre for Workforce Research and Development, and I was saying to us that education and training should not be supply-driven. I want to give Sen. Drayton the assurance that quite a lot of thought goes into when we are deciding on what courses and programmes to offer. Right now, as Minister Bharath had indicated, we have universal ECCE, early childhood, primary, secondary, and universal tertiary up to the undergraduate level. You have a 50 per cent subsidy at the postgraduate level, and it was my view and my recommendation to my colleagues and the hon. Prime Minister that the time would have arrived for us to even consider 100 per cent GATE funding for certain areas on the needs list of the country where there is a critical demand for specialty skills.

I want to tell you about the GATE, since you raised that matter. When we came into office—and what is now being boasted as “we tink ‘bout GATE” and “who claiming GATE”—the genesis of GATE was under the previous UNC, when the Minister for Human Development, Youth and Culture was the hon. Ganga Singh. It was the Dollar for Dollar Programme, [*Desk thumping*] also assisted in main measure by Dr. Tewarie.

Sen. G. Singh: Idea to concept to reality, you know.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Now I want to say this because, you know, this is the season, as you say, it is the “silly season”—let me make it abundantly clear that the Government of the People’s Partnership has said in its action plan, 120-day action plan, item number two, a promise we have kept and we will continue to keep, that the GATE programme will be well secured and will be expanding. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to tell you, there will be no interference with the GATE programme except to make it more efficient. Have we increased the efficiency? The answer is, yes. We have moved from piles and mountains of paper, what we inherited, to register students—to register them now through the eGATE services—electronically. For the first time we have been closely monitoring attendance of students at institutions. We are looking at your GPAs. We are looking at how long it takes you to graduate. I have no problem with lifelong learning, you know; I believe in lifelong and continuous learning, but I have a difficulty with you taking seven years to do a three-year degree. The other four years you could

continue to learn as much as you can, but we want to make sure that you graduate on time.

Therefore, in that context, for the first time, I was saying, as well, that we have received returned money, or moneys, from training providers, many of whom you would not have known, had you not had a more efficient system, to the extent where the Ministry has received sums to the extent of \$38 million returned from the GATE programme, what you would have paid. You would have heard me say before that one of the things about the eGATE services is that you would prevent programme hoppers, many who are going from one programme to the next. You will have a lot of people who are also skipping programmes and wanting to return; we want to discourage that.

We want to offer the assistance to you but we want you to graduate on time. What has helped us, tremendously so, is we have established a GATE Standing Committee, headed by the Chairman of the Accreditation Council, Dr. Michael Dowlat—and I also want to thank Mrs. Cherry-Ann Le Gendre, Director of Budgets, because she sits on that committee as well, and we have been getting quite a lot of good support and networking with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training. Because there was a concern before as well that many people were not getting their reimbursements or their GATE payments on time, institutions that is, and they had a huge carrying cost with their overdraft. That has been substantially reduced because of the electronic system for GATE clearance policy.

Sen. Drayton mentioned as well that we had the situation where we have to be very concerned about investments in GATE. She mentioned that we must hang the country's flag on the talent and expertise of our people, and I totally agree with that. She mentioned, as well, the fact that we should look at the diversification of the economy, but when you look at diversification, diversification is not simply moving away from the plantation economy that Lloyd Best and Kari Levitt wrote about many years ago, or Gervin and Jefferson, or George Beckford in *Persistent Poverty*; it is not simply that. It is not moving away from oil or sugar, it is also diversifying into the brain power of the country, and that is being done significantly through education and training. You are building the architecture; you are building the infrastructure.

Having said that, I wish to advise as well, that one of the ways that we are going to be looking at diversifying the whole knowledge base is how do we seize opportunities for education and training in our society. In 2004, you will recall

that the former administration closed down Caroni (1975) Limited. What was left of Caroni at a certain place was this. [*Holds up picture*] This is what was left at one part of Caroni Limited. This is the Camden Airstrip, the Camden airfield, the Camden base with a small tower and a dust cropper and a decrepit or a dilapidated runway. What we have decided to do, Madam President, with the assistance of my colleagues, is to start the construction of a modern aviation campus. [*Desk thumping*]

This aviation campus is a consortium of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean Airlines Limited, the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard, the National Helicopter Services Limited, the MIC Institute of Technology, and the National Training Agency. What looked like this before, [*Holds up picture*] the runway at Camden, is now looking like this [*Holds up picture*]. [*Desk thumping*] This is your new state-of-the-art runway at Camden, which will now have a taxiway into your soon-completed 200 feet by 150 feet hangar that has classroom, boardroom, simulators, workshops—all in this facility. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

What will you land there? You will land this [*Holds up picture*] at Camden, a 727 jet is going to land. I see somebody in the public gallery saying, “wow”. This is going to happen just now. [*Desk thumping*] This is a donated, Dr. Mahabir, a donated 727 FedEx jet that is going to be flown from Piarco—it is now parked up at the southern terminal—by its appropriate crew and will land at Camden in Couva and taxi straight into your aviation campus. That is what we are talking about when we are talking about preparing the workforce.

The aviation campus—and, you know, we are not waiting to run classes there for the campus to be completed, you know; we have started with the facilities that we have, and we have graduated 75 persons so far in avionics and navigation systems. [*Desk thumping*] I want to tell you as well, for the first time—Sen. Drayton will be happy to hear this—the GATE programme is preparing adequately the workforce of the future and the now. We have a class for the first time of 25 young boys and girls pursuing for the first time, a certificate in Aviation Technology right here in Trinidad—right here. [*Desk thumping*] They have not completed their studies yet and Caribbean Airlines has taken 12 of them, and National Helicopters 13—the whole class. [*Desk thumping*] Guaranteed jobs, and that is why it is so important for us to understand how you take our young people and prepare them for the future.

For those who like to read, and I have no connection other than what I am going to tell you about the book and the name. There is a book that is written in

terms of what the workforce will look like, written by Professor Lynda Gratton of the London Business School entitled, “*The Shift: The Future of Work is Already Here*”. It is here, and in case you do not believe me, and I want to tell you as well—you know, Sen. Mahabir spoke earlier this morning and he mentioned the fact that we should ensure, and this was well supported by Sen. Drayton, that we should ensure that our young people—our human stock, our talent; and that is the word that he used—are equipped with entrepreneurial skills.

For the first time—I am sure you will be happy to hear this too—for the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, within one hour and 31 minutes from now we will be opening the first university store in any international airport in this part of the world. [*Desk thumping*] This is the university store of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Why are we doing that? We are doing that because we want to make sure that we do not only preach and teach, but we practise what we teach.

4.30 p.m.

Madam President, entrepreneurship is not only about reading about the success stories. Let me talk about entrepreneurship a bit. When I did my executive MBA, we would be reading about Ben & Jerry's and Walmart and Starbucks. Well I said to the universities here, the time has come for the people around the world elsewhere to read about the success stories in Trinidad and Tobago, about Serjad Makmadeen, about SM Jaleel and Shaffique Mohammed, about Arthur Lok Jack, Associated Brands, about so many other success stories. I challenge the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business, to write and document the first set of success stories, pioneers in entrepreneurship.

Many of you may not know that the Joseph Charles you know about in terms of Solo Bottling and Beverages Company, it was not that. That was not the name. The name was Serjad Makmadeen, a young boy who grew up in 1910 in Princes Town, who came to St. James to sell bread on a bicycle, and for every 10 bread that you bought as a customer you got one free from his commission—and he bought on sale.

Madam President: Hon. Senator, having reached the point of bread, we will take the tea break. The sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m. *Sitting resumed.*

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I seek your indulgence to return to the Order Paper to item 6 under Papers and to allow for the presentation of papers on the Supplemental Order Paper. Leader of Government Business.

PAPER LAID

Annual Report of the Ministry of Public Administration for the period October 2011 to September 2012. [*The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh)*]

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS
(Presentation)**

Draft Houses of Parliament Service Authority Bill, 2014

Sen. Elton Prescott SC: Madam President, I wish to present the following report:

Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider the Legislative Proposal entitled the Draft Houses of Parliament Service Authority Bill, 2014.

**Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment
and Sustainable Development**

The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Madam President, I wish to present the following report:

Report of the Joint Select Committee (JSC) on Human Rights, Diversity, the Environment and Sustainable Development on the Examination of Programmes and Services which provide support to victims of domestic violence.

**National Security
(Total Policing Initiative)**

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin: Madam President, I wish to present the following report:

Report of the Joint Select Committee on National Security on an enquiry into the “Total Policing” initiative on March 23, 2015.

**Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee
(Petrotrin)**

Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis: Madam President, I wish to present the following reports:

The Fifth Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee on the Annual Audited Financial Statements of Petrotrin for the period September 30, 2008 to 2013.

**Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee
(First Citizens Bank)**

The Sixth Annual Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee on the annual audited financial statement of the First Citizens Bank, for the period September 30, 2008 to 2012.

**Finance (Variation of Appropriation)
(Financial Year 2015) Bill, 2015**

Madam President: Hon. Senators, before we broke for tea, Minister Karim was on his feet. He spoke for 22 minutes and has 23 minutes remaining in original speaking time. Minister Karim.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam President.

Before we broke for tea, I was at the point of really indicating some of the success stories, pioneers in business, as an indication of how perseverance and talent when combined can give you success.

I was relating that to the University of Trinidad and Tobago and all other institutions, and I made mention of Serjad Makmadeen. The story goes on where Serjad Makmadeen would have bought a small soft drink factory in St. James from a husband and wife that conducted that business in their home. Having saved \$350, he was short of \$250, and he borrowed that from a very good friend by the name of Nagib Elias. That sum of money now allowed him to buy the factory. Because he had built up a clientele through the bread distribution and had a ready market, he wanted to expand the soft drink business but did not have sufficient bottles. The history records itself as saying that he would sometimes take beer bottles, wash them properly and fill them with soft drinks. He decided to write to persons in the United Kingdom to see whether he would be able to get their approval to sell him bottles for his soft drink business.

In writing, no replies came. Over and over he would write, he did not get a reply. One day he decided that maybe I should write this unique letter and sign it differently. He wrote a letter, and at the bottom of it he signed, instead of "Serjad Makmadeen", he signed "Joseph Charles".

After that he got so many replies that he was unable to reply expeditiously,

but what made a difference is the road to a bottle manufacturer in Canada, who had a surplus of bottles. On the bottles that were in surplus were printed a pilot with an aircraft—some describe it as an astronaut. It is a pilot that is described in the story. He bought those bottles and they were Solo bottles, and rest is history. [*Desk thumping*] The business was then passed on to his sons, Vernon Charles and Ken Charles.

I tell you this to tell you that there are many other success stories, but I am coming to a point. In mentioning these names I will tell you where I am going with it. Madam President, you yourself will recall from San Fernando a young man from Rio Claro who came to live in San Fernando and started the St. Michael's Secretarial College. His name was Raqeeb Hosein.

You would recall as well also from that area in south, Marabella, Daniel Ramoutarsingh, who would have sold bicycles and bought sleepers—that was the wood on which the train would have passed. The train passed over that track. He today would have groomed his sons and daughters, a success story, a giant and an icon in business, Helen Bhagwansingh, previously Helen Ramoutarsingh.

Right here in our midst is the successor of a great icon in business, who came from Syria in 1919 with no education. That is why I am saying—and I want to reiterate the words of the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who guides us consistently and tells that education and training is the passport from poverty to prosperity. [*Desk thumping*]

In 1919, Aziz Elias Hadeed came to Trinidad from Syria with nothing, to run Caribbean Insurance, and today his son, Sen. The Hon. Gerald Hadeed runs Beacon Insurance. [*Desk thumping*]

A revolution in the automobile business, and this revolution has a history as well, in Mr. Bickram Ramnarine from Bamboo, popularly known as Bics Auto Supplies. That has made a great difference. Captain Lee Lum—related I am understanding now in some very significant way to Minister Howai—among the pioneers in the oil industry. The Southern Sales and Services of today, run by the sons of Nazir Ahamad had its genesis in his father, Aziz Ahamad, who used to beat pitch on the road and bought a truck to service TPDL, the petroleum industry in Santa Flora; the rest is history.

5.10 p.m.

I tell you that to tell you that I have asked the University of Trinidad and

Tobago to ensure that all of these success stories are documented. [*Desk thumping*] Just as we studied Starbucks, Walmart, Ben and Jerry's, the rest of the world must now study the success stories and the icons of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] How are we going to do that? We are going to do that because the previous Government had a printery they acquired in 2006, sitting in a certain place in El Socorro, and when I became Minister I said, we must remove it from there and put it to the place where it belongs.

Two weeks ago, on a Friday morning, with some of my colleagues, we took that printery and we launched the first UTT University Printing Press. [*Desk thumping*] That is what it is—[*Holds up picture*—and I have asked the University of Trinidad and Tobago to document all of these success stories, but very importantly as well, where you have start-ups, where you have young entrepreneurs who have great ideas, we must give them the startup of 500 call cards free of charge for their viable business. You cannot only talk, we must do unlike others and talk—we must do and walk.

Madam President, I want to also recognize for all the things that I have said and what I am going to say, the significant contributions of all of the chairmen under this Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training. The University of Trinidad and Tobago is chaired by Mr. Curtis Manchoon, COSTAATT is chaired by Dr. Colin Furlonge, YTEPP Limited by Mr. Chandar Gupta Supersad, the National Training Agency by Mr. Kelvin Mahabir, the MIC Institute of Technology by Dr. David Lee, the NESC by Mr. Feroze Khan, and in addition to Mr. Manchoon at UTT, as we open the first university airport store within a few minutes time, I have granted that as a local brand that would be now known internationally.

All of these people, including the president of UTT, Prof. Narinesingh, the provost Dr. Ali, and the business development manager, Mr. Boodai, all of those and many others, I just have the time to mention a few, we congratulate and thank them for the significant work they have done. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Would the Minister give way for one minute? I just wanted to ask one question. I cannot think of some other names now, but when you do these success story could you remember people like Bob Yorke and Max Senhouse. Could you include those people—[*Interruption*]—I am speaking to the—may I be allowed to speak? May I be allowed to speak, the Minister has given way. Thank you. So, Minister could you remember those people also in your list of people?

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Sure.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Thank you very much, and maybe as I have forgotten to mention some, I want to tell you, all persons, all nationals of every creed and race—

Sen. Robinson-Regis: I am happy to hear.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim:—will find an equal place under the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] Bob Yorke, a great success story; Max Senhouse, yes, all of those. But, in the first volume what I want to do is to take about 10, and I have asked for the diversity to be present and I have asked that the first commemorative pioneers and icons and success stories in business, and entrepreneurs must be printed for August 2015, Independence.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Excellent.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: We have taken a lot of the institutions to where they could not have gone before. And as you mentioned about some of the names, some of those who are retired and some of those who may have gone to the great beyond. Only today, this morning, we started with the approval of Cabinet—hon. Prime Minister and my colleagues—approved for the first time an initiative called RRW, Retirees Returning to Work. So, for those of you who may be exiting the Chamber in the future and you feel that you have the age to return to work, there is a hope and opportunity for you.

We had a full house of people at the Valsayn Teacher's College auditorium, and what we are seeing is that we want to reengage them because Sen. Drayton made the point as well about addressing the labour shortage. The labour shortage is not only chronologically defined. The labour shortage is also in terms of your ability to contribute to the supply chain. And that is why we are making no distinction in terms of your age.

In some countries they have extended the age of retirement, but what has happened in Trinidad and Tobago and in the rest of the world is people are living longer because of education and because of better health care and the quality of health care. You would have heard from my colleagues the number of hospitals that we have opened, about to open, or will open, and that too will extend the lifetime of persons in our country. As I speak about institutions, I want to also indicate that with respect to Tobago, when we came into office teachers in Tobago had to travel—and I am sorry that my colleague Sen. Cudjoe is not here—to Trinidad to pursue their studies for the Bachelor's in Education. That no longer exists. The University of Trinidad and Tobago trains teaches to bachelor's degree right at the education campus in Scarborough, Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

I will come back to something else with respect to Tobago a little later on, maybe when my colleague returns to the Chamber. But, in addition to UTT—and you would have heard my colleague speak about the drilling school. Could you imagine, Madam President, that after over 100 years, and I want to congratulate and to thank my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, for the support.

Sen. Ramnarine: Great achievement.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: We have never had—we never thought, we never gave any wink to thinking about placing an institution to train people in a formidable sector of this economy, the energy sector. We had to be importing roustabouts, tool pushers, riggers, electricians; today, we are producing them at home right here in Usine St. Madeleine. [*Desk thumping*]

There is much more for that, but as I have talked about the NESC, National Energy Skills Centre—I want to commend the NESC as well, together with the NTA, COSTAATT to some extent, MIC and YTEPP. What we had in Trinidad and Tobago, was we had a number of persons with skills and competencies but no certification. So, when somebody came to you they were unable to even assess the job that you have properly and to cost it, and you would ask the mason or plumber, well, how much will you charge me? And he says, well, give me anything. If the anything exceeds his expectation you are seeing him tomorrow; if the anything is below his expectation you eh seeing him coming back.

What we have done through an initiative called the WAC, the Workforce Assessment Centre, we have touched the lives of over 5,000 who have skills but were never credentialed. What does that mean? They are now certified. Maybe partially, with the qualification of the CVQ, the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, or Unit Awards, and I will explain that a little later on. But the fact is, that they now have improved self-esteem, they now have greater marketability, they now have increased portability, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but the rest of the Caricom region and the rest of the world because this is an internationally accepted qualification.

When we look in terms of how do we build the brains— COSTAATT, which started as a community college, which continues to be so as well, operating in Melville Lane in Port of Spain, paying approximately \$1 million a month in rent, could not expand by one million centimetres. We have paid over \$300 million in rent, renting properties under this Ministry. Well guess what? COSTAATT will open its new campus in Chaguanas on 30 acres of land. [*Desk thumping*] This is what it is going to look like. [*Holds up picture*] It will have a capacity for 3,000

students not far from where my colleague, Sen. Avinash Singh resides.

So, much is being said, what I showed you there about UTT was the printing and packaging institute. I would have spoken about COSTAATT and you would have known about the Sangre Grande campus that never existed before, exists now under this Government. The El Dorado Nurses Training Academy, never existed before, was El Dorado Girl Youth Camp, abandoned, left to decay; the accreditation council, just doing basic work, has now really stepped up to the plate, and has international reciprocity agreements with major bodies such as theirs. So that if a foreign institution comes to Trinidad and Tobago we can approve them and if an institution from Trinidad and Tobago goes abroad and we have that reciprocal agreement they can also be accredited. That is the kind of engagement that we want to ensure that we progress to.

Madam President, with respect to TVET, quite a lot has been done in this sector, and I want to say that while we have reached the 65 per cent and exceeded the 60 per cent target rate for the tertiary sector, we are still at this point compiling the data for the participation rate in the TVET sector, the vocational sector. I have every confidence that when we compile that, Trinidad and Tobago will have a participation rate in the tertiary sector in excess of 70 or 75 per cent. Never before. Unprecedented.

We now have a state-of-the-art automotive technology centre with autotronics and IT in Chaguanas at the NESC facility; we have expanded the MYPART Programme, the Military-Led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship and Reorientation; to Presto Praesto and also to Chatham. We have started for the first time as well a Technokids Programme, where we take children six to nine years old and expose them to the iPad, the iPhone, the desktop, the laptop, everything so that they can adequately prepare themselves when they enter secondary schools. This year, we graduated over 1,000 students between the ages of six to nine. [*Desk thumping*]

And as I spoke about MYPART which has a relationship with the Ministry of National Security, before and continues to do so, I want to commend my colleague, the hon. Minister of National Security, Brig. Carl Alfonso, who collaborated with the Ministry in ensuring that for the first time we recognize interagency operations, and accredited to the National Training Agency, the National Security Training Academy (NSTA) at Cumuto, a significant accomplishment.

Madam President, earlier on when I spoke about the aviation campus, I just want to remind all of us about what is going to happen very briefly. I have

decided that to prepare the feedstock, as Sen. Drayton was indicating in her contribution, that it is important that we look at the young boys and girls who will be the future engineers, the aircraft maintenance engineer technicians, and who can be the future pilots and captains of this country. When we start and we launch the aviation campus, we will be also launching aviation junior. And I am going to take 50 students from various secondary schools, from Forms I to V, and we are going to bring them to that campus on every Saturday from 8.00 to 12.30, free of charge, so they can understand and learn, and appreciate dynamics and the environment of aeronautical engineering and aerospace engineering. [*Desk thumping*]

You know, much has been said about the OJT Programme, the On-the-Job Training Programme. When we inherited the OJT Programme some described it as a “go-for programme”—go, photocopy this; go, bring tea for me; go, make a cup of coffee—and for the first time what we did is we decided that we are going to expand the reach of the programme by having more sub-regional offices, but very importantly, how do we now align what you have studied in your institutions and graduated with, with what the labour market requires.

5.25 p.m.

In saying that, we have launched OJT Agriculture, with Minister Maharaj; OJT Environment, with Minister Ganga Singh; OJT airports, with Minister Cadiz; OJT Digital, OJT Medical among many others. Let me tell you about OJT medical. What we inherited was a situation where you had an oversupply of students who are qualified to pursue medicine, MBBS, but you did not have sufficient spaces.

Madam President, you know, your husband being a medical doctor, that what was painful for me as Minister was that they were scholarship winners, scholarship winners among the applicants who were placed on what was called a deferred approval list, which means that they were able to get a place, they were accepted with the qualifications but could not start medical school this academic year. They have to wait for a next year. And I decided we will now take the OJT Programme, I will use these students, take them on board, rather than they stay at home, and place them into hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, health centres where we will pay for them through the OJT Programme and we launched OJT Medical.

During that year they will learn a lot about the medical field in preparation for their studies in the next year. The professors at the university have told me that those students who come through that system are better aware of the environment and the conditions and have become better students when they enter the classroom. That is how—Minister Ganga Singh’s daughter is like that. That is

how we are utilizing. It is not simply a situation to say that the human resource is the most important resource. Anybody could say that. But what do you do about it? I want to tell you, if you want to know what people think about you and what you say and what you do not do, and what you come here and promise and you lament, read Michael Fertik.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of Minister Karim has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. F. Al-Rawi]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: [Desk thumping] Thank you very much, Sen. Al-Rawi, thank you very much, Madam President, and all my colleagues. I was saying that if you wanted someone to know about you, what you do, how you behave, how they see you, it might be instructive and I get no royalties from any of these books I am quoting. Not yet. Michael Fertik wrote a book called *The Reputation Economy* which I can describe in three lines, as it were. What people think of you, firstly. Whether people will work with you, secondly. And I am seeing Sen. Vieira shaking his head so probably he read the same book, whether people will work for you. That is how I "concise" the book. It is very important because our reputation is not the same as our personality, as indeed it is not identical to character. Personality is like form, character is class. And therefore it is very important that as we engage in this debate. We know that what we are doing is producing a country of class and we do that under the guidance of our hon. Prime Minister. [Desk thumping]

Madam President, how do we get to this stage? How do we recognize those people who might not have access and opportunity as my equation says: A (Access) + O (Opportunity) = S (Success). If you are bright but you did not have the opportunity, you missed that boat. If you are very bright but you do not have access, you are also denied. But if you have both A and O it can give you the S. Well it can give you the S as well, your success in life is not only what you have learnt, but how you practise what you have learnt. How, as Benjamin Bloom, the education psychologist says: it is not only about the cognitive domain (the knowledge), or the psychomotor skills (the hands), but the affective domain (the heart). How do we engage in ensuring that we build the brains of the country, by ensuring that they have the right attitudes and behaviour that will give them the correct altitudes? I want to tell you that what we are going to be embarking upon as we have launched a National Life Skills Curriculum, I am going to be starting

something called WCE: Workplace Character Education. It is as *Harvard Business Review* says—if you read the *Harvard Business Review*—it talks about the difference between absenteeism and presenteeism.

Sen. Drayton spoke so eloquently about productivity. What is productivity? We hear about time management. In my view, there is no such thing as time management. There is the management of self. That is what it is. You have to manage yourself to manage your time. And therefore as we talk about productivity, we talk about worker productivity, workplace character education. You must also learn where you work. We will soon be looking at opening the university on air, where you can look at your programmes while you are taking care of your parents. Look at your programmes while you are at home as a housewife or a househusband. Look at your programmes, whether you are on vacation or you are on a vocation. Learning never stops, and we know that, from birth to death.

Workplace character education as I was telling you, will define the difference as the *Harvard Business Review* says, between presenteeism and absenteeism. Absenteeism means that you are physically not there. Presenteeism means that you come to work but you bring plenty baggage. You are physically there, but you are not performing. And therefore productivity is not only hinged on absenteeism, it is also hinged on presenteeism.

Productivity. If you read as I would have read when I studied my first degree, *People and Productivity* by Robert Sutermeister. And again, I am just giving you the books. *People and Productivity* by Robert Sutermeister will tell you about the leadership continuum. There is a leader in every one of us but we have to make a choice. Choices we must, and therefore the choices I made was upon the death of Father Gerry Pantin, an icon in this country. I telephoned through my advisor and we met Sister Ruth Montrichard and Mr. Pacheco and I ask Sister Ruth, the Executive Director and Chairman of Servol, I said, what can we do to honour this great man? And she said, Minister, I would love to have a Servol Life Centre. I said where? She said in Strikers Village Point Fortin. Minister Coudray was there with me to launch construction of the Servol Life Centre in Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*] That will be opened before the end of this year. That will have a capacity of 40 trainees. It will have programmes such as beauty culture, parent education, volunteer health, drug and environmental areas of study for parents and for children.

Madam President, I want to also just give you a few of the other opportunities that we have presented to the country. For the first time a University Campus of

UWI in south Trinidad, the Penal/Debe Campus will be opened shortly. [*Desk thumping*] For the first time the open campus will have its signature campus in the name of Esmond D. Ramesar, who was a pioneer in extramural studies and we honour him with that facility in Chaguanas. And for the first time, in the history of this country, as far as I know it, while we have spoken long and very eloquently and given the best reasons why we should decentralize, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training will be occupying its new spanking headquarters at Chaguanas. And I want to tell you what is the slogan. One, decentralization—you will see the billboard. I have already designed it and my billboard is going to be called “Decentralization: 1.3 million reasons for it”. [*Desk thumping*] I am designing the billboard. I have a lot of skills, you know. [*Crosstalk*] I have a lot of skills. “Doh worry”.

As I say that, I want to conclude in a sense by telling you about the CVQs in secondary schools. And to date I want to quickly announce that the CVQs, the Caribbean Vocational Qualification—

Sen. Robinson-Regis: I know you like CVQs, you know.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: You know why? “Yuh want meh to tell yuh?”

Sen. Robinson-Regis: No, no. I know why.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: “Yuh want meh to tell yuh?”

Sen. Hadeed: “Stick break in dey ears.”

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: I will tell you why. [*Crosstalk*] Because in 2007 when I was about to launch the CVQ, your Government fired me as the CEO of the MTA.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Serious?

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Yes, I want to tell you. Now that you ask me, let me go home with it.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: We will rehire you. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: All right, well then I will go a little easier.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: All right, so do not tell me about it.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: The CVQs is a qualification that replaced the NEC examination. I am sure my good friend Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis will remember the NECs in the secondary school. And now we have awarded so far, I think it is important that we know, over 55,579 unit awards in the secondary

schools. [*Desk thumping*]

But as I conclude, if I had enough time I would say other things but I want to deal with this matter with Tobago, the THA. Sen. Cudjoe mentioned the fact that sometimes we do not treat Tobago as an equal partner. When you are in a partnership not only must you ask for respect, but you must give respect. [*Desk thumping*] And I want to tell you, you must also respect the institutions of the country and the state, one of which is called the Auditor General. And I just want to read an excerpt from the Auditor General's Report for the year ended September 30, 2006. The Auditor General says:

"The financial statements were not prepared on an accrual basis as stated in Note 1 of the Notes to Accounts."

The Auditor General went on to state in 4.2:

"Relevant documents and records necessary to verify amounts appearing in the Balance Sheet were not produced for audit examination. As a result, the following balances could not be verified:

Fixed assets \$628.7 million

Bank \$225.8 million

Investments \$7.8 million

Loans Receivable \$1.9 million

THA Deposits..."—

I am not giving you the full amount. I am rounding it off, the figures:

"THA Deposits" \$23.7

"Accounts Payable" \$21.4 million.

Madam President, it is important that I read this into the record, the following statement, which is a Disclaimer of Opinion. And the Auditor General is saying, I am reading from this report. In section 5:

"Because of the significance of the matters described in the Basis for Disclaimer of Opinion paragraph, I have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion. Accordingly, I do not express an opinion on the Financial Statements."

When we talk about productivity we must also attach to that, responsibility and accountability. It is important for us to ensure, as Sen. Cudjoe spoke in her

contribution, that we must have skills for the young people. But I ask her the question, what example do we set for the young people to follow when we have to read into the records of the Parliament situations like this?

As I conclude, I want to say that it has been my pleasure to serve as the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training. I want to say, as I am sure all my colleagues will join me in saying, we are indeed indebted and grateful to the hon. Prime Minister for selecting all of us. I want to say as well, that we have performed beyond expectation, as the Prime Minister describes, unprecedented, and certainly in this domain of tertiary education and skills training, never before have you seen O, never before have you seen A, and never before will you see the tremendous amount of S, the success. I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

5.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Sen. Avinash Singh. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Avinash Singh: Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me the opportunity to contribute in today's debate, entitled the Variation of Appropriation Bill, 2015. But before I dive into the contribution, I would like to respond to some of the comments made by the previous speaker, and I get to it right away.

In his contribution, which was very eloquently expressed today—I must say I am always fond of having been a type to come after the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, to contribute after such a good contribution. But he mentioned in his contribution earlier that we have moved from a participation rate of 42 per cent to 65 per cent in tertiary education. I want to say that he also—with respect to the education background—mentioned that this was the UNC institution and Government that started this realization of assistance in GATE, or GATE as we call it, with the dollar-for-dollar programme. But I would want to add that even under the Dollar for Dollar programme there were so many students that were not allowed, because of financial situations, to participate in tertiary education. It was only the PNM administration then, that sought to equalize this effect and justify that all students, and all citizens should be entitled to free education, and that is when GATE came around. And, yes, we applaud the fact that the effort displayed in terms of the education of our young ones is priority, but we must not forget all the other governments and institutions that went by.

He went to task with the Aviation Campus, and, yes, it is a laudable and very sophisticated piece of institutionalized asset to the education system, and I would agree, but it is under the authority of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, and

this is what we have appointed or elected—this is what Members here are elected or appointed to do, and that is to build on a good or robust foundation, and that is what this Government has indicated as such, providing all the details here today, with respect to the tertiary education.

Because it was the vision of the People's National Movement that led to the formation of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, that has led to all these brilliant ideas now. In fact, innovation and implementation by all successive governments should be priority and should benefit the users of those. But the honourable and goodly Minister, in his entire contribution, did not once, for a second, nor a word, give gratitude to the previous administrations who have set the foundation for progress in this country.

Madam President, in his contribution he also articulated and expressed that it was the past administration that closed down Caroni. Let me also read from the records and archives to put this illusion to task because it is repeated time and time again in this august Chamber that it was the PNM that closed down Caroni. But let me once and for all and, hopefully, probably, the last time, read into the record an opinion by an author, then Anand Ramlogan, *Trinidad Guardian* archives, and it is entitled: "Black and white facts". I am just going to put on record one paragraph, and I quote:

"Although I was pilloried and vilified in the last general election for saying Panday was responsible for the closure of Caroni, Kamla has now made a similar criticism. It is a fact. Panday mishandled Caroni. The closure of Caroni was started by the Panday government, which was ready to dismantle it and sell it off. The budgetary allocations needed to revive the company were not forthcoming, and the company went from bad to worse. Panday, once the champion of the barefoot labourers in the sugar cane estates, was a different man as Prime Minister."

Madam President, put that into context and this opinion was given in the public domain since January 18, 2010. So coming time and time again to try to justify that the People's National Movement closed down Caroni, I have just given you some archive information to put that to rest.

Moving on. In contributing to this Bill, I would like to turn to one of the main pillars in any country's economy, and I would like to specifically put some microscopic attention into that sector. In my opinion, it is very important, the agricultural sector, and simply to say that when this Government came into power they would have inherited contributions by the agricultural sector towards GDP of just around .6 per cent. This is indicated in the 2011 Ministry of Food Production Reports and it can be found online.

Madam President, we are in 2015. After millions of dollars allocated to the Ministry of Food Production and billions of dollars spent in budget after budget, are we really in a better place where food is concerned? The answer to that is very simple because when you look at the document laid in this honourable Parliament called “The Achievements”, which is dated March 31, 2014, and you turn to page 35, under “Actual Achievements”—and this is for 2013:

“Agriculture contributes .6 per cent to the GDP and it has remained constant.”

And that was in 2013. The point is, we have had the hon. Minister of Food Production, my good friend, come in this Parliament, time and time again, and—I may call him the Minister of Statements, but that is just me, because he has laid so many statements in this Parliament about how good the agricultural sector is going and how efficient, how productive it is. But should that not translate into a better GDP or contribution from that sector in terms of GDP? [*Desk thumping*] Why is it constant—.6 per cent?

I mean, their manifesto commitment was .6 per cent to 3 per cent in five years. Five years have gone and where are they in terms of that promise to the nation? One would have thought with this reduction in oil prices that is affecting the world, not just Trinidad and Tobago, it would have been the best opportunity to truly diversify this economy in terms of revenue-generation and putting efforts into other industries that make up this economy. But the moment of truth to prove to this nation that this Government deserves a second term, we can just look at one angle. Simply look at the agricultural sector and the increasing or decreasing of the contribution to the GDP. And if I were to grade it, Madam President, I would give it an F for failure because it has not demonstrated—

Sen. Bharath: Senator, excuse me. Would you mind giving way for a second?

Sen. A. Singh: Sure.

Sen. Bharath: Thank you for giving way. Have you considered the fact that GDP has actually increased in that period of time? So therefore as a percentage, it would not stay constant. Okay?

Sen. A. Singh: Thank you, hon. Senator. As I said, I was referring to the document provided, which was dated March 31, 2014. So up to that time—that it is the time period I referred to. Of course, you have not given us, the population, statistical information to prove otherwise, via the CSO and that is a different agenda for a different day.

Madam President, I would still give the agricultural sector an F for failure. The agricultural sector, in my opinion, has been cheated, battered, ill-treated and starved of opportunity to progress—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Bulldozed.

Sen. A. Singh:—and produce higher contributions towards the GDP. I will try to identify why I say this. I would not just come out here and boldly put down the agricultural sector, of which I am a part. So I declare my interest. I am a farmer. Issues in the agricultural sector are now more blatant than ever before. One of the most important resources in this country that goes hand in hand with agriculture is land tenure. This Government was at pains, at task, in trying to produce documents in nature for a land use policy. It was promised. What is the plan, really, where the limited resource of land that belongs to, not just a few, but belongs to all the people of this country—what is the plan with respect to that?

I will tell you. Throughout this five-year term of this Government, we have seen Ministries created and popped up overnight. We have seen the Ministry of Food Production which was formerly Ministry of Agriculture, dissected and created side by side, Ministry of Land and Marine Resources and Ministry of Food Production. Increase in expenses, in allocation, and this, in my opinion, is increased opportunities for corruption.

I say this on the backdrop of the mess that when a person goes to these Ministries, the problems they have to incur to get matters relating to either food production or land disputed. Have it my way, I would put it back to one. Incorporate it back and have it under one jurisdiction under the Ministry of Agriculture, so that it will be all-encompassing and you can go to one stop and get all your situations addressed.

Madam President, we have also seen Ministries formed, or we have seen positions formed: “Minister in the Ministry of”. Why is this necessary? You have also heard time and time again, high officials complain about—even right here in this institution—there is not sufficient oversight in terms of spending. And it boils down to how can a Minister oversight himself? How can a Minister truly identify issues and problems, or try to rectify problems and find solutions under his own Ministry? In fact, the rate this—thank God, this term is only around for five years and it is slowly coming to an end because I am sure we would have probably seen a Minister of Air popping up, Minister of Road, Minister of Light, Minister of Sound, Minister of everything popping up just so that certain persons would benefit and would not have to be deemed—what it is?—Senators without portfolio.

But turning back to the land issue, this is a major concern to all right-thinking citizens of this country. And when you really look at what is taking place and the policy direction by this Government, it has shifted almost 180 degrees from what they promised Trinidad and Tobago, to what they are trying to do at this present time.

5.55 p.m.

But looking a little more deep, Madam President, they have sought to bulldoze land in Gauve Road, farmers that are affected here, some who claimed that they are producing for over 50 years, but yet still on the next side of the story you are trying to regularize squatters, unconsulted, unplanned. My opinion again, political gesture to regularize or legalize these squatters living on state land.

Madam President, why are there different strokes for different folks? Why have squatters increased by two-fold under this UNC Government? This paints a picture. This issue is as a direct relation to issues surrounding the social needs of our population. Why do people squat?

Sen. Maharaj: Madam President, 35(1). Which part of the Variation Bill—I would ask my learned colleague there to provide a direction. Which part of the Variation Bill before us talks about squatting per se so I could direct my mind to that?

Madam President: Senator, please try to connect your discussion thus far to the Bill at hand.

Sen. A. Singh: Thank you very much, Madam President. I am guided. You see, when the debate was taking place, in crosstalk, my good friend Sen. Ramnarine, when squatting was raised he said Avinash would know. We are going to allocate \$55 million to the—we are going to move around and shift around moneys that could be used for other things. We are shifting around \$55 million to the Ministry of Food Production and we are also giving the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources over \$11 million. So in my quest, I would like to know whether or not this agenda in moving around these moneys has anything to do with the squatting issue. [*Desk thumping*] Because I was getting to the point that in moving around and creating social ills in society, results in high expenditure for Ministries like the Ministry of Social Development, where persons are below the poverty line and all these sorts of things. But I was getting to the point when my colleague pre-empted me and raised the issue of squatting.

I was going to say, Madam President, and I will say it, why do people squat?

Probably because they cannot afford shelter and it would lead to that level of poverty. It would be a burden on the State to provide housing and to raise expenditure in terms of underprivileged grants and baby grants and all these things that are budgeted for. They could either be desperate for shelter, but I think they are worse off now than ever before. They may not be gainfully employed, and Minister Karim went to task where employment is concerned. But if that is the situation and the unemployment rate in this country is so low, what led to over 60,000 people turning to squatting now from just 25,000 applications under the LSA before this Government came into power?

Madam President, just by the data alone, it paints that picture of the state of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, that people have to resort to squatting, in essence, to get shelter because this Government has not tolerated, they have not anticipated, they have not managed the housing structure and system well. Some could argue differently and they would have their time to do so, but I have been in contact with so many families—in fact, hundreds of family in the Carlsen Field area—and some of these individuals have been living there for over 50, 60, 70 years of their lives. Generations have come and gone and their leases are not being renewed which leads to further ills in society, but I know that the squatting issue is high on the agenda and probably they would say I am debating the next Bill right now, but it is relevant.

Coming back to the agricultural aspect of where land is concerned, that would have dealt me to go the direction of squatting—because you need land to have a good agricultural system and structure—land touches on almost every agricultural activity, from crop production, livestock, apiculture, horticulture, aquaculture, aquaponics, hydroponics, agroforestry, even agro processing and packaging. You need land. Under an agricultural sector you need land to have a successful industry. And, Madam President, this Government's solution to encourage that development is to give away the people's resources, give away the nation's land and give away the ownership of state resources that belong to all the people of this nation. We would have heard the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy here today spoke to the shares and the IPOs, and he would have mentioned the First Citizens Bank and all these sorts of thing, but I am of a different view.

My opinion with respect to this is that whereas there is a state agency that is owned by the people of this country, everybody benefits from the profitability of the state entity. Because the profit from that state entity, via taxes and otherwise, trickles down to our social programmes, it trickles down to fixing of roads, building of schools, building of hospitals and so on, but when you try to

commercialize that, you give that opportunity to a few elite in society and that why I have concern.

Madam President, it is best you open the Treasury and put a sign there, a national sign “Free money, come and take as you want.” [*Desk thumping*] That is what this Government is doing. Because when you talk about sustainable development in terms of agriculture, every child—and I am sure you are aware every child going to school, learning in school—one of the first things you learn in social studies class is the meaning of sustainable development, and this is a practicable approach in theory that this Government is doing everything opposite to sustainable development and they call it unprecedented. That is the way they term it. I call it unsustainable development.

Madam President, how can a sensible Government sit on the fact that there has not been an ounce of diversification in this economy? No new revenue generation, a stagnant almost completely dead agricultural sector. We cannot even feed our military. We cannot feed our own soldiers. Another country, a foreign country via imports, has to be used to feed our own armed forces. What has happened to the “support local” campaign? We would have heard issues surrounding labour which were raised by Sen. Drayton earlier, further magnified by Sen. Karim in his contribution, and I applaud the suggestion and the articulation of having the OJT agriculture. I applaud that, and it is good to hear the transition of CEPEP and URP into the private sector. That is laudable. But the question is when?

For example, the agricultural sector is desperate and we need it like yesterday. We need it now to have a successful agriculture industry because when you go through this country and you speak to farmers, farmers holdings, businesses, manufacturing sector, the underlying fact in terms of their cost of production and having a successful business and a profit at the end of the day, is that labour is the biggest problem. You could look on it from whatever angle. It sounds on paper, OJT agriculture, because I have never seen what it looks like.

Madam President, certainly the actions by this Government in agriculture have not produced tangible benefits in the form of improvements in term of the contributions to the country’s GDP. Maybe we need to look back at our subsidies and incentives. We may also have to consider subsidizing the production outputs to attract more persons into business because developed nations have turned to incentivizing production outputs to make the agricultural sector more profitable, and this in essence would lead to the standardization of prices because when you go to the supermarkets you will find commodities priced. A certain price for Easter, you will find a different price for Christmas, for Eid, for Divali, for all

functions, for all religious activities. The prices are actually affected. For example, chicken and poultry, meat and all these things are slower in the economy for fasting periods. But the point here is that we need to make this agricultural sector sustainable, one; attractive, two, and encompassing all those benefits that people would actually turn to it. Because if I were to ask a question here right now, Madam President, through you, how many Senators present today would want to see their child become a farmer? That question is a serious one to consider because the answer I am sure is very different from the reality in today's world because nobody wants to go into agriculture. [*Crosstalk and laughter*] I will leave that alone.

But to move this agricultural sector we need to really put effort, and I know the Minister of Food Production has been placing effort, but as I said, I am not seeing the tangible benefits in the short term. We need to have the agro processing and packaging, even storage. I know some is on stream, but we were promised those so long. In fact, I will give you one example. I was invited to the opening—thankfully to the Minister of Food Production—of the NAMDEVCO wholesale market in Chaguanas, and just like the disability centre in Carlsen Field, it was launched, it was opened, PR, it was a tick box item on the agenda, they got that, but then what happened? The gates were actually locked and that is it. The end of that. It is not open for the public. It is not in operation.

The market right now is just there. It is just locked and nothing is taking place. Recently, I saw the disability centre in Carlsen Field overgrown by grass. Probably they heard me when I said it. I see the grass is cut now, but this is what we have to go through as a developing nation. We need to have facilities, state of the art if we really want to achieve food security. We must have effort and, as I said, when the oil and gas sector, when those days turn dark, what are we going to do as a nation? This is the perfect time to really diversify and put more effort into other industries, put more effort into the agricultural sector.

Madam President, in terms of the achievements by this Government where agriculture is concerned under agro processing, I see we have had an initiative linked to the KFC outlets for fries, and I must say that was a laudable intention but it has gone by the wayside because none of our local sweet potato fries are being sold at KFC now, and I have done so at the earliest, Madam President, through you. It is a laudable intention. We have to, if not force, but legislate all international restaurants, all agencies, all holdings. They must be able to use some percentage of local commodities in their agenda.

6.10 p.m.

Sen. Maharaj: Is it the policy, hon. Senator, of the PNM to force or to legislate that local restaurateurs must use local commodities, percentage-wise, as part of their policy?

Sen. A. Singh: Thank you for that question, hon. Minister. In fact, as I said, we can offer incentives; [*Desk thumping*] we can have consultation, most important; [*Desk thumping*] we can go down that direction. Because like you, Madam President, most of us here, when you look at your breakfast on the mornings, if it is cereal and milk, well, okay; if it is doubles, Madam President, we do not produce anything in the composition of doubles. Not even the oil that you fry the “bara” in we produce here. The wheat, we do not produce that; the channa, we do not. Look at our diet and then you “want to support local”. We need to support local.

I am very happy and I am very privileged to be in the company of your presence and hon. Senators upstairs in our tea time, our lunch time, and you see local provisions being offered and served as our menu. But this needs to start from inception at the homes, educate the parents, the early childhood care centres, primary schools, tertiary schools, [*Desk thumping*] everybody. We need to go local.

Madam President, as I said, the intention is laudable, yes, I will support legislation, I will support an agenda that gives forth benefits to the population, and food is one of the most important entities in any situation. So, my questions, in terms of the agricultural agenda, and I know the hon. Minister would rise to respond so he could probably clarify, because I would have indicated that I stand to be corrected on some of the issues, because I am not seeing tangible benefits in the public domain of action.

So where NAMDEVCO is concerned, in a previous debate, I would have indicated that we need to have NAMDEVCO do their jobs properly. We need to have them going out there, not just collecting prices. What does that do to the population? Does that give me as a farmer or give a consumer any comfort in just prices alone? They have to go and expand outside of that remit, keeping with respect to their legislative agenda, and find new markets. Market our local commodities, our local products. I know they are marketing a few, but we need to sit down as a nation and get serious in terms of marketing and supporting our local farmers. [*Desk thumping*]

You have seen the closure of the cocoa and coffee industry. Some may even

argue that is the death of the cocoa and coffee industry, because we were once prestigious in terms of having the best fine or flavoured cocoa, but where has that gone? We know we could talk about the good honey that we had that has received world awards on occasion after occasion. But what is being done?

The hon. Minister would have come to this Parliament and indicated his intention to have a crop insurance. That is a good idea because right now, I can tell you that farmers are not only being affected by floods. We are also being affected by drought and in recent times, bushfires and also, you know about praedial larceny. Yes, we have the praedial larceny squad, but monitoring is very key because I have received some comments and recommendations from farmers around me that some of these praedial larceny officers are demanding from the farmers their produce.

Sen. Dr. Mahabir: Taxing.

Sen. A. Singh: Taxing, if you want to call it, so we need to monitor. And some of them even went as far as calling the officers' names but I will not do that, but I would wish to identify it.

Madam President, we have also heard in this august Chamber, and in the public domain, about the memorandum of understanding signed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. This did not bear fruit.

Sen. G. Singh: Thank you, Sen. Avinash Singh, for his graciousness in allowing me to move the procedural Motion.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Madam President, in accordance with Standing Order 98(8), I beg to move that the Senate continues to sit until the completion of the business at hand.

Question put and agreed to.

FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015) BILL, 2015

Sen. A. Singh: Thank you, Madam President. As I graciously gave way to the Leader of Government Business, I would like to know what has come out of that relationship or that signing of MoU between both countries and both parties because it has a direct implication where land is concerned as well. Because one

could probably argue the reason for going to Guyana is because of the large land mass, the resources, but right here in Trinidad—and I have said it time and time again, I will repeat, Madam President, that we have the capability here in Trinidad and Tobago. We have the land, we have the resources. We really need that innovation and driving factor to produce. We have an unemployment rate, we still have it, it still exists, so that means there are people idly by not doing anything productive, so we need to incorporate those agendas into our agricultural factor.

Another initiative I would like to also find out is what is the success stories of these mega-farm initiatives that were continued or in some cases, established by this Government, in terms of meeting the agenda and having our \$4-billion food import bill which stands, somewhere in 2010— because I do not know our present food import bill; perhaps we can get those statistics here today. How have these initiatives really impacted on us as a nation reducing our food import bill? If we are serious, we would have benefits to show from additions of revenue, additions of taxes, additions of expenditure, in all sectors and it goes as far as every single Ministry. If you want to talk about health, how have our citizens' lives really gotten better with all the additional allocations, budget after budget? Do our people really feel that sense of security, compassion and willingness to go to a private institution? I think not.

We can also talk about the Caroni Green Initiative which started off as a very good idea, but what has become of that? Millions of dollars, of taxpayers' dollars, have gone to Caroni Green Initiative, and perhaps the hon. Minister of Food Production can elucidate some of the benefits of that initiative, as well as the land delivery programme which was also initiated by this Government. There are many sites that are allocated for agriculture and have had infrastructural upgrades and installations but these recipients have not received their leases. So that, land and land tenure are very important in terms of getting the agricultural sector forward.

You would have heard me mention, First World countries having research stations on almost every farm, because they know the importance of continuing or consistently having their produce or their species, flora and fauna, modified to meet such demands of environmental conditions, soil conditions, in essence, to receive that high-yielding capacity of any commodity. So I would have really liked to see efforts placed in research stations where our genetic availability of species diversity can be explored, which will, in essence, lead to higher yields of food production.

Madam President, I could stay here and talk a lot more on agriculture but, as I said, speaking to most of the farmers at the ground level, speaking to most of the

agricultural establishments in this country, they are very disappointed in where this sector has fallen with respect to contributions to GDP and investment. I will tell you, Madam President, and this is evident because when you compare our cost of production where food is concerned, can you imagine—and I have said it here again and nothing was done when I said it, so I will repeat it. Can you imagine you go to PCS and you try to purchase urea as a fertilizer for crops? The cost is sometimes two or three times higher than if you were to import from China or other places of the world. That is unprecedented, that local farmers cannot afford their own locally-produced urea which is high in quality and good in substance.

But, as the days draw closer now and the curtain of this UNC Government is about to fall, it is left to the next Government and by no means—I would like to say that this country has gone through this turmoil and we have survived for the last five years. Because we still have citizens today, when you talk to them, and you know it is so unfortunate, because some of these citizens tell you “If you all come into power, we going to have to eat grass”. I wonder if these people were eating grass prior to 2010. But that is just some issues when you actually talk to people at the ground level. In a sense, I would like to see the agricultural sector really diversify in terms of our national economy and give the national agricultural sector the recognition and emphasis that it requires for us to achieve a food secure nation. Because food security must be on the agenda of every Government, whether it be successive or present.

So, Madam President, I have tried to identify some of the reasons and justifications for the agricultural sector where budgeting is concerned, and I will tell you, we really have to put some effort in terms of the incentives and subsidies that are given to agriculture. Because, in recent times, there are so many farmers at present who have purchased machinery and equipment for agricultural purposes and they have not been subsidized as yet. Sometimes, in some cases, it takes a year. So we have to put mechanisms in place, as I said, to attract new people into the sector if we want to diversify and we have to give the people of this country the benefits of our tax dollars.

So, Madam President, I will close as I began on December 10 or 11, 2013, and I would like to thank you, Madam President, for guiding the proceedings of this honourable Senate and I wish to indicate my gratitude to the Almighty God and the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley, for having the confidence in me [*Desk thumping*] to represent the People’s National Movement in this, the Tenth Republican Parliament, and I must say, I feel honoured having been one, out of 60 persons, to sit on this side of this honourable Senate.

I would like to express my gratitude to all Members—Opposition, Government and Independent—who have really been there throughout my tenure as a Senator and who have given me the guidance to go out there and try to be a better person and try to, at least, contribute to legislation that will be for the better and greater good of this country.

So, with those few words, Madam President, I wish to thank you and thank this honourable Senate for this opportunity. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to make a contribution on a Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum, the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2015), Act, 2014.

As I rise to do so, I note the urgings to be brief but I think that there are things that we should spend some time on from time to time. I do not intend to take very long and I do not intend to rush either. I say that because, to my mind, we are in a time of economic redefinition. The energy turmoil that has engulfed the global economy has not left us alone and we ought to have seen it coming. I recall as far back as 2003 in a State of the Union Address by George Bush—he later became George W. Bush—that he was talking about energy independence and I remember sitting in my living room and looking at this man talking about energy independence and wondering what that meant because I think a lot of people assumed that it meant a reduction in dependence on Middle East oil.

What we did not quite work out, and it took us 12 years to see, was that shale oil and shale gas and the tar sand in Canada, and so on, would start making a contribution to supplies in global energy markets to such an extent that some of the established players in the global energy industry chose to drive world prices down—but the point is, we knew. We knew for more than 10 years that this thing was coming, and we allowed ourselves to be deluded by the demand that was driven when China flipped “ah switch”, turned on the lights and became a manufacturing giant in the early part of the new millennium, when oil prices shot above \$100, and people could not understand how or why or whether it would last, and then all too quickly, we came to believe that it would and it would last forever. Trinidad and Tobago, of course, benefited from this, not so much with oil but with gas, and we weathered the global financial crisis quite well, only to be sucker punched by Clico.

Now, of course, the tide has turned, therefore, against us. Energy is plentiful and cheap and while we are running low on our own reserves of gas and oil, we find ourselves in a position where we have to figure out how do we spend the money we have. The fact is, we are not poor but we are certainly not as rich as we

used to be. So, if I were speaking to a layman on the pavement and he asked me to sum things up, I would say, we certainly have less money to waste now and absolutely none to “tief”.

6.30 p.m.

We are in that place where we must see the opportunity to use the resources we have better, so we have to work very diligently to create a future beyond oil and gas. I say beyond oil and gas. I do not say beyond energy because I think Trinidad and Tobago still has the opportunity to be a major player in whatever the global energy industry becomes.

But while we are doing all of that, this repositioning, we must ask ourselves the question: where is our money going to come from? How are we going to continue to drive this economy? So, when I look at the Bill before us, which seeks to vary expenditure, it occurs to me quite powerfully that that is what we are talking about. We are talking about expenditure, spending money, and what significant sums they are too. Half of the money that is being spent really lands right on the nose of the issues that appear presently to bother us the most.

Education and national security account for more than \$1 billion of the \$2 million of redirected spend that we have in this Bill. We know national security needs a lot of work. There are major challenges and it is not just about resources. I think, in a sense, we have weakened, we have even prostituted our conversation about what we need to do with some of the institutions in this country when we only talk about money.

The fact is that, if we look holistically at some of the challenges we have, we have major behavioural problems here and these are in need of fixing and really it is nothing to do with a budget. It has to do with will and management and leadership and a determination to be better. [*Desk thumping*] And if we could align on that, then, perhaps we will spend better too. But I do not want to dwell on national security.

I want to just turn very quickly to education. We are throwing billions and billions of dollars at a system that, to my mind, nobody is happy with. I wonder whether we have thought to redefine education or is it that we are going to remain a slave to the status quo, to vested interest and to doing things today and tomorrow as they were done yesterday. And so, somewhat comically, yesterday was yesterday and today might be today, but today looks remarkably similar to yesterday. We have to have the courage to move beyond that, and every time we spend money there is an opportunity for us to do that. In the same way in

management we say what gets measured gets done, what gets spent on, what gets resources, that is what flourishes. And so we have an opportunity to really look at our spend and say: “Well, okay where are we putting this money and is this going to help us to earn money for this economy going forward?”

I listened to the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training about the ambitions of the young and he was very, very strong, very powerful, and rightly so, on the point that if a young person was desirous of getting a good education they could.

But—and I am sorry the Minister of Sport is not here—because I wonder if we have given enough thought, as a society, to the idea that not everybody wants a degree, that not everybody wants five O levels and three A levels and then a first degree. Now, to my mind, everybody that has a first degree wants a master’s. In my youth, which was not that long ago, someone with a master’s degree was an oddity. Now my friend from tertiary education is talking about the graduate glut. There is a postgraduate glut. To me, I think if you just have a first degree you are now viewed like an under-achiever.

And so, if not everybody wants a degree or to be a carpenter, or a plumber, have we thought about sport as a profession? Have we thought about sport as a life choice? And have we thought to make that option available to the young people who do not want to study all of this books and get five O levels, three A levels, an undergraduate degree to come out and then not get a job? Have we thought about that? Because, in our education system, we are losing thousands of people every five years. Thousands of people just fall off the bus. They fall off the wagon. What are they going to do? Where do they go for jobs?

So have we thought about sport? Have we thought to give sport a chance? If I think about this, Madam President, if I say to everybody here, everybody here knows if I just say Lara. There are parts of the world that I have gone—I used to live in the UK—and some people you would meet, you would say you are from Trinidad and they would go “Aaah Kallicharran”, or “aaah Lara”, or “aaah Yorke”. Was Kallicharran from Trinidad? I do not know. *[Interruption]* He is Guyanese but plenty of them assumed he was from Trinidad. Plenty of them assumed he was from Trinidad. So we claim him. We will claim him.

Hon. Senator: There are Kalicharans in San Fernando, Ivan Kalicharan.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Well they must have been family. So sports people put us on the map. I was living in Manchester when, in 1998, or thereabouts, Manchester United won the European Cup and I do not think that people in

Trinidad and Tobago have ever understood or ever could understand how far Dwight Yorke actually reached in the world of football when millions of people just came out in the streets to see this man from Tobago riding in a bus and all of these men around him, the people that you hear about, the David Beckhams and the Paul Scholes and the Eric Cantonas and all these fellas there and Dwight Yorke, our Dwight Yorke, stands in the middle of these men.

Sen. Prescott SC: Tobago Dwight Yorke.

Sen. Dr. R Balgobin: We claim him. What Brian Lara did in cricket and what Dwight Yorke did, you call their names everybody in the world knows them. Everybody in Trinidad knows George Bovell. We know about Stephen Ames.

But, tell me something, you look at these fellas and you really get the impression that they succeeded by accident. You get the impression that they did not get that much support from the system, from the society, from the places around them, they succeeded almost against the odds, or that they had to go abroad to succeed when they were very young.

I remember very clearly, Madam President, being on a Caribbean Airlines flight, I think it was Bwee then, when in a stunning error of judgment, somebody decided to run a production on the plane that was promoting Trinidad that interviewed George Bovell's father, who I think is also called George Bovell. I think there are some Roman numerals behind their names. I guess it was George Bovell the second that was talking; the father of the swimmer, unless, of course he was a swimmer himself, the second. Someone asked him: what did you do when you realized your son had talent? And he said, and it was on Caribbean Airlines, he said: "The first thing we did was get him out of Trinidad." He said it. It was recorded. It was played back over and over again. He said: "The first thing we did was get him out of Trinidad" and he went on to say why. He said: "Well the youth in Trinidad are not focused on their—". I guess they were—

So you look at the success of these sports people and you wonder well, what have we done or not done? What happened after Hasely Crawford? We had to wait a next 20 years for somebody reasonably competent at running. And those athletes that came after, I do not think we groomed them here. Did we? "Dey born here and dey gone".

6.40 p.m.

So I think that—

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Keshorn—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: No, I am coming to Keshorn Walcott in a moment, when I come to Sen. Avinash Singh's contribution. What I want to say, Madam President, is LifeSport has been a bad lash for everybody, but that does not mean that they were just doing evil or wicked things, that does not mean they were not doing some good work. They were touching some people. They were touching a constituency of people that needed help, that were not being addressed by the formal systems that we have.

So I think, Madam President, when I think about how we spend our money, we need to view human development more holistically, and add sport to the mix. [*Desk thumping*] We have talent. We know that, but the next Lionel Messi, is not going to come from Trinidad, if you want him to do SEA and then five O levels, and three O levels, and then hope to coach him to play football. When the Barcelona Soccer Academy and the Manchester United academy—they take these children before they are 10. What is wrong with that? What is the purpose of education, not to help people to have a good life, to be responsible members of the society? Are elite sports people not that too? Or is it that to have worth in this society, you must have more and more degrees, more and more paper hanging on the wall doing nothing?

We have to have the courage to include this in our arsenal for human development: sport, and start them young. Everybody cannot and should not do O levels perhaps. It is something that we need to be open and have a mature conversation about. Similarly, what about a life of music? You know, we talk about Mungal Patasar and Liam Teague. Where is the system that produces these people? In other words, how do we produce a Brian Lara or a Liam Teague, systematically? We do not. They come out and they succeed almost in spite of the system. But you know what? When Liam Teague was down here receiving yet another award, he identified a woman in San Fernando named Gunilla Tang Kai. [*Laughter*] That Mrs. Tang Kai has trained hundreds and hundreds of people in San Fernando to play the violin and to play stringed instruments. This woman is transforming the youth by herself, not “ah cent” of funding from anybody.

Go further south, look at Siparia, where a 30-year-old man named Akinola Sennon is taking guns out of young men's hands and putting two pan sticks in them, at 30 years old. He is a young Muslim man. He totally defies the concept that we have of what it is to a Black Muslim. [*Desk thumping*] This man is running homework centres after school, and teaching young men, who would otherwise go into a life of crime, to play pan. When you become a competent pan player, what? Where is the life for you? How do we take people and give them a life in music or in sport? These are things that we must think about, so when we

are talking about diversification, we must do so with regard for our human capital. Not just talk about diversification, as if it is some dry economic concept, because diversification has a human element in it. So we spend all of this money, and we say, “okay, fine”, but we spend it, and our institutions still do not work.

You look at this World Cup scandal, and this FIFA drama, and you realize with sadness that Americans had to do what the rest of the world could not. Not Europe, not anybody, nobody in the world could do it. So dislike Uncle Sam all you want, the United States had to do what no one else could. Would it not be wonderful, Madam President, if we were the one country in the world, small as we are, to be big and bad enough to have taken them on? “We eh winning” World Cup anytime soon, anyway, why could we not take them on? It would have been fantastic, but you never see us having the courage to do something like that. Why? Why could we not lead that investigation? We have two universities here and plenty graduates. “We doh have” enough bright people? “We cyar follow ah” trail of money?

Our institutions do not work. So if we do not have confidence in them, we do not have confidence to take on fights like these, but we ought to. We ought to build that confidence. What else are we paying for? When I look at the numbers here, what are we paying for? There are four things. We are paying principally for salaries, and if we are paying—we keep shovelling money into salaries. Madam President, I will tell you this. Do you want to give people 14 per cent? Give them. Do you want to give them 10 per cent or 20 per cent? Give them, but if there is not a concomitant rise in productivity people need to understand that the increases they receive are not sustainable. It is as simple as that. If everybody wants more pie, the pie has to get bigger, otherwise you create the conditions for conflict.

So if we are talking about paying people, and paying more people or paying the same people more, either way, we must have a conversation about the efficiency of the public service. It nauseates me to hear people just commend public officials all of the time. There are many who ought to be commended, and there are many who are an absolute waste of time, and ought not to be getting our tax dollars to do nothing. We have to have the courage to examine that, as dispassionately as we can, and see how we can cause these people to take their place as part of productive members of employed society.

The other thing we are spending money here for, are grants for new borns; for the underprivileged. No problem with that, but you know what I would like to see, Madam President? I would like to see, when you find yourself underprivileged and pregnant—bad combination— *[Interruption and laughter]*

Sen. Prescott SC: “Leave de lady alone.”

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: —it is a bad combination—I would like to see that the State steps in and supports these people better. And how do we do that? As soon as you find yourself pregnant, and you present yourself to a doctor or to the hospital, counselling starts from then—

Sen. Dr. Mahabir: And nutrition.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin:—and nutrition and all of these things. We start from then. We are giving you folic acid from the outset, and we explaining to you how to treat yourself, and we start talking to you about what it takes to be a parent. What is your responsibility for this thing growing in your belly? How are you going to nurture the child emotionally, spiritually? How are you going to nourish the child? These are things—so I am fully supportive of a grant, but let us tilt how we spend some of our money, so that we produce better citizens, and happier citizens. So that we do not have to witness the kind of cruelty that some parents, who are unprepared for parenting, we do not have to witness the abuse that they heap on their children, who many of them may view as interruptions to the fun that they were having. That is not so say that this is only restricted to underprivileged people. It is not. Wealthy people may hide it better, because they could hire a nanny, but we must help. We must intervene. So this is what I wanted to see.

I see that we are spending money on naval assets; fully support it. The Minister is an officer and a gentleman. He needs his assets. He must have his assets, because we cannot talk about crime and then not be prepared to pony up when the time comes, to give the law enforcement resources they need to deal with the problem.

Then there is \$69 million for the Port Authority. It remains a source of everlasting confusion for me, how an island cannot run any ports that make money. You know, that for me is amazing, why we have to keep shovelling money into these ports, I do not know.

Sen. Maharaj: “You is chairman” of Point Lisas, you should know.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Yes, but that is the thing. I know the system. I know the structure, and you have a set of dysfunctional and foolish competition, which obtains in the port sector in Trinidad. It is quite funny because right hand and left hand do not talk, at the expense of—[*Points to Sen. Howai*] so I leave that right there.

So, Madam President, what I am saying is we need more transformative

spend. I am not suggesting that we have more and more government agencies, because in my examination of government agencies, many of them have taken on a life of their own, and they no longer serve the public interest, they serve their own interest. [*Desk thumping*] That is madness, absolute madness! Again, we shovel money at them, and they print these offensively, opulent documents, expensive times 10, and send it here and say, “This is my report of what I have done”, and 30 pages later you are still wondering what have they done?

Madam President, we need to have a mature talk about where to take this economy, and to my mind, there are three things that matter. We must emphasize value add. When I go in the supermarket in the produce section, if the aisle has 10 bays, the first six—and I did this. I actually went and checked. The first six bays have imported products, and the first local product that I have seen in the seventh bay is a roll of bhandhanias, tied together with a rubber band. And we want to say we have an agriculture sector? And we want to talk about agro-processing? The first six bays, Madam President, you have apples, pears, plums, nectarines, strawberry, blueberry, raspberries, there are kiwis, there are cantaloupes, there is the other kind of melon that, I do not know what it is.

Hon. Senator: Honeydew.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin:—honeydew, thank you, and so on. Then this little sad bunch of bhandhanias. [*Laughter*]

That is why I was saying for state functions as well—we should have courage and we should say for state functions we want local produce. If I go upstairs and I have tea, what fruits do I get? Apple, grapes, pears. [*Laughter*] So you know what? It is a travesty of the highest order, and this is where I come back to Keshon Walcott, because Sen. Al-Rawi and I went to the same college together—[*Interruption*]—“uh huh, dai’s ah good college”, and there, we learned to pelt mangoes.

6.55 p.m.

I never paid for a mango in my life until now, but mangoes were growing all on the sides of the road, mango trees everywhere. So you learned to pelt these mangoes, but you know what, Madam President? We never went from taking that mango and eating it to finding a way to presenting it in a commercially acceptable fashion so that people can enjoy it without perhaps getting themselves messed up, and so on. If you go to Sainsbury’s in the UK you will see that the people in Thailand take that same mango, they slice it, dry it, dust it with a little sugar and

they put it in a bag and sell it to you for an enormous amount of money, and people open it and they eat that as a healthy snack. But there is nothing here; juice here is orange juice. The orange probably not—it “doh” taste like local orange either. Why I say that is if you get local oranges and you make orange juice, I mean, you know what good orange juice tastes like, you know what real orange juice tastes like, but there is no guava juice here, you know.

So, you know, to Sen. Singh, I will support him, and I will further that we have to do something with this produce because we must add value. This is the problem the retail sector has today, Madam President, you walk in the malls, you walk on the streets, lots of people, but they are—well, it was a young person’s term in my time, it probably still applies—it is called “gaping”, and that is all they were doing, window shopping. You are not seeing anybody by the cashier, you know; they are just watching, and then they go home and they order on the Internet. The reason they do that is because they do not feel—well, they recognize that the retail store has no value. What value are you adding? I could see it online, and I could get a more current version than what you have in your store.

Why would I buy a bottle of perfume from you, “I doh kno how long it sitting dong dey and if it will smell like a beer when I finally buy it and spray it on myself”, when I could buy it somewhere—you know, I would get a greater assurance of quality. So, how do we add value? The second thing is, how do we create employment? So anything that we do when we talk about diversification we have to talk about employment, and this why I like also, lives of sport and music, because it gives us the opportunity to provide some measure of employment or employability for people who otherwise would not have anything.

Then, finally, of course, it should earn foreign exchange—easy formula for diversification. So to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, I would say I am very glad that you are not spending more. I note just today on the BBC, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the United Kingdom is talking about legislating a requirement for a budget surplus. Just today he is talking about it, making it a requirement that you run a budget surplus, that you do not return persistent deficits.

So, Madam President, I am minded to say I support the changes, but I would make the observation that we have to spend less and live more carefully. We still, Madam President, have enough money. We have to have enough wisdom to do the right things with it. Thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Mutema. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Kwasi Mutema: Thank you, Madam President, for giving me

this opportunity to contribute to this debate here this evening. I sat here today and, really, I must admit, it was an enjoyable experience for me, in most cases, listening to many of the Members in this august Chamber as they gave their deliberations and their contributions here today. For example, listening to Sen. Karim, as he portrayed the creativity and thought that was applied in the tertiary sector in terms of the programmes. I think it was really an enjoyment sitting and listening to Sen. Karim. Also, Sen. Bharath, who also I must congratulate, as he was able to provide a lot of the facts and was able to put the whole thing together in terms of the achievements of the Government over the past five years. It certainly has made my job easier this evening.

Also, listening to Sen. Mahabir “ramajay”, as they would say, you know, in his own style, being able to communicate the ideas in a very practical manner so that the simplest minds could understand. I appreciated that very much. Even the goodly Senator, Sen. A. Singh, who as a farmer spoke so passionately on agriculture and the needs required, even though I would not go to the point, as his other colleagues attempted to do yesterday, to refer to him as a lobbyist. [*Desk thumping*] I would not do that, but he came forward and used his experience to represent his sector, and I appreciated listening to him. As I have said, I would not refer to him as a lobbyist.

Madam President, as Members of this Parliament we all have a shared responsibility to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, especially the youth of our country. I say regardless of which side of the political fence that we may sit, we all share that collective responsibility. It is our duty here as leaders in this political realm where we are here not just to represent the respective political parties from which we come, but, more so, we have a greater duty to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I say, therefore, as adults we cannot, on the one hand, tell our children that they must always speak the truth, and then, on the other hand, we as adults seek to distort facts and the truth in order to suit our own interest, [*Desk thumping*] because our children are looking on; they would lose respect for us and our institutions.

Only today we had a number of children here from the Cedar Grove Primary School, and, Madam President, when children lose respect they tend to be very harsh in their judgement. Therefore, I would like to quote—this is from a *Newsday* newspaper, October 14, 2001—there were 10 children all under the age of 13 years. They ranged from 10 to 13 years from the St. Catherine’s Girls’ Anglican School, 2001, who were asked the question, “What do you think of politicians?” All 10 were negative, and I say very negative, but very clear. You would not believe that these thoughts are coming from children, 11, 12, 10 years.

Just to mention four of them, well, Antonia Cyrus, who was 10 years old in 2001, 14 years later she is 24 years now, I wonder what she is saying. She said then:

“Well, I think they don’t act responsibly and they’re not honest to themselves and the country.”—10 years.

Eleven-year-old Dianna Pierre:

“I think politicians in this country aren’t taking up the role that they’re supposed to which is being role models for the citizens of this country”—11 years.

Twelve-year-old Sheryll De Bique:

“I think that politicians aren’t seeking the interest of our country and they should start thinking about helping poor people.”

Ten-year-old Precious Horsford:

“I think that politicians have many responsibilities which most of them don’t fulfill.”—2001.

A legacy we have inherited from the previous regime. Even today, Madam President, our experience as we see today where our whole country at this point seems to be enveloped in one major issue, where we have a very sordid example where the despicable actions of one man is bringing shame and disrespect to a whole nation. I say, Madam President, as leaders we have to be very mindful and careful how we act and what we say.

We have also had a continuous display by Members of the Opposition, who continuously seek to distort the truth and facts when they are presented to them by this Government. This issue is a case in point because, despite what has been said here this evening, I think there is clarity particularly for the people who are out there, because there has been a lot of mischief that has been made surrounding this issue, where a lot of our people have been made to believe that this Bill, this Variation of Appropriation Bill, has been brought forward by the Government so that they can seek to get more money from the Treasury, and as they say, for electioneering, to rape the Treasury, and so on. This is some of the talk you are hearing on the ground.

So that there is need for clarification, if not, for those who may be in here, but, certainly, for many of our people out there. Because, Madam President, what the Government is seeking to do here is what every household in this country does from time to time, [*Desk thumping*] and that is re-prioritize your spending. For example, most of our households we would have a monthly budget being made;

the parents would sit down and they budget their salaries for what they are going to spend on the food, on rent, on this and that.

However, there will be times when some other urgent need for some urgent expenditure may come up that they did not expect, some unexpected expenditure, so they have to re-prioritize that need and that spending. For example, a member of the family may fall ill; for example, you may find some unexpected bargain may occur, that this father may have felt he wanted to get this type of machinery for a long time and he saw the bargain at this point in time, which he knows he may not get later on, so then he may want to adjust his spending that month to be able to gain that opportunity—grab that opportunity of getting that bargain for that piece of machinery now.

So that, therefore, what that family may have to do, what that household may do is go back and look at their budget and say, “Well, look, even though this month we may have budgeted to go on a vacation abroad, however, we may have to put off that vacation, take that money now and spend it to get that piece of machinery this month”. So they re-prioritize their spending. So while the economist may give you the big term, “Variation of Appropriation”, the simple term, which so many of our households have been accustomed to doing over the years, month after month, you have families engage in this same exercise of re-prioritizing their spending, taking the money from here where you may have budgeted for and say, “Look, we will spend it here this month and make those changes and maybe later on we will spend on what we intended to”.

7.10 p.m.

This is what the Government is engaged in at this point, a reprioritizing of the needs and, therefore, inevitably reprioritizing your spending and making the necessary adjustments. So it is very important that we ensure that the people out there get that clarification.

Madam President, you see, the Opposition believes that they can continue to take the intelligence of our population for granted, that they can utilize their propaganda machinery to achieve their narrow objectives. They continue to engage in what I will call “dragon politics”. They believe that because in 1991 they were able to win an election by using the distorted propaganda that the then NAR Government had placed a dragon on top the Red House that was responsible for all the destruction taking place in the country, that they can come now using whatever propaganda again, in order to distort the truth to affect the minds of our population. [*Desk thumping*]

But I have news for them: this is not 1991, and our population is more enlightened, our youths now are more well-informed. You say something now and they can just go on Google and they are able to get it, which brings me to another point. This Government has been able to transform the infrastructural development of this country by leaps and bounds. The country has witnessed over the last five years unprecedented development of its road networks and associated infrastructure. What has been the response of the Opposition? Attempting to belittle this achievement by stating that all the Government did was build a whole set of box drains.

Earlier on I had necessity to make reference to Sen. A. Singh in a more complimentary manner; however, I have to state my total disappointment with comments I saw attributed to him in the daily *Express* today, where, to quote Sen. A. Singh, being interviewed by the *Express*, he said:

“While some may argue that roads and box drains may have been the only visible output from this Government,...”

I repeat:

“While some may argue that roads and box drains may have been the only visible output from this Government, it does not correlate to the almost \$400 billion spent.”

The only thing I could say, to be generous to him, maybe he was a bit ignorant about what was done. After today, hearing what he heard in the Chamber here today, I am not sure he would make this same statement. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President, we were able to hear so much about so many of the achievements by this People’s Partnership Government over this last five years. I will just touch on a few, which would be necessary to link it to this whole question of the infrastructure and importance. So we deal with this point that was made by Sen. A. Singh, and which has been made by other Members of the PNM, about what this Government has done is only box drains.

But if you look at the question, for example, I take education, where over 93 schools have been constructed all over the country, [*Desk thumping*] and 91 more schools are under construction, and these schools have been constructed—not just as the PNM has been accusing, in central and south Trinidad—Carenage, Laventille. The Rose Hill school that was there dilapidated for over 12 years, it took this People’s Partnership Government—we do not have a seat in Laventille; we do not have a representative in that constituency of Port of Spain South—[*Interruption*]—not yet, thank you Senator—but it took this People’s Partnership Government to construct that school for the people of Laventille. [*Desk thumping*]

[SEN. DR. ROLPH BALGOBIN *in the Chair*]

So the children of East Dry River there would have to leave and go far up to Picton in order to go to school, Mr. Presiding Officer. So you have schools being built: Carenage, Laventille, Arima, Chaguanas, Couva, Point Fortin, San Fernando, all over, which shows that it is a question of attention to the national infrastructure, where schools are concerned, where education is concerned.

The Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, Sen. Karim, spoke in terms of COSTAATT moving into Sangre Grande, building a campus in Sangre Grande. We have the University of the West Indies in Debe, which shows the network of educational institutions all over the country. [*Desk thumping*]

You go to health and you look again where this Government has systematically set out to build a network of health institutions throughout the country as well. You have Arima, Carenage again—I find Carenage seems to be getting plenty attention. Which constituency is this?

Hon. Senator: Diego Martin West.

Sen. The Hon. K. Mutema: Are you sure about that? Diego Martin West, Carenage, Sangre Grande, Couva—we also have the Couva Children’s Hospital—Point Fortin, Arima, the National Oncology Centre in Mount Hope. Mr. Presiding Officer, I want you to follow me carefully, a network of health institutions as well.

In terms of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, you have major developments in terms of road works throughout the country as well. The Diego Martin Highway, the Point Fortin Highway, which was promised since 1961 by the then administration, and which this Government has been able to deliver to the people. [*Desk thumping*] The Valencia Bypass, the Tarouba Link Road, the Naparima/Mayaro Road, again showing the volume in terms of network of road works.

The point I am trying to convey, Mr. Presiding Officer, is that this Government, through the development of the nation’s infrastructure in a very systematic way, has embarked on what you will know as an integrated approach to development. This is far different from what existed before, where you had development taking place in silos. So where, under the previous PNM Administration what occurred is that you had a lot of growth, but very little development. [*Desk thumping*] That is the big difference.

Here you have what is termed as “people-centred development”, where you are looking now at development that can be relevant to the people in a very

serious way. I want to quote for you, dealing with this whole question of the integrated approach to development, first from an article entitled, “Better Infrastructure Brings Economic Growth”, done by the Economic Department of the US Embassy, which states:

“Investments in modern infrastructure lay the foundations for economic development and growth. Building roads, bridges, power transmission lines and making other improvements create jobs. When completed, these projects help a society increase its wealth and its citizens’ standard of living.”

The other article I quote is one that comes from a Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences out of India. It says:

“Infrastructure is the prerequisite for the development of any economy...Infrastructure plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and thereby contributes to the reduction of economic disparity, poverty and deprivations in a country...It is an important precondition for sustainable economic and social development.”

I also have another document to quote from; this one may be more interesting. We are dealing here with the integrated approach to development, which would involve also paying attention to the development of your rural sector as well. Because the thing about the integrated approach to development is that there must be a balanced approach in terms of your urban/rural development. Something that this People’s Partnership Government has set about to correct.

You cannot speak about a developed nation and yet you have development imbalance in favour of just your urban sector, your urban district, it does not make sense. [*Desk thumping*] So they have set out, bringing about that balance between the urban and the rural, which we have been criticized for by the Opposition.

I say, “Okay, they criticize, maybe they do not know better. Maybe they have their perspective”, because everyone is entitled to their views, their opinions and their perspectives. So I say they do not know better, that is their perspective and their opinion. However, strangely enough, when I looked at the manifesto of the People’s National Movement, and I go to the 1961 manifesto, it says here, to quote:

“Needs of rural areas

Special attention will be paid to the needs of the rural areas with particular reference to water, health, education and fire services.”

But it gets more interesting, Mr. Presiding Officer. [*Crosstalk*] Ten years later in 1971—remember I spoke in terms of the integrated approach to development,

on which this Government has embarked.

7.25 p.m.

When I go to 1971 under rural development, I see again, it states:

“The PNM promises greater emphasis on integrated rural development.”

I repeat:

“The PNM promises greater emphasis on integrated rural development including the establishment and expansion of agro industries”—Sen. A. Singh?—“assistance to farmers on land already cultivated will be stepped up. To this end unused and unutilized Government and private land will be brought into productive agricultural use.”

Believe it or not, that is the PNM manifesto 44 years ago. It took this People’s Partnership Government to come 44 years later to implement this approach to development. [*Desk thumping*] You see, Mr. Presiding Officer, this question of infrastructural development and the integrated approach is very simple. To understand it, and this may be for the benefit of my good friends opposite, to break it down a bit for you that you can understand more clearly. Let us use the human body as an analogy. Let us say that the organs of the body represent the various centres of development. The heart, for example, represents your urban centre, your major commercial centre, your heart.

But you will have other organs that will exist in the more rural areas, for example like the kidneys which are way down to the back there, to be considered that rural area where you have those kidneys. And as your organs spread right throughout the body, but you need to be able to take all the necessary resources and nutrients to all of these centres, to all of these organs. [*Desk thumping*] That is where your blood vessels come in, which is your network. As you are representing your road network, the blood vessels are your road network that carries all your resources and your nutrients to these organs which are your centres of development.

So that, Mr. Presiding Officer, it means to say that definitely what this Government has embarked on is a most progressive approach to economic developments by paying particular attention to this integrated approach that can ensure we have balanced development within our country. So that we will be able to service, as what I was able to outline, all of your various services and centres throughout. So, in terms of the education, where, as I showed you had that

systematic approach of developing your various education institutions, the various parts of the country, your health institutions, you must have a very efficient road network to be able to connect and service all of these institutions, and this is where an efficient infrastructural development comes in. So, I hope my goodly Sen. A. Singh understands the significance and importance of such, and we would not hear such irrational statements being made in the future.

Mr. Presiding Officer, I dare say that such an approach to development, it has to be relevant and as well as flexible in its response to the needs of the people, and therefore that is where the need comes in to accommodate adjustments from time to time, ensuring that flexibility which the economists, as I said, would refer to as a variation of appropriation. I therefore say that this Bill is not only relevant, but is a fact of life in any aspect of prudent financial management.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Mr. Presiding Officer. I am happy to contribute very briefly to this Bill before us, and I do not know if that was Sen. Mutema's maiden—was it?

Hon. Senator: No.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Okay, I did not recall hearing him previously. But, Mr. Presiding Officer, I wanted to ask the goodly Senator if when he said that the People's National Movement takes people for granted, and he also talked about "dragon politics", I am wondering if as a representative in the People's Partnership of NJAC, if he felt that his leader Ambassador Makandal Daaga believes that he could take people for granted, and if he is also taking people for granted, and if he also believes that his leader believes in "dragon politics". Because, Mr. Presiding Officer, I do not know if you recall that on May 17, 2011, and I am quoting from the *Business Guardian* and it is headed "Daaga lashes out at corruption", and it is an article by Yvonne Webb and she said:

"In what is being viewed as a stinging attack against the Government, Ambassador Maandal Daaga, leader of the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), one of the coalition partners, criticised perceived corruption in the country. Daaga made his statements at the Founding Congress of the Movement for Social Justice (MSJ), another coalition partner, at Palms Club, San Fernando, on Saturday evening. In his biting commentary, made before an audience which included representatives of all coalition partners, including TOP's Ashworth Jack, MSJ's Errol McLeod, UNC's Dr. Roodal Moonilal and COP's Winston Dookeran, Daaga declared: 'In my 50-60 years, I have never

heard so much corruption in my land as in the last few days. There is too much corruption and people are stealing money as though they invented it...It seems almost as though the rich have taken a vow to thief, thief, thief,' he shouted, evoking loud applause from the audience.”

He went on to say that:

“...the UNC and the COP could not tell workers they had no right to do what they were doing. However, more than once during his address, he pointed out: ‘I am not against my party,’ Daaga said history had made it clear that all the constitutional, political and economic advances this country had made were due to the struggles of the working people.”

[*Sen. Mutema stands*]

Senator, I am not quite finished. In a *Newsday* article dated May 17, 2011. It is headed “NJAC leader concerned over extent of corruption in TT”, and I quote:

“Political leader of the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), Ambassador Makandal Daaga, has expressed concern over the level of corruption that...play out itself in the country.

...Daaga called on the government to ‘open our jail doors, and just pack them in.’

‘People are stealing money as if they have invented it; as if it is their right to thief.’”

—and he went on to say that Errol Mc Leod needed to speak out against this situation, and, Mr. Presiding Officer—

Sen. Mutema: Mr. Presiding Officer, 34(b).

Sen. Robinson-Regis: I am not quite finished Senator—34(b), what—

Sen. Mutema: Sorry, sorry.

Hon. Senator: He does not know his Standing Order, boy.

Mr. Presiding Officer: Let me just—34(b) is clear, the Senator has to be willing to give way and if she does not wish to give way then she does not have to,. So, maybe just let her proceed, please.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much.

In the *Daily Express* of May 17, 2011, it is headlined “Jack surprised by Daaga’s talk of corruption”, and Warner said—

Hon. Senator: You really quoting Warner, eh?

Sen. Robinson-Regis: He was an acting Prime Minister. He was an acting Prime Minister on five occasions.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Of the UNC.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: On five occasions. He was the chairman of the UNC. Yes, I am quoting him in 2011, an acting Prime Minister as he then was:

“Warner was then asked to comment on whether he feels Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar should meet again with the partners of the Partnership.”

He said:

“ ‘I believe that Makandal Daaga, if he felt that way, he should have sat down with the other four leaders and discussed it with them, but to rush off to the media and embarrass one of your colleagues who was there as a leader is not a way to do things. Everybody these days seem to be rushing to the media to get headlines, to get sound bites and so on, and I am saying no government is run that way. I am surprised. I must confess I am surprised.

...I make no judgment...that’s an area outside of my remit. I don’t want to talk about other people’s business. The Prime Minister is the soldier of that, and I leave it to her.”

So, I ask you Senator, was this a distortion of the truth? Is this a statement of “dragon politics”? Did Makandal Daaga believe he could take the population for granted? Since then he has not spoken. *[Interruption]* What is the issue Senator? Excuse me, I need to finish my thought process.

Sen. Mutema: You posed a question to me.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: I have not finished my questions to you.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hot and sweaty, boy.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: You know it is so amazing that Senators come to this House and say all manner of things about the PNM did this and the PNM did that, and yet in their own party they have people speaking about corruption, the leader, and after that statement nary a word has been said by Makandal Daaga. *[Desk thumping]*

And, Mr. Presiding Officer, I would like to ask a few questions of the Government that is asking us to do a variation of appropriation, and make no mistake we have not said to the population that this Government is asking for an increase. Several of us have been here for five years, others of us were here in a previous incarnation, and we know what a variation of appropriation is. So, Senator, please do not try to belittle us by saying that we have said that we do not know what a variation of appropriation is. We are well aware of what a variation of appropriation is, and we are well aware—if people have been saying that, it has not come from us.

Now, I would like to ask just a few questions, Mr. Presiding Officer. I would not detain this Senate. Under the Head Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, recurrent expenditure, personnel expenditure, goods and services, promotions, publicity and printing, \$7 million.

7.40 p.m.

And according to the information provided to us in this Senate by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, funds are required for sponsorship support for the hosting of the semi-final and final matches of the 2015 edition of the Caribbean Premier League. So I would just like to ask a few questions. I would like to find out, what is the objective of the Government in sponsoring a private cricket league? What is the total amount of sponsorship support for hosting of the semi-final and final matches of the 2015 edition of the CPL?

I know you all would like to stay a little longer than June 17. But you would know that the Ministry of Sport has a question to answer since January 5 and we are still waiting for that answer. So let me ask these questions tonight. Let me ask the question tonight. How does the Government intend to get value for money with the sponsorship of this event? This is the CPL, the Caribbean Premier League. I would like to ask another question. Under the Caribbean—and all of this is under the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications. Caribbean New Media Group—now according to the information that we have received—

Sen. Maharaj: In your postbox?

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: No, in the documents that we have here—by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Funds are required for the settlement of outstanding payments which were incurred during the implementation of the national conversation initiative.

And this initiative is led by the hon. Prime Minister.

I am asking the Government to indicate to us what mechanisms are used to ensure that the funds that have been allocated for this national conversation initiative is in fact being used for that purpose. And why the outstanding payment of \$2.5 million and the gratuity payment for contract employees of CNMG, which is in the amount of \$4.3 million, were not included in the 2015 allocation?—because that is information that should have been known at the time of the budget. And since the funds are required for gratuity, how many employees are hired on contract and how many employees that are hired on contract will be entitled to that gratuity, Mr. Presiding Officer?

I would like to ask, again, under the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment and Communications, the details of estimates of the development programme for the financial year 2015, Head 48, \$10 million was allocated to the communications policy and strategic road map. And the question I would like to ask is, what is the additional \$9 million?—there is a request for \$9 million. What is that additional \$9 million to be used for?

Also, who is the contractor or consultant hired to develop the strategic plan of the communication division of the Ministry? Has this contractor already been brought on board? Has this been tendered for? And, does the Government consider the development of a strategic plan for the communications division critical at this point, given the fact that the Parliament is about to be dissolved and general elections are due to be held? And also, would the Minister be willing to give assurances—I do not know how but I am asking—that this sum, if approved, would be used for no other purpose than to develop that strategic plan and not for Government's self-promotion in the form of television, radio and newspaper advertisements?

Mr. Presiding Officer, specifically as it relates to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, and my colleague spoke about the CEPEP Programme and I would like to bring to the attention of this Senate, especially in my capacity as the Chairman of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, that the financial statements for CEPEP for the years 2012—2014 have not been submitted to the Parliament for an examination by the PA(E)C. Further, for the period 2011—2015 there has been an allocation of approximately \$2,851,852,330 to CEPEP. And the question is, given that no financial statements have been presented, how is this vast sum of money being monitored?—because we have no idea what is happening. And whether there has been an audit conducted of the CEPEP to ensure that, in fact, we really need 53 additional contractors separate and apart from the

340 previous additional contractors that are mentioned in the narrative of the documents that have been laid in the Parliament? And how has CEPEP hired these contractors and whether or not these contractors, these additional 53 contractors, have already been hired or whether there will be an invitation for people to tender for these contracts?

And, Mr. Presiding Officer, we would also like to know how are the services of the various contractors monitored and reviewed on a daily or monthly basis? We have concerns, because as this Parliament comes to an end we are very concerned that at this time in the life of this Government, and certainly in the life of the budget cycle, that this size of variation is being requested, especially in circumstances where the auditors have said, and I would like to quote from the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts for the Financial Year 2014, dated April 29, 2015. And the Auditor General, Mr. Ali has indicated and I quote:

“While”—accounting standards—“are quite robust, they have not been updated with changes in accounting...practices...Consideration should be given to updating local financial directives to conform to...best practice.”

And, Mr. Presiding Officer, this document is replete with situations, where, under the rubric “Audit Findings” it is said:

“The audit revealed numerous instances at various Ministries/Departments where Financial Regulations and Instructions are discussed...continue to be disregarded.”

“...examples of weaknesses in this system of internal control, as well as non-compliance with legislative requirements and/or financial directives.”

Sen. Maharaj: That is the THA audit?

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: No, amazingly. This is the audit of your—the Ministries that you run, the over 30 Ministries.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Big problems.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: Almost every Ministry is listed in this report that is dated April 29.

Sen. Maharaj: I am sure mine is not there.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: As a matter of fact it is. There is:

“...a pervasive need”—to review and enhance—“accountability and good

governance.”

And, Mr. Presiding Officer, overpayments are in the order of \$96,918,275, overpayments.

“Overpayments”—as it says—“continue to be a major concern since they not only represent a leakage of public funds but result in time and other resources being spent on accounting, recovery, reporting and auditing as well as, at times, emotional factors involved in the recovery process.”

Sen. Maharaj: What do you mean “emotional factors”?

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: I do not know. I did not write it. I am just quoting from Mr. Ali’s report. And, you know, interestingly, Mr. Presiding Officer, when Sen. Karim was reading the Audit Report of the Tobago House of Assembly I did not hear Sen. Maharaj asking all those questions.

Sen. Maharaj: I was talking.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: I did not hear any of the Senators on that side asking those questions.

Sen. Maharaj: I was asking.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: Quietly.

Sen. Maharaj: Yeah, quietly.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: And then they have a heading:

“PERVASIVE ISSUES

Lease Agreements

Signed lease agreements were not produced with respect to certain properties for which rental payments were made.”

And there are several Ministries listed here. But under the Ministry of Food Production, three locations.

So your Ministry is featuring. Three locations. Contract agreements. The Ministry of Education which is one of the Ministries asking for variation under this appropriation Bill. Contracts not seen. And these are contracts for goods and services. Contracts not seen: three in 2014 amounting to \$36,384,625.19.

Contracts not seen in 2013: 27, amounting to \$139,837,445.23. This comes under the heading of “Pervasive Issues”. And under “Contract Employment”, for contracts not seen, it says the number of:

“Information received...on the number of persons employed on contract during the year and related remuneration payments is summarised”—as—“follows:”

Mr. Presiding Officer, for the year 2014, 5,946 contracts were not seen in the Ministries, for a total payment of \$584,157,469.44 and in 2013 it was the same, 3,450 persons’ contracts not seen for employment and the amount expended, \$415,836,835.

Mr. Presiding Officer, we are very fearful that this Government will continue as “Chief Servant” Makandal Daaga said. And that is why at this last minute, at this almost eleventh hour we are concerned about this appropriation Bill being brought before the Senate and so we have to register our concern as loudly as we can.

7.55 p.m.

And, Mr. Vice-President—

Sen. Al-Rawi: Presiding Officer.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: Sorry, Mr. Presiding Officer. I would also like to bring to the attention of this Senate that with regard to infrastructure development regarding the Parliament, the restoration of the Red House:

“Neither a contract nor a Memorandum of Understanding was produced to support payments totalling \$14,911,014.83...

A contract was also not presented for the services of the Quantity Surveyor on the project to whom sums totalling \$5,940,494.23 were paid...As a result, compliance with terms and conditions of execution and provision of services could not be ascertained.”

In relation to the Stollmeyer’s Castle, in relation to the “Whitehall Restoration”, all of these special buildings for our history, special buildings for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, all of them being treated with scant regard. With regard to the “Restoration of Stollmeyer’s Castle” it is said:

“A visit to the site revealed that the furniture for the Castle which is stored in an adjacent building is termite-infested and deteriorating.”

This is period furniture, and I am sure Sen. Dr. Mahabir, who loves his antique

vehicles, would be very concerned about this situation also.

Sen. Dr. Mahabir: Antique houses.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: I like antique houses and buildings.

“The surroundings are also not being properly maintained although a landscape maintenance provider had been retained for this purpose.”

With regard to Whitehall:

“As reported in the previous year, the building continues to be bird-infested and deteriorating. Antique furniture and fittings are also not being adequately stored and protected.

The current location of items of furniture, equipment, paintings, etc. which had been on the premises before the start of the project could not be ascertained.”

I do not know if we have to employ the previous AG to find it like the way he found the piano.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Oh yeah.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: But, Mr. Presiding Officer, we heard the Senators talk about the National Oncology Centre, and with regard to the Ministry of Health, documents were not produced in several instances, and particularly, under the construction of the National Oncology Centre, and we do not know what is the status of that construction because we are not seeing anything happening with that building. And under the construction of the National Oncology Centre, the audit says:

“A copy of the contract between the executing agency and a construction company relating to payments totalling \$51,544,649.38 was not seen.”

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Madam President, there are a plethora of instances where this is the case with the audit. And in relation to Sen. Mutema talking about the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and the dualling of the Diego Martin Highway and the Port of Spain East-West Corridor Transportation Project, and the Bridges Reconstruction Programme, it says, under Ministry of Works and Infrastructure:

“Neither contracts nor Memoranda of Understanding were produced to support payments totalling \$266,962,053.27 made to an executing agency under the following Projects” were seen—

So “the terms and conditions of execution could not be ascertained.

A similar absence of agreements was reported in the prior year with respect to amounts totalling \$676,506,620.93 having been paid to 2 executing agencies for 3 projects.”

And, Madam President, this is just the tip of the iceberg with regard to what is happening in the Ministries across the board under this administration. We therefore have to register our concern. As I said, we are well aware that this is not a request for an increase. We understand, quite clearly, that this is a change of where the allocation should be. But we have to register our concern because there are questions to be answered, and the answers did not come from the Minister when he presented, and we have not heard any answers for these questions from any of the Senators who have thus far spoken.

Madam President, before I take my seat I would like to remind this Government that they had indicated to the population that within 120 days they would have solved the crime problem, or brought some respite to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. But, of course, we all know, the Prime Minister indicating that the war was on land and not in the sea, although now we are seeing a mad rush to purchase offshore patrol vessels in order to deal with a coastline that has been left open for the past five years. Five years the coastline was left open and now there is a mad rush to purchase vessels, some of which I understand do not suit what they are being purchased for. I understand that. I might be wrong.

Sen. G. Singh: Talk to Commander Franklin. He is in charge of the—

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: Are you sure?

Sen. G. Singh: Yes, Commander Franklin.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: Okay, I will do that.

Sen. G. Singh: Commodore Franklin.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: I will talk to Commodore Franklin. But I understand that a number of the vessels are not suitable for what they have been brought for. But one of the things that, apart from bringing in these vessels and so many other things, one of the mechanisms for dealing with the crime situation was touted as legislative proposals, and I would like to record for the Parliament that the Data Protection Bill, which will deal with some issues of cybercrime, that remains only partially proclaimed. It continues to remain only partially proclaimed, and this is since 2011.

Again, 2011, the Electronic Transactions Act, 2011 remains partially proclaimed. And let me indicate that with regard to the Data Protection Bill, it was assented to on June 22, 2011 and still is only partially proclaimed and it was partially proclaimed in January 2012. Several sections and parts remain unproclaimed.

With regard to the Electronic Transactions Act, 2011; assented to in April 2011; in January 2011 it was only partially proclaimed. Let me also indicate, the Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Act, 2012; assented to in July 2012. It is awaiting proclamation. The Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) Act, assented to in December 2011, only partially proclaimed. Part was proclaimed in 2012, part was proclaimed in 2013. It still awaits full proclamation.

Sen. Al-Rawi: They proclaimed section 34.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: Yeah, that was proclaimed. Section 34 was proclaimed. The Anti-Doping in Sport Act which was touted as such a great development by this Government, it was assented to on July 10, 2013. It is still awaiting proclamation. The Dog Control Act, assented to in July 2013, only partially proclaimed a year later in 2014.

The Indictable Offences (Committal Proceedings) Act of 2014, assented to in September 2014, still awaiting proclamation. All of these, ostensibly, to deal with the crime situation, they are of no use because they have not been proclaimed. The Miscellaneous Provisions (Administration of Justice) Act, 2014, assented to in September 2014, still awaiting proclamation. The Miscellaneous Provision (Prisons) Act, 2014, assented to in September 2014. It awaits proclamation. And the prison system is going further and further down the drain, and I am seeing on the highway one of the biggest fences I have ever seen. I do not know what—

Sen. Al-Rawi: Double fence.

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: Yes, and it is a double fence, and I do not know what that is for. But anyway, even the Planning and Facilitation of Development Act, 2014, assented to in October 2014. That is awaiting proclamation. The much touted Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act, assented to in January 2015. That is still awaiting proclamation.

And I could go on and on, but what we are seeing before us is a Government that brought several pieces of legislation to the Parliament but it was just to say, we passed 100 pieces of legislation, but most are of no effect because they have

not been proclaimed. And we on this side, continue to be concerned because with just a few days left to the end of this Parliament, we are being asked to move around money in a way that we are not sure exactly what is going to happen to those funds once they are moved, and we register our strong concern and we register our utmost distaste for this kind of use of the Parliament at this dying hour, for objects that we are not sure are going to be in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, just as I take my seat, just to assist the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training in his list of persons to be in that first volume of Trinidadians and Tobagonians who have done well, I would like to add a few more names as I end: Bertrand Doyle for insurance; [*Desk thumping*] Langston Roach for industrial cleaning supplies; Ken Gordon for journalism; Cheryl Bowles for personal care products in the form of Cher-Mere; [*Desk thumping*] Belgroves, Guide's, Allen's, Simpson's for funeral homes—

Hon. Senator: What about Dass?

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: Dass for funeral homes? Brian Bowen and Penny Commissioning for boatbuilding, and I can give a more exhaustive list, but I would like to end on that note.

Madam President, I do believe at the end of the sitting we will give greetings. However, I would like to give my greetings now because I am ceding that responsibility to—

Sen. G. Singh: You are leaving me alone?

Sen. C. Robinson-Regis: I am leaving you alone. I am ceding that responsibility to my colleague, Faris Al-Rawi, because he has been here for five years. I have not, although some people think I am an institution. [*Laughter*] But I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Madam, for your time in the Chair presiding over this Senate and for your time as a Minister in the Government of the United National Congress. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on my Bench for their contributions that they have made to nation-building in Trinidad and Tobago.

8.10 p.m.

I would also like to thank the Government in their dying hours for the contributions that they made to nation-building in whatever way that they made their contribution. I would like to thank the Independents for continuing to hold those of us who are in the political cut and thrust of the politics, to hold us to a certain standard. At one time I remember I was about to respond in a very caustic

way to the Minister of Health on an issue, and Senior Elton Prescott just gave me as slight whistle and I knew I should not go there. So the Independents, I would like to thank them for the role that they have played in their ensuring that this Parliament has continued to maintain a standard.

I would also like to thank my colleague—I did say I was ceding my responsibility, but it seem as though that I am giving my speech—the Leader of Government Business for making this time in the Parliament [*Desk thumping*] not unpleasant, and also my colleague the coordinator of the Independent Bench for making our relationship a very fulfilling one, and the staff and everyone who is associated with the Parliament, thank you very much and I wish our nation Godspeed.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Small.

Sen. David Small: Thank you very much, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*] I am here to make a brief contribution to give my views on some thoughts on where we are as a country. I really am happy to be here, and it is interesting that we are here when the country is pregnant with anticipation of an impending election. So that adds a special or different flavour to the things I have to say tonight. However, as is my usual style, I tend to take a slightly different tack in terms of the things I want to talk about. For me, I am going to ask in advance to bear with me as I lay out the factual matrix of the things I am going to talk about because I am going to be placing quite a bit of data on the public record, because I believe that at the end of this process someone has to take responsibility for placing the facts on the table and leave obfuscation to others.

Madam President, I listened with intent to the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy when he piloted this Bill and I have a basic mantra about planning and strategy. I would have liked to have heard from the Minister of Finance and the Economy that this is the last opportunity that he has, in this Parliament, to talk about the policy and strategy of the Government. I would have liked to have had some sort of reporting on what has happened, and from a macro perspective, when we came into office these are the things that we met, these were the indicators at the time and this is the progress we have made. Because if we do not get it from a macro perspective, we will get bits and pieces all over the place. It is difficult to pull the whole thing together.

I would have liked to hear from the Minister of Finance and the Economy saying, when I started this process, looking at the economy, these are where the

major indicators were and in the period of time that I was here, these are where the indicators went to. Good or bad, it does not matter. But I think that is a fundamental responsibility of the Government, and I hope and expect that the Minister of Finance and the Economy in his wrap-up will at least attempt to give some overview of what has happened with the economy as a whole during his tenure.

Madam President, Trinidad and Tobago is a prayerful country. I think it is wonderful that Trinidad and Tobago represents—within our country, it is a rainbow nation and we have people of many faiths, and the past five years have proved that Trinidad and Tobago citizens pray more than probably anybody else in the world and we have what I consider to be a viable economy and a very viable energy sector, but this is not by any financial wizardry or any savvy on anybody's behalf. It is just plain, in my own respectful view, good fortune. Our energy revenues have held steady over the past five years despite a confluence of events that could very have easily been disastrous—very easily—and I am going to outline, Madam President, with your permission, the data to support which I have said.

Over the past five years as compared to the previous five years, our exports of crude—exports from which we get direct sources of revenue—declined by 71 per cent. Exports of crude in the five-year period 2010—2014 declined by 71 per cent as opposed to the five-year period 2005—2009, and let me be clear. I am not here to lay blame. I am here to lay data to build the matrix. In the same period, the prices for those products in the five-year period 2010—2014 average \$91. In the preceding five-year period the price averaged \$71, which means that prices were 22 per cent higher. So while we had a 71 per cent decline in crude exports, just by the fact that we are a market taker, we were very lucky at that point in time the prices were higher. No special activity on behalf of anyone. It just worked that way in our favour.

Our petrochemicals. Ammonia exports declined by 22 per cent over the period 2010—2014 as opposed to the period 2005—2009. There are many reasons for that. There was the issue with the gas supply. I understand those issues, but again the issue I am making is that I am laying the data because I am building a thesis that God is really a Trini and he has looked after us. Methanol exports declined by 8 per cent, similarly in the period 2010—2014 as opposed to 2005—2009. The price of ammonia in the most recent five-year period increased by 52 per cent as opposed to the preceding five-year period. The price of methanol increased by 27 per cent as opposed to the previous five-year period.

So again, we have had reductions in ammonia exports and methanol exports, but the prices have increased tremendously. Again, we are a market taker. Whatever the market gives us is what we take. So that we found ourselves in a situation where the productive parts of the energy sector that earn export revenue, the production dropped for many and several reasons, many of which are understandable, but they were supplanted by the fact that the prices in the international market for those products increased, which means that God really is a Trini.

So regardless of the reason—and the reasons are many and several and the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has spoken to them ad infinitum. The BP issues, the other issues with the faster decline, we understand all of those issues and I am leading to a point and it is a similar story with urea. Urea production decreased by 47 per cent over this period and the price increased by 23 per cent. Again, there is a trend here.

Madam President, the one saviour in this mix is LNG. LNG production actually increased by about 6 per cent in the most recent five-year period as opposed to the previous five-year period. And more importantly, it also coincided at a time where while the prices in the US dropped by 96 per cent in this five-year period as opposed to the previous five-year period, prices in Europe increased by 14 per cent and prices in Japan increased by 75 per cent, and of the past two or three years Atlantic has been selling a lot of its product to South America where the prices as compared to Europe prices just slightly above Europe prices. So the prices that Atlantic LNG has been earning for its products are very high prices, and the fact that its production actually increased a tick is the one bright spot on the economy in terms of the energy sector.

So, Madam President, in laying out my thesis, I think that given the data I have presented, I ask: how long do we intend to tempt fate or stretch out our good fortune? I fully understand that the Government is faced with multiple demands and calls upon a finite revenue source. They have to run a country. There are needs, there are priorities. I understand that. But what we have to understand is that through no particular activity by the Government itself, we survived a tough period when our productive capacity decreased and we only survived and maintained a particular level of energy revenue purely on the basis that the international prices were favourable. That is the only reason. There is no other reason. So that we rode our luck and all I am saying is, in going forward we should apply a little more prudence respectfully.

As I continue to talk about the energy sector in my first set of remarks here, in the past five-year period ground has not been broken on a new natural gas downstream project that has reached completion and that is understandable also. The national gas situation in Trinidad and Tobago is understandable and I will bring some logic to it because I hear things all over place and a lot of it is unnecessary hysteria. It sends the wrong message to the man in the street. The reasons on the supply side are obvious, but I am concerned about the business development side in terms of the state institutions who are chartered or are required to do business development for the downstream gas sector.

I am really, really concerned because the downstream gas industry, aside from the DME project which I will come to, has essentially stagnated and part of the reason is obvious. We do not have any extra gas or any project. But it still does not reduce us to not requiring a plan in the event that all of the exploration that is going on now we find new gas.

I have been waiting to hear an update on the national energy policy. I think I heard easier today the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs laid the minerals policy, but I would have liked to hear an update on the national energy policy, I would have liked to hear an update on the national gas master plan because these are the things that are going to take us forward so that we can understand in the event that the country finds gas, what is the plan. We should not wait until gas is found in two or three years with any luck and then we are scrambling to figure out what we need to do. We need to have a base- case scenario. We need to have a—if we find X amount of tcf, this is how we are going to apply the priorities to the priorities for the use of the gas. If we hit a big major find, well these are the priorities for the use of gas. That should be mapped out and be ready for rollout with little tweaks That is the best strategy going forward.

Madam President, I have a normal mantra that I talk about. I say what gets measured gets done. So if we do not have a plan, a plan will normally have targets, so I backtrack. In order to say that we have been successful, we need to be able to say we have hit our targets. But if we do not have a plan, then there are no targets. So it is difficult to say you have been successful at doing something if you have not hit any targets because there is no plan. At least no plan that is obvious to me, or available for public dissemination.

Madam President, I want to speak briefly about the one downstream product that seems to be the bright light on the horizon for the downstream gas sector. I have noted that the Mitsubishi gas project in partnership with Massy Holdings is a project that has been touted and it is a project that I think is a very interesting

project and will be a very, very positive benefit to Trinidad and Tobago. The concern I have is what has been happening with the project. I keep hearing the dates changing, the dates shifting. I understand how it is in business development and you are developing a project, but if I am to accept the latest information that the project is supposed to start next year, then I have a couple of questions.

If a project is supposed to start construction next year, let us say the middle of next year, 12 months from now, then they would be doing what is called front-end engineering and design. Nobody who is doing a project will embark on spending for certainly a billion-dollar project. A front-end engineering and design is probably US \$10 million or US \$15 million. They are not going to do that unless they have all the contracts signed, ready to go. Now, in reading a release from the Mitsubishi website it says that all the gas, and I want to quote. They said they:

“...have concluded contracts for the EPC...gas supply, and relevant land leases.”

This came from the Mitsubishi website dated April 13, 2015. So Mitsubishi is saying on their website that they have concluded the contracts with EPC gas supply, and relevant land leases. I can only assume that since the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs or the Government did not say that is incorrect, that is correct.

Sen. Ramnarine: He said that in public.

Sen. D. Small: Great.

Sen. Ramnarine: In front of the entire media.

Sen. D. Small: Well I am happy to hear that, Minister. That helps me because I assumed that a project of this size would need a minimum gas contract term of 15 years.

8.25 p.m.

So I would like to understand, if we know the project is coming and it is already done: what is the term and what is the volume? And this is not secret information. The term and volume are some things that should come out. I understand the issues with price. I will use my colleague, Sen. Henry, who is not here, he is wonderful—I want to debunk that, because depending on which side of the aisle you sit, everyone asks: what is the price? I would never ask for the price on something like that because I am familiar with the standard confidentiality and competitiveness clauses that relate to such a contract. I am familiar with it and it is actually disingenuous for anybody to ask for this to be put into the public domain because it is simply not done. It is not done.

My concern is that depending on which side of the aisle people sit on, people ask: “what is the price for this, what is the price for that”, when they should know that the National Gas Company and whoever they contract to, there is a standard term in there about competitiveness and confidentiality around the pricing arrangement. Nowhere in the world would that happen that “we signed a contract to produce, to sell gas to you and this is the price”. No, nobody does it. So that that is something that I want to clear up once and for all. So for all of those who wish to ask that question, please, please, do not ask it.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs would know, the Cabinet would know, because in order for this to happen, NGC and Mitsubishi would have sat, negotiated and presented the project agreement, and before it could be announced, it would have to go to the Cabinet for approval with all of the various project terms. I am very familiar with the arrangements. So that is fine but that is not for public consumption because that is a competitive issue in the context of the fact that the NGC has gas supply contracts with other parties that they are selling gas to, and whom, several of them, they are actually in negotiations now for renewals. So you do not want to say, I am giving X party this price and then this party will say, “A-a, I want less than that” or “I want more than that”. It just does not happen.

So I asked the question about that, because I believe that we have a project touted at US \$1 billion. I have seen the target date for start-up slip by roughly two years. Information is relatively sparse on it and I would have liked to see more information coming out about what is happening with the project. Because the other element of that, Madam President, is that I am well aware that the National Gas Company’s source of supply of gas, those contracts start to come to an end beginning this year. I think one of the British Gas contracts comes to an end in December of this year and some of the BP contracts have to come for renewal next year.

If you give a 15-year contract to a company now in a situation where you, as far as I am aware, are still to renegotiate contracts with these suppliers, I want to understand what is the arrangement. Because as it stands now, the NGC does not have gas for any new project. If they are giving gas to a project, what is the arrangement? Have they done what is called a back-to-back?—they have spoken to producer X and said, “Listen, I want to supply company A and I will just facilitate the transaction and it passes through me”. I want to understand what the mechanics are because as it stands now, the NGC does not have the spare gas supply to supply a new project. If we are signing at least a 15-year term for a

project, there must be an arrangement in place and I do not think that that necessarily should be a state secret—“What is the arrangement?”

Because here is what: the other operators who have contracts—PCS and all the other companies who are seeking negotiations with the NGC—are wondering, how could the Government give gas to a new project and we are here struggling to get our terms renewed? So, I think for the purpose of keeping some transparency in the sector, and for managing the unnecessary hysteria.—there is a lot of hysteria, a lot of concern about what is happening—I think it would behoves the State to say, “Listen, we have approved this project agreement, we are going ahead with this project, the project is going and here is the basic understanding of how this project is going to get gas” and also give comfort to those who are trying to get their contracts renewed that when the BP Juniper field comes on in early 2017, somewhere around there, everything would be normalized and everybody will get their full supply. Because, in any case, even if you assign a contract now, the project will need 24 to 30 months to produce, so you talking 2017 earliest. So, I would ask, I would suggest, I think it would behove the Government to, at least, give some indication of what the arrangement is for the supply of the gas. The price is not an issue for me.

The most laudable achievement of our energy sector over the past five years—and I say this with no reservations. I remember sometime last year, we were having a different debate and I had cause to, as someone said, some many and several people said, to support the Government and I got booed and I got harassed and I got “ah gazillion stuff” and I am just like, fine, I am a tough guy; it does not bother me. But I say this without any fear: the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has charted a course to make sure to do all that he can and he has been very successful at making sure that the country’s upstream assets are going to be explored in a way that they have never been explored before [*Desk thumping*] in the history of this country. That is an incontrovertible fact.

And as I say, I tell people, I am not here to deal with anything else, I am here about making sure about removing obfuscation from the process. We have acreage that is going to be explored that has never been explored in any significant way before and I, just like many of my colleagues or my former colleagues at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, we remain cautiously optimistic that there will be one or two—if not a big find, at least one or two medium finds that sustain our energy business well into the future.

Madam President, I want to focus now on the state energy sector.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I know we have had a pretty interesting

and informative day thus far, but I believe this is an appropriate time to take a 30-minute break. A light lunch has been provided.

Hon. Senator: Dinner.

Madam President: Sorry, a light dinner has been provided and the sitting is now suspended until 9.05 p.m.

8.32 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

9.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed*

Sen. D. Small: Thank you very much, Madam President. Could you let me know how much original time I have remaining?

Madam President: 14 minutes.

Sen. D. Small: Thank you very much, Madam President. I closed that initial section. I just want to make it clear, the oil and gas energy business represents a chain of activities from what we call upstream, through the midstream, through refining, through downstream and export. The whole viability of that chain, the sustainability of that chain, is based on making sure that at this end, what we call the upstream, we either have a lot of resources or we have a lot of people looking for resources.

Anytime you slow down activity or stop activity on the upstream you challenge or test the viability of the rest of the chain. So that where we are, where we have a lot of activity taking place or planned in that area of the chain, it allows for a certain level of comfort that everyone who is looking will not find but we should be able to find enough to make sure that the rest of the chain is sustainable going into the future. It is very important.

Madam President: Senator, I am sorry to interrupt your train of thought but you do have 24 minutes left of original speaking time.

Sen. D. Small: Thank you very much, Madam President. That allows me to deal with some other things also. I am so happy to hear that.

Madam President, I am happy to see the Minister of Finance and the Economy has returned from a healthy dinner.

Sen. Howai: Was it? [*Laughter*]

Sen. D. Small: At least it was plentiful. I want to spend a couple of minutes with the state energy companies and I think it is important for me to do that.

Madam President, I want to focus on Petrotrin for a few minutes. This state enterprise is in the enviable position of being a monopoly supplier of petroleum

products in this country. They have the largest amount of onshore acreage under contract. They are the largest producer of black crude oil in the country. They also have the largest workforce of any oil and gas company in the country. They also have never had a major engineering project completed on time or within budget. They have inherited old defunct inefficient assets. Their environmental compliance record is one of the worst in the local industry, if not the worst and these are not again, knocks. These are statements of fact.

I am concerned, because if I were the Minister of Finance and the Economy, when I look at the statistics for Petrotrin—and allow me to lay some data on the record—Petrotrin's export sales over the past five years have decreased by 17 per cent. Refinery output and monthly refinery throughput have also decreased by the same amount. Their crude oil production has also declined.

But here is the big issue for me, Madam President. Petrotrin is a tremendous source of opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago. When I looked at the finance section of Petrotrin's reports I noted from the year 2010 to 2014, Petrotrin generated \$155.8 billion in revenue. If I were Minister of Finance and the Economy, that is a lot of money; \$155 billion almost \$156 billion in five years could deal with a lot of the issues that the Government is facing. Here is the challenge, in that five-year period, the total profits of Petrotrin were \$2.9 billion coming out a profit margin of 1.8 per cent. So that we have a company that seems to have no problem generating revenue. It generates a lot of money. The question is: what is happening with that money? Certainly, if I were the Minister of Finance and the Economy, I have a company that I own, Corporation Sole, and in a five-year period it generates \$156 billion in revenues, yet only returns \$2.9 billion in profits, something is fundamentally wrong and it presents an opportunity for the Government to go in there and say: Guys, we need to really roll up the sleeves and let us try to get at what is the core of this problem, because if we get Petrotrin fixed properly Petrotrin could sustain and stop the Minister of Finance and the Economy from losing his hair the way he is doing now. I am serious because I believe—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Howai: I am still cute.

Sen. D. Small: *[Laughter]* I am not going to disagree, hon. Minister. You are mainly repeating, Mr. Minister. But Madam President, I want to stay on point. We have a state company that is a tremendous resource to the State and I think that it is time—successive administrations have pussyfooted around, forgive me if that is unparliamentary language. Successive administrations have not decided to say, Petrotrin you are a company that we want to keep but we need to get some of

these things fixed. A company averaging \$30 billion a year in revenues is something that the Government should want to control and make sure it is as profitable as possible. With a profit margin of 1.8 per cent something is wrong. Or some things are wrong and it requires some fortitude to go in there and try to figure out what those issues are and let us try to fix it. I never say it is going to be easy, Madam President, but I think it is long overdue that we really try to understand what is happening there.

When I flip to the National Gas Company, I see a completely different story. In the same five-year period, the National Gas Company had generated \$83 billion in revenues but profits are about \$26 billion. It is not a fair comparison because they are in different businesses and they have different profiles but I think what when you step back from it, I think that a state company, one that is generating returns, profit margins in the 20-something per cent and one is down in the very small single digits, we need to understand are there any lessons from what the NGC does that could be applied to Petrotrin? What do we need to do? Those two state enterprises, if they were working—

Sen. Ramnarine: The NGC does not have a union.

Sen. D. Small: I hear you and I understand that. But it does not—I understand what you are saying, hon. Minister. I hear you but I think we have to sit down and try to fix it because here is what is going to happen, it is going to get worse. It has been getting worse over time and it is going to continue to get worse and before it gets worse we need, as a Government, as a country to say: “Listen let us try to see how we could find some kind of harmonious way to try to fix the Petrotrin issues.” So, Madam President, I think that covers most of my—I have some data here but I can always share that data. I have some data on the outlook for oil and gas prices but I will leave that to the end, if I have time.

I now move to, having completed the fact that God is a Trini and that our energy sector revenues have been able to be maintained purely on the basis of the fact that the market prices for our products have been elevated. There is no other reason. I go back to one of the points made by my colleague, Sen. Mahabir. We need to change the way we budget and the way we spend because eventually continuing to have deficit budgets in a situation where the single largest component of your revenue stream, you have zero control on where that goes. It has been going positive but if it goes sharply negative in two or three of those products then we have a huge hole. So I am asking, in going forward, in planning, I think Sen. Mahabir hit it correct, we need to change the way we budget and then

we need to really look at the way we spend. Both Sen. Mahabir and I may be available, seeing that, as of now, we are Senators without portfolio but we are consultants in our own right.

So let me move on. My next section, I want to talk about the finance market. I have here a press release issued by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago saying:

Statement on the payment of moneys or whatever to former Clico directors:

I look at it and this hurts me more than anything else and I have put it on the public record that I have an annuity policy. And as I keep explaining to people, I read an article where it said one of those persons who got paid had the rate of interest of his annuity increased and there was no surrender charges. As a Clico annuity holder, I have had my rate of interest decreased and I have maximum charges. So I do not know because I am paying more now in premiums than I will get in my pension payment.

Madam President, I understand that there may be a, according to this, legal requirement. But here what: this company was the—the people who were directors sat and orchestrated/participated in the biggest piece of corporate malfeasance in the history of this country, the history of this part of the world. And the fact that anybody could think that it is even remotely correct to say I am going to repay these people without seeing about people like me who have lost value. My pension now is in peril because the rate that I was promised, even if they reduced it by half, but they have reduced it by about 75 per cent. So I am in deficit and I am sure I am not alone. It is not right.

The fact that, unlike Allen Stanford, they are not making a jail. Allen is doing 125 years for running a Ponzi scheme. He was living the good life, taking people's money and living the good life. Fellas who were running Clico were in Monaco every year with the blondes, as I keep saying they were in Monaco with the blondes having fun, the billion-dollar round table or million dollar, whatever the round table was. The guys were having fun. And now, as a humble guy, started an annuity plan for my pension, doing things properly, I am caught, stuck and then somebody decides it is okay to pay millions of dollars to these guys and “nobody make a jail”? Nobody has been arrested? Something is fundamentally wrong. It is wrong, it is wrong, it is wrong.

When I was actually preparing this contribution, doing my research, I put on the news Saturday night and then people are removed from office. I am like, okay,

I am reading this but—I am hearing, I am not going to go into that. People removed, that is for the realm in another place. My issue, I roll it up. You have an organization that wilfully took people's moneys and did things with it that they should not have done and have disadvantaged shareholders. The people who sat as directors of that company should be in jail. They should be facing the courts. They were running a Ponzi scheme, having fun with people's money. There is no way, under any circumstances that they should receive any money. They should be in jail, paying back what they have. They should be “cutting a jail” and you are paying people money? And I feel it personally, because my pension that I had planned 22 or 23 years ago, I planned and I put money in it faithfully, it is now negative. The money I have put in, what I would get out is less than what I have put it. I do not get this and I continue to say that. We have a Commission of Enquiry, no arrests, no convictions, \$20 billion gone and nothing done to the directors. Madam President, as always, my expectations remain low, that anyone would ever be even arrested or questioned but I continue to live in hope.

Madam President, the other issue I want to talk about, it seems that the FCB IPO scandal is clearly a figment of my imagination and I am going to say why I am saying that. I have here copies of reports of investigation and status updates from the United States Securities and Exchange Commission's website. You can go on the website and say: “Listen, we are conducting investigations, here is the status and where it is.” I can report pursuant through section this. “We are looking bigger because this party has been found to be doing this, and we are investigating and this is where it is”; public information.

Madam President, I go on the website of the Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission. There is zero mention of anything to do with an FCB or IPO scandal. It does not exist. I scanned through every possible page of the website and there is nothing. I scanned Google, I looked to see SEC update on the investigation, what is the statement by the SEC? Nothing. So clearly, the FCB IPO is a figment of my imagination because according to the SEC website they have no information on it, so it does not exist. The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has indicated that investigation is ongoing and all these other things are wonderful.

9.20 p.m.

Here is what, how long has it been? We are coming to a period now where there will be a lot of distractions. So I do not know where this is going to go, Madam President. Again, I want to reiterate my concerns about that because, if here I believe that the fundamental urge to cheat has not been punished because

favoured parties have cut nice deals to avoid prosecution—I say that without compunction—I sit here in amazement, or I stand here in amazement at how this has played out, and yet, there is nary a word from those with power to bring those guilty parties to justice.

Madam President, I now move on. I want to repeat something that I heard earlier today, from Minister Bharath, the hon. Minister. He said repetition does not equal validity. I like it, because I have been repeating this same story for a long time about the banks and their fees. So, he said repetition—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Say it again.

Sen. D. Small:—just saying it again does not mean it is valid. So I want to address the Minister’s concern that this is valid. I want to put the data on the table that this is valid. The banks are charging exorbitant fees. Now, the nature of banking is to try to get away with as much as possible. It is up to the regulator to pull them back in line, and say, “Guys, no”. In the UK and the US there is a financial services regulator, and says, “listen, whoa, your charges are too high. You need to bring down those charges”. I do not know who has the responsibility for that in Trinidad and Tobago, but it is something that is fundamentally wrong.

I want to refer to the Central Bank economic bulletin, August 2014, which is the latest they have on the operating results on the financial system. Madam President, when I look through that section of the report, and the latest information they have is for 2013. There are eight commercial banks in the country. The total amount of money collected in 2013 in service fees was \$757 million. That works out to—assuming 1.3 million people in this country—roughly \$600 a citizen a year or roughly TT \$50 for every “man, woman an chile” in Trinidad and Tobago, in bank fees.

Madam President, I have no problem with someone running a business and wanting to make a profit, but that is not a profit. That is extortion, \$757 million in one year in bank fees! Not interest on loans, you know, bank fees. It is crazy. I think the last time I was here, I showed you a statement from a particular bank, and they are charging me fees for—because they decided of their own to give me an overdraft, without calling me or talking to me, and then because I do not pay, they are charging me interest on the overdraft. Well, I have no “court clothes”, so I plan next week to go and pay them off, “jus geh rid ah dem”, and close off everything, because I cannot win. Someone told me, “Smallie, whey yuh boddering with dat? Election coming, everybody go forget dat. Ah say, leh he talk. When he done talk, steups, nobody eh studying you”.

Sen. Dr. Mahabir: “Leh dem take yuh to court Smallie”, we will go and—

[*Interruption*]

Sen. D. Small: “Nah, I, eh hah no court clothes”. [*Laughter*] “I know. I smarter dan dat.” But at this last opportunity that have in this Parliament, I want to put it on the record again. You have these banks in that same 2013, writing off loans to the tune of \$141 million. I have “a couple lil mortgages and ah car loan”. I would love to line up to get my own written off. Who is getting \$141 million in loans written off? Madam President, these are things that concern me, because the average citizen in this country is being taken advantage of. The Regulator, the parties with responsibility for pulling these banks back into control, there is no way, no reason that eight banks should be making three quarter of a billion dollars in revenue from fees in one year. That is obscene, and this is publicly available information. It is not a creation of my imagination.

So, Madam President, that is something that I—and it is just one—additional little statistic, and I have no problem with people earning well. I looked at—up to until the data available, it quotes that all these commercial banks have a total of 7,600-odd employees, but the wage and salaries bill is almost \$2 billion. So, I am like, that means the average salary works out to a little over \$20, 000 a month per bank employee? Now, I have a lot of bank employee friends, and they are not earning anywhere near \$20,000 a month. So it means that there are guys in the banks, “getting fat”, P-H-A-T, and what are they getting “phat” on?—the fees. So somebody has to say, “Bankers Association, you are an oligopoly. You sit in your golf course, clubhouse, wherever you sit, and work out the deals between each other, but it is going to come a time that the public will not take this anymore. The public will not take it anymore”.

At every chance I get that I can talk about it, I will talk about it. If we are talking about the baby Bill, anything, I am going to talk about it. So, forgive me, Minister Bharath, but I did demonstrate that there was some validity to my repetition.

Sen. Bharath: Absolutely.

Sen. D. Small: So, Madam President, I have a particular issue that I want to deal with now, another, what I call aberration in the system. It has to do with the fact that it only recently dawned upon me that I am what is called a Senator without portfolio. [*Laughter*] Now, I did not understand what that meant. There was a circular sent around by the very efficient Parliament staff, informing us the end of the Parliament is coming, and the arrangements for final benefits. Then I recognized that, when I made the phone call to the staff member here, “Oh, that

does not apply to you. You are a Senator without portfolio”, very respectfully, not rude. “Those things do not apply to you.” He said, “You are not a legislator.” Well, if I am not a legislator, Madam President, why am I here? Why am I standing here?

I want to quote from the Retired Allowances (Legislative Service) Act, Chap. 2:03, where it says in the definition section it describes legislator. It says:

“legislator” means a person who—

- (a) is an elected member; or
- (b) not being an elected member, is the holder of a specified legislative office;

And it refers to the Schedule. I looked at the Schedule. It says:

“Minister.

Member of the Executive Council.

Member of the Legislative Council.

President of the Senate.

Parliamentary Secretary.

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Deputy Speaker.

Leader of the Opposition.”

That means I do not exist. [*Interruption*] That is from the laws that they gave me on the CD, that they gave two weeks ago?—that is from that, December 31, 2012, this is the update. I am not sure the year it is. I just pulled out the relative page. [*Crosstalk*]

So, Madam President, there is a clear and basic incongruence, where according to the legislative pensions Act, I am not a legislator. Nobody on this side of the floor is a legislator, but for all other purposes, including the Integrity Commission, we are legislators. So somebody has to correct that. It needs to be corrected. For me, that is a Bill that could come, and we could say, “Debate, take a vote”. There is no debate, because it does not require a debate. It is an aberration.

We have Senators here—Sen. Dr. Balgobin, my good Sen. Drayton— who have served this country, who have gone and worked, and worked and worked, and their contribution will not be recognized. Something is fundamentally wrong with that, and that does not require any tremendous Act—[*Interruption*]— just to bring—[*Interruption*] I understand last year that the sitting Government brought

an amendment—brought a Bill including that, but also included some increases on the pensions, that a whole public hue and cry arose, that I disagreed with. But here is what, we take things in stages. Bring a Bill that says we are going to bring everybody into the fold, under the current arrangements. That is a benign Bill. If anybody complains about that, well, then it—[*Interruption*] according to the—[*Interruption*]

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

Motion made: That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. D. Small: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Madam President, and thank you very much, my good colleague, Sen. Dr. Mahabir and all the other colleagues for allowing me to continue.

To bring this sharply into focus, I want to send a message to the SRC, whenever they decide to start to work, because I have said what I had to say about them, completely disconnected from reality; not able to function and understand the realities of being a Senator. They clearly have no concept of what it takes to come here. People may be looking on at TV and see that we are sitting here, and things are going, and it just happens. I slept probably a total of seven hours over the weekend reading all the various Bills. My children were like—I cannot talk to them. I have had no family time for the past several weeks, because it takes away my personal time to prepare to be here, because I have to work otherwise. So here I refuse, I rebuke, I just absolutely disagree with any notion that I do not serve here in a full capacity.

For the information of the wonderful SRC, I want to quote from the *Trinidad Express* of June 09, from Minister Ganga Singh, and I want to quote:

“When you sign on as a senator, you sign on for work too. It is not meant to be one day a week, it is meant to be in accordance with the work that is available...The work that comes from the House of Representatives has to be completed in the Senate because it is a bicameral system and that is what we are engaged in.”

The SRC has to understand, or whoever, when you are looking at the salaries, you cannot say, “Well, we are here one day a week from 1.30 to 6.30, and on that basis, you will”—Madam President, this is at the current, what they call the

payment. I call it just a payment they make to Independent Senators. Certainly compared to the bank employees we earn less than the average; quite a bit. The public does understand that, quite a bit less than the average of—what the numbers I have just read out. So somebody has to step back and say, “Listen, we need to really re-evaluate this, and look at this with a different lens”.

Madam President, it is true the issue of true corporate responsibility and giving back meaningfully to the country is one that I had cause to mention several times. I noted with much interest, the comment by the newly appointed head of Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers’ Association, from the *Trinidad Express* of May 19 where he says, and I quote:

“The”—TTMA—“has told the Government that it wants no more incentives...”

Well, I am sure the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his PS will be dancing a jig because I understand, from my experiences, every year doing the budget cycle, more than one person knocking the Minister of Finance and the Economy’s door saying, “We want more incentives”. Here is the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers’ Association—so the newly installed head has said that they want no more incentives. I hope the Minister has it in writing. Or, otherwise he can have my copy of the article to show them if they ever come knocking on his door.

I believe it is a positive step because we have to change. We have to remove the lips of many people from the teat of the public purse. [*Desk thumping*] We have to remove them. They keep coming to the State and expecting the State to fix all of their problems, and that is not so. That is not the Minister of Finance and the Economy’s responsibility. So stop harassing the Ministry of Finance and the Economy staff every year, “We want incentives for this, we want incentives for that. We want incentives for the other”.

Hon. Senator: Corporate welfare.

Sen. D. Small: Corporate welfare. So I read this, and I have this saved. I have it in the cloud. I have it all over the place to be able to find it, and refer to it, because I believe that is the way we should going. For the first time there is an action by one of these organizations that I agree with. Whether they will live up to it is a different story, but I will always remind them every so often, this is what the president said.

Sen. Maharaj: Who is the president?

Sen. D. Small: The president is a gentleman called Dr. Rolph Balgobin.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

I noted with interest last week, the speed at which the head of one of the country's most profitable banks made a public declaration, of the fullest cooperation in finding the wrongdoers, in a matter currently engaging much of the public interest.

9.35 p.m.

I wish to say for the record that I fully endorse and support this overt demonstration of public-mindedness as the bank's reputation is clearly at stake. My only disappointment is that the particular head did not go on to mention that he would also commission a review of the larcenous and outrageous charges and fees levied by his institution on defenceless citizens. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, it should come as no surprise that it comes from the same bank that after exhausting all my savings in fees, they are now charging me \$30 a month in overdraft charges and interest monthly on the overdraft. But, Madam President, I plan to deal with this.

I digress on this, but, Madam President, verily I say unto ye, the day of reckoning is near. Sinners, your greed will be exposed and punished, your ill-gotten gains will disappear, for it is said, he who takes for himself that which the Almighty has created for others will feel the wrath of the Creator and will be punished by his fellow man for this greatest of [*Desk thumping*] transgressions against the will of God; for it is written, it is only by the sweat of thy brow that man shall eat bread and it shall come to pass, for the righteous will eventually prevail—it is what it is. [*Desk thumping and Interruption*] It is evolving.

So, Madam President, I have outlined, I have looked at several issues. I have too many issues to talk about. I am running out of time, and I want to spend some time now, now that everyone knows what my feelings are, and I presented data to support what I am saying, because unfortunately for me I operate in the real world, and here is what I say, I cannot go anywhere and tell anybody something and say, "Aye, this is my position on it", because they will ask me, "Okay, well, what is driving your position? Please inform us on how you arrived at it". I operate in a space where you have to demonstrate rigour, if you say something you better be able to back it up and demonstrate how you arrived at it—my word is not good enough. As good as they think my word is they still want to see the supporting data on how I arrived at it. That is how I live every day.

So, Madam President, as I start to wind up, this has been a tremendous experience for me as a professional. My time in public service, as most Members are aware, I was a civil servant for 22 years and that was a tremendous learning

experience for me, and now that I am out on my own doing various bits and bobs I am having another tremendous experience. I think that the experience I have had in this Senate has run the gamut. I have been congratulated, I have been booed, I have had the range—people have called me the most vile and unclean names in their blogs. I look at the blogs and I actually feel sorry for them. I just read it for interest, but, Madam President, it concerns me because here is the reality, I have an 11-year-old and a 12-year-old, and one day my son is looking at the newspaper and he looks at the blogs, he said, “Dad, what is a head n-i-g-g-e-r-?” He asked me because he does not know, and you see, when people put these things on there—now I have to sit with my son and explain to him that that is a comment from somebody who is clearly a hateful person, does not have a clue about what I am saying, or what I am talking about, did not take the time to read my entire contribution, but came up with a derogatory description of me.

Madam President, it gets worse; last year I was doing a particular debate here when I took a position that—here is what, I tell people I can back up what I say; I take a position, and if I identify a problem and I present a solution and the Government of the day decides that that solution is acceptable to them then I will be amenable to saying, okay. I identified clearly what I saw as a problem and I offered a solution, and the solution was accepted. Is that illogical? My logic is simple, but, clearly, that should not apply to my family. Why should my wife go to work the next day and someone is telling her, “How could you walk in the street with your head straight after what your husband did”? That is not called for.

The things that I say in here come from me, and these are the things that I live with. I love my citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, but some of us hold their passion for particular preferences too closely. We need to be able to disagree respectfully. [*Desk thumping*] The lack of tolerance in the society scares me. It scares me, Madam President. Then I come here, and the cut and thrust is what it is, but I always try to explain to people that after the cut and thrust it is a collegial atmosphere, and that is the endearing tradition and trait of the Parliament.

So, Madam President, as I believe this is going to be my last opportunity to talk in this Parliament, I want to thank you for bearing with me for the several times I have digressed in my contributions, and, certainly, before you became the Presiding Officer, when you were on the Government Benches, you and I shared many meals together upstairs and we talked about various things about family, and we had wonderful conversations. I would share with the Members that I met the former Presiding Officer at a function last week and I gave him my personal thanks also for being that guide and that steady rock for the operations of this Senate.

I want to thank the Members of the Independent Bench for bearing with me, because they have realized now that I am a very, very clear-minded person and when I have an issue I tend to detail it, and I am not asking anybody to agree with me, but I am going to detail what my concerns are. I want to thank Members on both sides of the fence here, the Government and the Opposition. I think I have been able maintain cordial relations with everybody, and I want to be able to thank you all for being able to talk with me and share with me and we were able to have this rapport that perhaps the public is not always aware of, but there is a good rapport amongst all the Members.

I want to thank all of the staff, in particular, the ladies who take these notes. I am always amazed when I see the draft of the *Hansard* of how accurate it is. I want to thank the policemen who keep us safe. There was an incident where Sen. Mahabir and I were going out of here late one night and we were accosted close to the car park, and now we get security to the car park because of that issue. We were accosted by some guy at 11 o' clock one night—"Urrrrrr"—[*Laughter*]—"and Mahabir stand up behind me". [*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. Mahabir: And what did Mahabir do?

Sen. D. Small: "He stand up behind Smally—Smally, you tackle him." [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. Mahabir: It was the other way around, Sen. Small. It was the other way around—you were behind me.

Sen. Al-Rawi: He said, "Smally, stand up behind me". [*Laughter*]

Sen. D. Small: Well, no, that is an illogical position. But, Members, I want to thank all the support staff from the Parliament, the caterers, the people who take care of us to make sure that they keep us in through—the Marshal and all of his team, because this has been an enriching experience for me. Anyone who knows me knows that I tend to be very direct. If I tell you something, it is what it is, and it is not that I am unwilling to change, but if you want to me to change you have to support what you are saying with some information, do not just tell me to change, because how I came to my conclusions was based on an analysis of the data, and if I repeat it there tends to be validity. [*Laughter*] So, there tends to be validity, so every so often I have to demonstrate that.

So, Madam President, in closing I am really happy to have had this opportunity. It is one of the most enriching experiences of my life, because I believe that this Parliament system is a system that is here to make laws and rules

and regulations for the betterment of our country. For those of us who have young children, or who have children, we want to make sure that the society in which we live will improve and get better so that they will have a better experience than the experience we are having. That is the ultimate objective of what we are doing here, at least for me. So, I want to thank all the Members, and I want to thank everyone for their patience in allowing me to speak tonight. Madam President, thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Roach. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. H. R. Ian Roach: Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to make a brief commentary on today's debate. I think it is more structured for me in probably seeking answers, posing a few questions to the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, because we are here to debate the variation of appropriation for fiscal year 2015 in the sum of \$2,189,563,690 from the original budgeted sum last September.

Today's offering in terms of the debate has been very enlightening in many instances. It has also been very entertaining, as my colleague, Sen. Small, has just concluded on a very jovial note, but I am still left wondering, because to me the essence of this variation of appropriation Bill, first of all, is not to extend to seek more money, as has been said repeatedly here, but it is to move around funds from one department to a next department. I wanted to believe that, and probably would like to hear from the Minister in his wrapping-up, probably, what is the justification? What is the policy behind moving the money from where they are taken to where they are being deployed?

My concern is—because we are running a deficit budget for the last four or five years, I think, consecutively—we are running a budget in deficit in the sums of millions of dollars, and I am concerned because—I think in one of my contributions my focus was dealing with the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. Now, we all know—in this country we all know that right now the Government—the country is challenged in terms of its resources because of the drop in the prices of our main income earner, which is oil and gas, right?

It interests me to find out what will justify the Government, inasmuch as it has reduced in this present variation, the deficit by one-point-something million. I think it is still three something—three-point-something million dollars from \$4 million. I mean, give or take, I am not quoting the numbers accurately, but I think within the ballpark there. Excuse my ignorance because I am not an economist, but why is it money is not being allocated to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund

in terms of a buffer for future commitments to be met? I mean, I do not think anything was budgeted in the original budget in September. I stand corrected if I am wrong, and if there are savings to be had, and what is being presented here, 65 per cent of this budget seems to deal with wages, right?—wages as opposed to capital expenditure or capital, categories of wages for the civil servants and statutory bodies and Ministries, and so forth, is understood.

I have heard one of my colleagues here earlier on say that the concerns about giving 14 per cent increases is one thing, but being able to sustain it is another thing. Where is the relationship between the increases with the productivity? I think those were matters that I would have heard much more contributions and much more rigorous engagement from the Government side in explaining why it is the resources that are being deployed where it is, and why it is these increases were given at this stage in time where there were very protracted negotiations in many of the instances before it arrived at the 14 per cent. Unfortunately, it arrived at 14 per cent in those who have received it in a time where resources are challenged. Our income resources are not what it used to be a few months before the budget was presented.

What exactly is being done? Why is this is being done? What is the policy behind the variation as it stands right now? For instance, I mean, money has been allocated to the Ministry of National Security again. It is being said that it is to buy these new OPVs, these naval vessels, but, I mean, are we getting the satisfaction in terms of what this expenditure is supposed to bring about? They are supposed to bring about a reduction in crime, a greater level of security among the populace, and I do not think that is forthcoming. We hear, time and time again, that, you know, there are a few—a lot of hard-working officers and a few errant ones. I do not think that is so anymore. My father was a police officer, I grew up in a police environment, and I am hearing that in those days that there were a few corrupt police officers, and, in fact, probably there were. But, I mean, you hear the average citizen complain about the police, their conduct and their behaviour.

So deploying more resources to them is not necessarily solving the problem, because sometimes they seem to be part of the problem. I am not here to hit the police in particular, but somebody has to say it. It is a fact. Right? So just giving more assets does not necessarily mean that you will correct it. We are 1.3 million people, from what I remember. I mean, there is a lot of migration in Trinidad and Tobago, I do not know if we are still 1.3 million people. The square miles of

Trinidad and Tobago have not increased and yet still we are spending billions of dollars for the development of a population that is relatively small. I have lived in

a city where the population is 10 times what it is in Trinidad and Tobago. Right?

9.50 p.m.

We have a lot of resources, in terms of even people resources, that are very talented. The very plural nature of our society lends itself so that we can draw on a lot of resources and cultural positives, to make us a very unique society. Throwing money behind a society that is not properly managed or sensitized to where we are going, I am confused. I am confused most of the time, because we are just throwing money behind issues and it is not bringing about the result that we are looking for. The budget goes every year, but crime is still going the same way.

We have the Judiciary getting an increase. We have just passed a family Bill bringing in the Family Authority, where you will need a lot of masters and judges and so forth. Where is the income coming to support that? Where is the allocation coming to support that? You have more police, you have more vessels, more people will be arrested hopefully and so forth. They are going to be brought where? Where is the building to house the judges, to house the staff? Where is it coming from?

I am interested in hearing the Minister in his closing comments probably direct his attention to answering some of these questions. What is the basis of the Government prioritizing the way in which it has done in this Variation of Appropriation Bill?

One of my problems sitting here—I mean, the experience sitting here for the last two years has been an eye-opener for me. You watch and you read, but yet being part of it now is that it brings you in a different focus, a different experience. All of it has not been very pleasant for me, it has been very frustrating because I want to be part of a solution and not be part of a problem, and many times I see what goes on here is not managed in a very efficient way.

We would have spent Monday, Tuesday and today Wednesday here on a number of two or three Bills. One Bill took up about 48 hours, basically two days of constant debate, and then it collapses. To me when we are here, I think one would be debating policies and not engaging in the technical aspect of trying to structure language for an Act. We are not draftsmen and draftswomen with that special skill, and to do it in this kind of ad hoc way, to me it is very inefficient, it is very amateurish, [*Desk thumping*] and I say that with great deference to those who would have employed their energies and diligence in doing it. It is just that we can do things better. I mean, there is something called diminishing returns.

What one can boast about is that you came here at 10.30 a.m. and you are going to leave here at 11.30 p.m. or midnight to see that we got this thing done. Got it done how? That is not an efficient way of deploying one's energies and one's intellectual capacity. I find it very wasteful, I find it very taxing.

I am now challenged physically, so I cannot sit here for that duration of time without getting up to walk and things like that. Even for the normal, healthy person sitting here in that environment is unhealthy. Any medical person that is worth their salt would tell you that sitting injures the human anatomy. You need to get up very often and walk about. There must be a better way in structuring how we conduct business here. [*Desk thumping*] I do not know if what I am saying here will fall on deaf ears, but something has to be done—something has to be done.

The other thing I am coming to, because it is going to make my contribution very short, is that this is a money Bill basically and its purpose here is for what? Is it to educate? Because nothing we are saying—how much of what is being said or has been said for the day is going to be taken on board by the Minister of Finance and the Economy and is going to reflect in changes? Is that going to be taken? Is that going to be done, Mr.Minister?

Sen. Howai: We will answer.

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: Would be answered, but would any changes take place?

Sen. Howai: If you mean to change the Bill—

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: Yes, I mean to change the focus. There is an allocation for the Ministry of National Security, to me it could go to the family—I am perturbed about the amount of money that goes to the Ministry of National Security. This is no particularizing or identifying of the hon. Minister of National Security, because, you see, it almost like you are putting a plaster to the sore. You are not trying to find where the source is coming from; it is like an ant's nest. You have to get to the nest itself to deal. We have to start being pre-emptive, in preventing the criminals at the level of criminality that seems to becoming part and parcel of our culture. We need to address that, because we all are living in jail at the end of the day. You have all your security systems, your dogs, your guns and all these kinds of things, but that is not the way of enjoying life.

I did not grow up in that type of environment. Without knowing the figures, I could probably put my head on a table that the amount of money that is being deployed now in terms of national security, certainly was not spent back in those days on that. To me most of it went on education. A lot of money is being spent on education. I heard the Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim speak eloquently about what

is being engaged in terms of GATE and so forth. I was appreciative of the clarification, because I did listen today and yesterday and I heard people taking issue with how it is being, again, abused. There are different levels of abuse, different levels of crime in the country; we have a lot of white-collar crimes that are going unattended to. So what exactly are we doing? What are we measuring our success in terms of deploying this type of money?

Then I heard another one of my hon. Senators, I think it might have been Dr. Rolph Balgobin, talking about sports. Not everybody is capable of being able to undertake the studies and the rigours of intellectual discipline in terms of acquiring a degree and so forth, but still yet could be skilful and productive and a very decent individual and make a contribution to the society. So these things must be looked at holistically.

Today in Trinidad and Tobago, with all the education that is available—and as the Minister rightly said, if you do not want to get an education in Trinidad and Tobago, it is because you do not want to. It is not that the opportunity is not there for you. That being said, there must be some kind of policy as to what type of employees or what type of workers we are looking for. You can reach a situation, at this point in time, where it is difficult to get basic services in Trinidad and Tobago. Basically it is a challenge to get domestic help; it is a challenge to get plumbers, artisans and so forth, yet still you have institutions, you have UTT now. Probably we are going management level; we are probably moving from unemployment to probably over employment or underemployment.

We have very highly educated people, as I think Dr. Balgobin said as well, that you have a lot of people now with master's degrees. When you have a first degree it is almost like, really, you have nothing; whereas a first degree before would have secured you a certain type of quality job. We need to balance the type of resources and the type of deployment. Even in the education system, where do we want our society to go? What exactly is the policy? Are we going for a highly technical type of society, the new worker?

We have so many letters behind a name, but are these people being able to be employed productively in Trinidad and Tobago, or do they have to leave the country and seek employment elsewhere? Are we creating enough jobs? Are we changing the psyche of the educated youngster, from being an employee to being an entrepreneur? Because we have a lot of highly educated employees. Is that what we want, or do we want to have more entrepreneurs?

I was hoping in this debate—to me, it was very limited in terms of its remit.

But the breadth and scope in which it has gone—as much as being enlightening and entertaining—to me it has gone so far away from exactly my understanding of what a Variation of Appropriation Bill is supposed to do. Why are we moving the money from this and why are we putting it into that? What informs it? The document does not lend any assistance in that regard; I have looked at it, it does not really clarify that for me.

Madam President, having said that, I am looking forward to the Minister in his winding-up that he would probably give some sort of edification where that is concerned.

I will just probably close in my remarks in talking about how the business of this Chamber is conducted. I think it left a lot to be desired. I think sitting here and engaging for hours, in these long hours, in trying to perfect legislation which at the end of the day sometimes is not perfected, there must be a more clinical way, a much more scientific way, a much more disciplined way that legislation could be engaged and brought to the floor to be debated in a proper way. Rather than we spend all these long hours, either on the floor or at times in committee, [*Desk thumping*] trying to perfect legislation, which, if you do not get it right—I mean, it just provides a lot of opportunity for lawyers to have their day.

It can go on and on and on, arguing this. We need to look back at this. We need to look in the new Parliament, whether I am part of it or not, that business ought to be conducted in a much more efficient way. If this was a private enterprise, I am certain private enterprise cannot operate like this, in a productive, successful and profitable way. Too much loss; it is a colossal loss of human productive time.

Madam President, in my closing remarks—I said I have no intention of speaking long, because I do not even believe in that. You know you have 45 minutes or 40 minutes, and after you are finished you have an extension of another 15 minutes. You must say what you need to say in a short space of time. I do not even understand the part—and I am not hitting the Government or anything, I am just hitting the system at this point in time—which is, the Government brings a Bill, the Government knows what their policy is, and you will have almost every single Government Member get up to speak about this.

I do not understand that. To me you have one or two or three persons. You have the person who pilots the Bill and you have probably two or three persons, probably if they want to answer the Opposition or answer the Independents that would come at the end—probably in the middle or the end to clean it up—and

time could be better used and much more probably productive work will be done. In terms of the Opposition the same thing can apply for them. They know what is their position; they take positions on legislation, and they can say, okay, this person will speak on this and this person will speak on that, rather than everybody speaks out every time.

On the Independent Bench, we are all independent persons. We do not corral, we do not engage in strategy. People speak on their own. So there are nine independent instances here, but I realize, without discussing it, sometimes people listen and they say, “Okay, this has been said”; I would not go into that. So either they are short—and where I am sitting here, unfortunately, because I am not able to roll up and move up, by the time it reaches to me, my turn, what is to be said has been said already. So it is just reiterating it in different language, and it is verbosity and it is tautology, I mean it just goes on and on.

Sometimes I just sit here and decide not to comment. I am saying, “What am I going to participate on it this afternoon?” I thought hard, whether I should say something or I should not say something, because what I am interested in is the people’s business—what the people are benefiting from in this discussion. Is it from the Government saying what they have done or is it the Government saying what they are going to do with what they have, and why they are doing what they are doing?—so inform people.

Is it that the Opposition is going to say, okay, Government why are you doing this? That is not a justification for doing so, and “X/Y”. Then the Independents bring in their objectivity and their clarity to what, in their own particular expertise, to bring some measure of balance in the debate. Most times to me I am lost at the end of the debate, and I am hoping that this Chamber, as opposed to the Lower House will rise to that.

Having said all that, Madam President—I probably have gone over my time, because I said I was going to speak for five minutes. I have probably gone into 10 minutes. I do not want anybody to get up and beg for no more time for me, but I would like to say it was a mixed experience for me. It was a welcome experience being of some service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Whatever my contributions may have been, I hope it was one of value, where I hope it was one that contributed to helping to make better laws or advancing the business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Yes, there is a camaraderie that exists between Members, regardless of what the public may see in terms of it being kind of adversarial, but that is the nature of things. But really and truly, there is a lot of cooperation that goes on behind the scenes; I think it is something we welcome. Unfortunately the public does not see

that and sometimes because you have people with their leanings or ignorance, may have strident positions. Whereas what exists in here, in terms of behind the scene, there is more collective working together towards a common objective. I think that is something that needs to be promoted.

I think what is encouraging in our society is that even though the political thing may at times seem to be very rife, that violence still seems to be an absent quantity, and I hope it never becomes part of our culture of political struggles, because we have done quite well as a plural society in dealing with these issues, which in many other countries are a source of major upheaval and crises.

Madam President, I thank you for the indulgence. I thank all Members for their contributions, for enlightening me, and for those that were here before for a very long time, five years, that provided some sort of assistance, because I know that we are moving into a very youthful period of time. I know the President said that we need to have more young people involved in the politics. That is so, but I see also the benefit of having the not-so-young because there is the institutional memory, there is also wisdom and maturity to go into something like making legislation that will have a lasting effect and critical impact upon the lives of every citizen that exists in Trinidad and Tobago. With that, I thank you very much.

10.05 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. Garvin Nicholas: Thank you very much Madam President, and I promise not to be very long.

Madam President, let me start by saying that the purpose of this Bill here today, as I think listening to the debate we have gone sort of all around the world, and this is not unusual, I suppose, for this kind of debate when a money Bill is discussed or debated. But for the sake of the listening public and for Sen. Roach, this Bill is specifically designed for one real purpose, and that purpose is to ensure that moneys that we can utilize elsewhere for the running of the country be utilized elsewhere. And it is necessary at this time to utilize money elsewhere to ensure that salaries are paid where labour agreements have been made, have been agreed to, and public servants are expecting certain increases, that those increases be honoured. It is also important that certain goods and services are delivered.

Now, the question has been asked, well, why now? Why at the eve of an election? The point must also be made that a Government governs until the end of the term, and the term comes to an end when an election is called or, in fact, on election day. That is when the term comes to an end of a Government and then the

Government changes, and whether it changes into the same party or a different party, a new term starts. So that the Government has a responsibility to ensure that everything is kept running until such time as the term comes to an end.

So, it does not matter if business is conducted over a five-year period, in the first year, the second year or the fifth year, and it does not matter if business is conducted in the first month of the fifth year or in the twelfth month of the fifth year. There is a plan that the Government had, the Government has tried to do quite a lot in the five-year period, and that is why at this time we are still trying to do for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Yesterday Sen. Ganga Singh spoke to special interest and, you know, we made joke of special interest, but the reality is that I do have a special interest that I wish to declare, and the special interest I have is indeed the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and more so, the people of Trinidad and Tobago who need assistance in making their lives better, from Government. Because, you see, it is very, very easy for us to sit here—a lot of us, most of us, if not all of us, are quite comfortable in our circumstances; quite comfortable, some extremely comfortable. But there are many people out there who are far from comfortable.

Many people out there who—and one would expect that when you took over Government in 2010, in Trinidad and Tobago after so many years of independence, so much money flowing through our system, one would have expected that all would be well in Trinidad and Tobago. One would have expected that all our institutions would have been functioning effectively and efficiently; one would have expected that all our public buildings would have been in a proper physical state; one would have expected that the average citizen in Trinidad and Tobago would have access to school, water, electricity, proper roads and bridges. One would have expected all of these things given what Trinidad and Tobago has had, and certainly one would have expected that given the fact that in November of 1969 the then Prime Minister said in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, and I quote:

Let me clarify my Government's position—

Hon. Senator: What source?

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: The *Hansard* of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: What date?

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: It is Friday, November 28, 1969. Dr. Williams speaking in a budget speech.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: The father of the nation.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Yes, he is credited as being the father of the nation. *[Interruption]* I was only just born.

Hon. Senator: What year were you born?

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: In '67. He goes on:

Mr. Speaker, our policy has always been to pursue economic development within the framework of social justice. Economic development without social justice would be meaningless in any country, even more so in our country, with its peculiar history of colonialism, slavery, indentureship and exploitation. The record is there for all to see. We have vastly expanded secondary education and university training with opportunities for everyone in the country irrespective of race or economic or social background.

We have greatly expanded the social services including public health which is virtually free as is education, low-cost housing and water supplies in both urban and rural areas which continue to be heavily subsidized, and public transport facilities. In spite of severe budgetary constraints we have over the years increased both salaries and wages for both manual and non-manual workers in the public sector. We have spent large sums of money on special works and Better Village Programmes to provide employment on works of social community improvement; we have—

And he goes on.

The reason I quoted Dr. Williams of 1969 is because successive PNM administrations, including Sen. Cudjoe today, spoke to the fact that the PNM provided this country with things like free education, health care, and the lot. But, I make the point that in 1969 that framework was already established. The question is, what happened since then? What happened from 1969 to 2010? *[Interruption]* Now, it would be absurd of me to say that nothing happened, because of course things happened, but there was clearly a movement away from a particular philosophy of governance which spoke to economic development within the framework of social justice. And why I say this is because had we continued the development plan that was articulated in 1969, and had we used our resources along those lines and along that philosophy, in 2010 we would not have had a situation where children still needed to travel long distances to get to education, or that large communities were still without health care, or that large

communities were still without water and electricity.

Now, the funds that we are asking for today to be varied and transferred to other subheadings is to continue that work that we have started or continued in 2010 to refocus Trinidad and Tobago back to a position of development within the framework of social justice. Because I want to remind people what pertained in 2010, in 2009, et cetera, because, unlike many who probably commentate on the circumstances of society today, my memory goes long beyond a 10-day memory, and I remember in 2009 and in 2010 what Trinidad and Tobago was like. I remember when persons were marching up and down this country to have their wages sorted out.

I remember, in particular, marching around the Red House, peaceful demonstration, when the Government of the day put the police on the people who were marching around the Red House, and I remember particularly where David Abdulah, who was standing with me as we walked around the Red House, was dragged from the crowd, and dragged down St. Vincent Street to the police station and arrested for marching around the Red House. I remember—*[Interruption]*—I do not know, probably they did not have enough policemen. That was in 2009. *[Interruption]* I remember when we had the summit going on in Trinidad and Tobago and we went to St. James, very, very far away from the summit, and we were talking about, just again in peaceful protest, talking about the issues of the day, and police in riot gear and dogs turned up to put an end to a peaceful expression of one's issues in Trinidad and Tobago—*[Interruption]*

Now, we might make a joke of this, and the PNM seems to think that this is funny, but this is not funny. *[Interruption]* We were in a situation in Trinidad and Tobago where we were bordering on dictatorship.

Sen. Cudjoe: Like we have right now then.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Where persons were simply not allowed to raise their voice against the Government.

Sen. Cudjoe: Like now.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Very much unlike now, where anybody could say anything about the Government. Anybody, without fear that any police in riot gear will come to take them away, without fear that any police would turn up in riot gear with dogs to prevent them from talking.

10.20 p.m.

Hon. Senator: What about fear of losing their jobs?

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Certainly without fear of losing their jobs.

Now—[*Crosstalk*] I will give you the opportunity to banter if you wish, but I would like to continue if that is all right. So that in the five years that this Government has been in power, this Government has refocused on the development of people. And there is absolutely no doubt, it does not matter what the propaganda might try to say, Trinidad and Tobago over the last five years had a focus on development of people and what the needs of the people were. And we did so, and it is important to reiterate, by building 97 schools. And what is the purpose of building 97 schools, including preschools?

You see, one can look at developing a nation in two ways: one way you give everybody an opportunity, or one way a handful of elites control everything. The PNM believes that a handful of elites should control everything. The People's Partnership believes that everyone should have an opportunity. [*Desk thumping*] And that is why, for many years, for budget over budget, over budget, if you read between 2002 and 2009, every year there would be a promise by the PNM that they would build a number of preschools and they would provide universal preschool education to the children of Trinidad and Tobago, but they never did. It is only in the last five years that we were able to provide universal preschool education for the children of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Cudjoe: Not Tobago.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: And Tobago. It is only in the last five years that we have gone on a drive to provide schools in almost every community in Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure that children do not have to travel long distances or get up at ridiculous hours of the morning, to travel long distances to get to school and then travel ridiculously long distances to get back home on an evening, and therefore not have a productive lifestyle. That is the purpose of these schools.

In addition to which, we understand that in order to give children the opportunity to grow and develop and to engage in sustainable jobs, there must be varied opportunities. So that, yes, we have the various university campuses that have again, thanks to Minister Karim, we have seen the proliferation of other opportunities, both in vocational as well as strict academic activity. Because like Sen. Roach pointed out and Sen. Dr. Mahabir pointed out, and I think others may have alluded to it.

Hon. Senator: Balgobin.

Sen the Hon. G. Nicholas: And Sen. Dr. Balgobin as well. Not everyone will want to go down the same road academically. And they should not, because if we only had a nation of lawyers, well for one thing no Bills would be passed in the

Parliament. But you simply cannot have a nation with only professional classes. You need to have farmers, you need to have plumbers, electricians—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Brigadier, soldiers.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Soldiers, police officers, teachers, et cetera, and we must treat those individuals with the same respect as we treat the professionals. Because you cannot have a professional attending to his burst pipe, and I can tell you that without a plumber, the professional who feels that he is so great and grand and should be, and walk around the place with his head in the air, when he has a plumbing problem the plumber becomes his god. And we must understand that in a society like Trinidad and Tobago, or any society, that each person has a role to play and must be treated with that kind of respect.

And this is what this Government has sought to do, by providing the opportunities, the training and the certification. It gives people opportunities to stand on their own two feet, to grow, to develop. Now we can go on and on about what we have done in the last five years, but I promised that I will not be long. But it is important for me to make the point that the reason we invested the way we invested is because we sought to invest in people and to provide the services and the systems that assist people in growing. Yes, there are a number of other deficiencies. We still have the issues with our prison system. We still have issues with the court system. We still have issues with a number of systems and buildings and structures and the antique buildings, et cetera, that were mentioned. But, because we have limited resources we had to decide how to prioritize.

And we decided that it will be far better to provide a health centre in a community than to fix an antique building. They are important, but a health centre, or a primary school or a secondary school or early childhood centre, or even a police station, we gave priority to those institutions before we moved on to the others, because the others we agree are important. But any time you have fixed resources you have to prioritize as a Government. And we are saying that the priorities were not based on people before. Yes, we have some wonderful big tall buildings in Port of Spain that we spent a lot of money on, but we took a decision as a Government, the Prime Minister when she came to the population in 2010—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramnarine: Human Development.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: She spoke to human development being the priority for Trinidad and Tobago over the next five years which would have been

2010 to 2015.

Now, before I wind up, I just want to touch on a few things that were mentioned, in particular, by Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis. She spoke to legislation that we had passed, that we have not yet proclaimed and legislation that we have proclaimed in part and not fully. Legislation is actually the coming into being of a Government's policy. And after the legislation is passed we need to ensure that the structures are in place before you can proclaim legislation. Now, sometimes the structures are already in place, so that you can go from passing it in both Houses to having it proclaimed immediately.

In other cases you may have some structures in place and therefore you can partly proclaim legislation and get it working. And then in some cases you have to put the whole structure in place because you have changed a system. And in order to have that legislation proclaimed you must put the entire structure in place. That is how it works. And that is why all legislation cannot be proclaimed immediately. And if we look for instance, at the procurement legislation, the procurement legislation requires a few things well to be done. But it is not like we passed the procurement legislation and just sat by. We have put in place an oversight committee, headed by the former President of the Senate to ensure that what needs to be put in place for the procurement legislation to work, is put in place. And that is what is actively being done as we speak.

We spoke about crime, and again, anybody who has lived in Trinidad and Tobago over the last decade understands that between—well a decade and a half, between 2002 to 2009 there was a steady increase in the crime rates in Trinidad and Tobago. Year upon year, upon year, upon year. That is a statistical fact. Everyone is aware of that. In the last five years crime has come down, and that is a statistical fact.

Now it is impossible, it is just totally impossible, it has not been done in any country, it has not been done by any people, it has not been done by any community, where you can go from a situation where, year upon year, record-breaking crime rates and crimes committed and then you just simply put an end to it, you just turn off the crime pipe. That is not how it works. The reason crime increased the way it did is because the systems and our institutions broke down over time and deteriorated over time, and in order to fix the problem we have to fix the institutions, fix the society and that requires time. But what we have done in five years is to halt the increase in crime, to bring it down and to stabilize it in some areas and to continue to have it decrease in most other areas.

And what do we continue to do? We have introduced legislation to deal with the courts. We have introduced legislation to make things move faster. We have introduced legislation that makes the crimes that are most prominent in the society, crimes that you will not be allowed to be—we have made them non-bailable offences. So we have made it more difficult for the people who want to commit crime.

Now, we spoke about—the issue of OPVs has become a very popular issue, because, of course, the Government has now procured vessels to patrol our borders.

Sen. G. Singh: Respond to what she said that it was unfit for purpose.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Yeah. It is a fact that we are an island state, and as such we must protect our borders as part of our overall crime plan. The OPVs that were ordered by the previous Government were ordered without any consultation with the people who have to use it, that being the coast guard. They were not fit for purpose. They were not to the standards that they were procured for and as such there was a breach of the contract. We spent the last five years getting vessels that are indeed fit for purpose. And we got those vessels after working very closely with those who would be using those vessels, the very people in the coast guard. And they are the ones who came and said this is what we need.

10.35 p.m.

They are the ones who went out and visited the various shipyards and said, “This is the shipyard that can provide us with what we need”. And they then outfitted the vessels to suit what was needed to make them fit for purpose, and the process took five years, and now we are able to deliver. We did not wake up yesterday and say, we are going to buy some vessels. That is not how it worked. It was not like buying blimps. It was a long process to get it right.

In addition to providing the vessels to protect our borders, we are putting CCTVs to protect and monitor inland. We have provided the police with more equipped police stations. We have provided the police with police vehicles with GPS and other on-board technology that make it more efficient for them. We have put in place a better radar system. We have included the use of DNA for evidence.

We are outsourcing the forensic facilities because our own forensic lab, we appreciate, is overburdened by the number of things that it has to do on a daily basis. So that, for instance, when you go to court because you need to get the

evidence back for drugs, or you need to have the report of a weapon, whether it is, in fact, a weapon from the forensic lab, those things take years. And we understand that in order to make the justice system more efficient we need immediate assistance, and that is why we are procuring the assistance of foreign labs to assist in this regard. So there are a number of initiatives that we are taking to drive crime down, and we are actually seeing the results of that.

In terms of corruption, again, the procurement legislation, together with a lot of financial regulations, we are working with the international regulatory bodies to ensure that we tighten up on, and to move Trinidad and Tobago forward with regards to compliance on the international monitory regulatory framework. So all of these things are actually being done.

So to sum up, in five years, where the Opposition speaks to us having done nothing and squandered money, what we have done in five years is: provide universal preschool education, build 97 schools, 95 schools under construction. We have repaired some 101 health centres. We have built more health centres. We have built more hospitals, with hospitals to build. Hospitals are now under construction. We have built drains, bridges and roads to allow people to access their homes, to access their land where they can farm, to protect properties from flooding.

We have built highways to ease the burden of the user of the roads, to ease the traffic flow in Trinidad and Tobago. We have provided vocational training institutions. We have essentially dealt with every aspect of Trinidad and Tobago in improving the lives of every single citizen of Trinidad and Tobago over the last five years. Yes, there is a lot more work to be done and we will do it in the next five years. [*Desk thumping*]

But to stand and say, for a moment, that this Government did not have a plan, or this Government wasted money, or this Government has come today in the last hour of its term to seek a variation and it should not, those are invalid objections and invalid contributions because they are simply not true. And it is important that we start dealing with the truth, and the truth is, this Government has performed beyond and above. [*Desk thumping*] And it has certainly—

Sen. Al-Rawi: Do not forget Kamla Persad.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Do not worry, I would not forget. I would not forget. It will ensure economic development within a framework of social justice, and it is because we have a Prime Minister who cares about the people of Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] from the senior citizen, where we

increased pension, to the average adult, where we have made life easier, to the children of this country where we have provided education and all sorts of other incentives. We have raised minimum wage twice, we provide the laptops to children to ensure that they are kept abreast of the technological age as they get their education. Holistic development is what we have done over the last five years under the leadership of Kamla Persad-Bissessor, [*Desk thumping*] Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

And with those few words, Madam President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Al-Rawi. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam President. Twelve hours and 15 minutes later, Madam President, I rise, hopefully with my tone capable of disturbing those who are concentrating very deeply on the far end of the bench opposite.

Sen. Hadeed: Hallelujah.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Hopefully inviting Sen. Hadeed to also join into this contribution. He knows I share kind and wonderful feelings for him and that the crosstalk is only crosstalk.

Madam President, the hon. Attorney General is quite correct. We, as a Senate, really cannot do very much about the Bill that is before us because the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago says so, not because of anything else anchored in propriety, anchored in some vision of what has happened in the last five years. Indeed, we beg to differ on the respective approaches that we have towards this Government.

Section 64 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago makes it absolutely clear that there is a restriction on the power of the Senate as to money Bills. The Variation of Appropriation Bill before us is a money Bill and even if we were, as a Senate, to vote, no—not that we can—even if the Senate were to express strong dissent, it is irrelevant because the money Bill needs only to have the certification of the Speaker and to pass the House of Representatives.

Madam President, we are 16 days, an hour and 15 minutes away from 17 days into the sixth year of this Government's occupation of Government in Trinidad and Tobago—six years—because we have crossed over the fifth year and into the sixth year after May 24. It is, indeed, a technicality that the Constitution provides that you can call an election up to three months after the first sitting of the Parliament and we have yet to see when that date will come.

Today, Madam President, is sitting number 179 in the 10th Republican Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed, this is Bill number 108 for me, myself. I see opposite me, three faces on a bench of 16, including the Presidency, left surviving from the original pack: Sen. Fazal Karim, Sen. Vasant Bharath and Sen. Kevin Ramnarine.

I have said to myself that it has been an extreme privilege to have participated in the Senate of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago because, for a lawyer, it is like a child in a candy store. The privilege of being able to make the law and practise the law has been the singularly most exciting privilege, from a legislator's point of view, but from a parliamentarian's point of view, the ability to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago has been an awesome experience.

And so, in what is perhaps the last contribution that I will make in terms of a Bill on the floor of the Parliament, or a Motion, in this 10th Republican Parliament, permit me to address a few of the observations made. Sen. Bharath, in particular, piqued my interest. He is a phenomenal debater, Madam President. He is definitely, hands down, an excellent debater. So, too, is Sen. Ganga Singh. There are quite a few very accomplished debaters opposite and I have no difficulty in acknowledging their talent in debating.

Sen. Bharath, in particular, is very persuasive. You listen to him and you are inveigled to believe that he is telling you the truth. *[Laughter]* You listen to Sen. Howai, and how could you get angry with a man like Sen. Howai? He is so polite. According to Sen. Cudjoe, he is very handsome as well.

Sen. Cudjoe: I said he was cute.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: According to Sen. Cudjoe, he is cute. But, Madam President, Sen. Howai, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, spoke to a whole host of facts and figures, rattled off quickly, and then out of the figures comes the word, "robust", a word that he chooses very well: "We have developed robust techniques. We have dealt with things."

The hon. Attorney General just spoke to us and told us about a vision that he has of his Government's operation. The hon. Attorney General was there telling us things which actually caused me great concern, some of which overlapped in some of what Sen. Bharath spoke to, so I will divide them out. But the hon. Attorney General spoke to so many facts in similar vein to facts that Sen. Bharath spoke about, but Sen. Bharath went a step further. He said facts are facts but that statistics can be manipulated, and he is quite correct.

He gave us a view of a factual analysis of Trinidad and Tobago and he said that the People's Partnership inherited—his words—“a weak and fragile, crumbling economy”. And I said to myself, “Wow, could that be true?”

Let us look to facts. So permit me, in my initial sojourn into this Bill, to say that I had a look into the facts of Trinidad and Tobago. Permit me to say, we cannot look to a Central Statistical Office for facts because it does not work. There is no building for them. It is not populated by anybody who turns up to a desk, because it just does not exist. So there are no facts out of the Central Statistical Office. For the first time in the history of statistics in Trinidad and Tobago we do not have a properly functioning CSO.

Secondly, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, in terms of the facts produced, has published figures which year on year change. Thirdly, I said perhaps it is useful in analyzing Sen. Bharath's view that the Government now sitting had inherited a weak and fragile, crumbling economy, and I thought to myself, “What better place to go to than, in fact, the first Bill which we sat as a Parliament to discuss—first Motion, first time we sat to discuss anything. It was July 06, 2010 and we sat to debate a Motion brought by no less a person than the Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs, Sen. Mary King.

10.50 p.m.

What I found incredible is that the Minister of Finance and the Economy, on the one hand, speaks to statistical information which includes a reflection on the great economic achievements of this Government in terms of unemployment figures, inflation figures, import cover, foreign exchange analysis and the debt to GDP ratio, and listen to what the Minister of Finance told us today:

Employment stands at 3.3 per cent.

Not CSO's unemployment by the way.

Inflation, 6.7 per cent; headline inflation 12.6 per cent food; import cover 12 months; forex: generous US foreign exchange available particularly for those travelling over the long vacation, sometimes referred to as summer vacation; debt to GDP ratio: 41.3 per cent.

So said Sen. Howai. Sen. Bharath is the one who said that they had inherited a disastrous crumbling economy. So I went back to Mary King's contribution and here is what I was very surprised to find in her contribution, Madam President. Sen. Mary King's contribution made for very good reading.

I also had a chance to reflect on my own contribution that day and I remarked at how civilized my approach was then, how less of a cut and thrust it was then because it was a much more, I should say, legal approach to debating in those days. I had not quite caught on to how rough this game can be at times, but indeed I was insulated by very excellent debaters on the political end, more seasoned than I am, in the persons of Fitzgerald Hinds or Penelope Beckles, and certainly I was privileged to have served under excellent people on the “political long pants” side.

But, Madam President, here is what Mary King had to say. She was talking about, of course, on the *Hansard* as it appears Tuesday, July 06, 2010, about the economy being petroleum-based as a plantation economy. She said that the economy grew steadily since 1993 to 2008. She said that the first time there was a contraction of some 3.2 per cent of GDP was in 2009 and this represents the first actual decline since 1993. She said the major contributor to this depressed performance was the global collapse in both demand and price for energy and energy products.

She said there was in fact economic growth of 0.8 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2009. She said that another statistic to be looked at was the employment figure, and she said in 2009 the labour market showed signs of decline, preliminary figures showed unemployment rate fourth quarter 2009 at 5.2 per cent. But she then went on to say that there was an acknowledgement that the employment rate was 3.9 per cent in 2008. Sen. Howai’s figure is 3.3 per cent. She went on to say that the inflation rate specifically—hear is what she said about December 2009 inflation rate:

“This is the lowest it has been for over 40 years”—at 1.3 per cent.

She said:

“Food inflation for the same period dropped from about 30 per cent to virtually zero...; food inflation was zero in 2009.”

She said, “Core inflation...”—was—“around 4 per cent;”

She said liquidity was still high. She said that the Central Bank says total government revenue was challenged in that global collapse that happened that affected Trinidad and Tobago by way of contagion, but that there had actually been an ability to contain the deficit to \$0.6 billion—to contain a deficit notwithstanding a global collapse. She went on to say that the exchange rate and the real effective exchange rate was excellent. US \$6.3 it stood, with no difficulty in obtaining US dollars on a free-floating arrangement. She went on to say that

Trinidad and Tobago had 12.2 months import cover. She went to say that debt to GDP ratio was 42.2 per cent.

Sen. Howai says to us today, debt to GDP ratio 41.3 per cent, import cover 12 months; forex, he acknowledges there are challenges. Central Bank working on it. Does that sound, Madam President, to be anything like a crumbling economy in decay? Sen. Bharath is very correct. The facts are to be found on the *Hansard* report, coming out of the mouth of the Minister in discussing the state of economy on Tuesday, July 06, 2010. You see, you could not revise it conveniently now. A recent fabrication some say. The fact is that in July 2010 the state of the economy according to the analysis put forward by the Government—this Government. The snapshot of the economy according to Mary King is that the economy was—I want to get the exact words—in an excellent position.

The hon. Minister, then, used quite an interesting expression. She said the economy is not quite a basket case, and then she went to say that it could be described as a solid position. I am looking for her actual words so I can put it correct. She said the long-term solution was that the Government should engage in counter cyclical expenditure, but that certainly is not a decaying crumbling economy referred to by Sen. Bharath. I just wanted to deal with his exact position on that.

Sen. Bharath, Madam President, went further. He said, looking clean past of course things like the downgrade of Moody's; looking clean past the fact that the criticism levelled against us in Trinidad and Tobago by Moody's as a lending agency is anchored not so much in the sensationalism that we have been downgraded. Because if you compare the economic situation in 2010, as inherited by this Government, as Mary King herself, was in a good condition, and as the facts and statistics show we are very little different from where we are now, the factor is that we have been in difficult financial situations before but Moody's did not downgrade us in 2009 or 2010. [*Desk thumping*] Moody's did downgrade us on an uncertain trajectory that this Government has us on, persistent fiscal deficits and challenging prospects for fiscal reform.

The decline in oil prices and limited economic diversification is only part of it, but the weak macroeconomic policy framework, given a lack of medium-term fiscal strategy, that caused the problem driven by the fact that there was no macroeconomic data. So when I hear all of this gobbledygook coming out, hitting you, number after number after number with no CSO office, where does this come from, Madam President? It certainly does not seem to be the same thing that Moody's saw. We are in certainly not an environment of a global economic crisis

as we were in 2008 and 2009. We were not downgraded then, why have we been downgraded now?

I heard Sen. Bharath saying, “Well fear not. We did well in the rankings. We came in in the top 10.” But you know, I know my learned friend and he is my good friend. I know my learned friend is a little bit more gracious than that, because the honest position is that Trinidad and Tobago achieved that ranking because of a successful implementation and continuation of a Single Electronic Window and the ease of doing business, and that, Madam President, was not started by this Government. [*Desk thumping*] That was pushed through by a PNM Government in particular, and he ought to know that. [*Desk thumping*] It is okay if you do not want to give the credit to the PNM, but the public servants who served in that Ministry and in the several Ministries of Government, they continue to serve today and that is a slap in their faces.

So, Madam President, it was very much like, to use Sen. Mutema’s analogies, let me break it down. This Government comes to us, much like a nurse comes out of our lady having gone through birthing a child. A beautiful baby is born. The mother has been through hours of labour, brings forth a beautiful human being onto this earth, the nurse walks out with a cleaned-up lovely baby, all powdered and looking good, and then says to everyone, “Isn’t my baby beautiful.” [*Desk thumping*] I mean, come on, there is a continuity of purpose in this. There is a continuity of purpose in this. There is a maternal and paternal right to intellectual property and to hard work, because there is a continuum of government.

Listen, Madam President, I am very conscious that as a Member of this Senate, I am here at the will of my appointment being still valid; secondly, that all politicians stand in revolving doors and move very quickly through that cycle, and the constancy and permanence of the institutions that serve us, is what is there. And on the institutional point that Sen. Roach raised, he is right; it was very, very, very costly for us to sit as a Parliament. Madam President, do you know how long we sat as a Parliament? In dealing with the motor vehicle Bill, in making great use of our parliamentary time I did a little calculation, urged by some good thinking of others. We sat April 21, May 12, May 19, June 08, June 09. We sat for five days. We sat for 12 hours on some days, we sat for 8 on others, I have averaged it at 10.

There are 31 Senators present here, 31 by 10 by 5 is 1,550 man-hours we spent on a Bill that the Attorney General admitted was badly drafted. Why were we spending Parliament’s precious time to try and fix something when we had

said early o'clock take it to a joint select committee? [*Desk thumping*] Why? It makes no sense. And it is not that we stand here in Opposition to a Variation of Appropriation Bill, far be it that that should be the case. Why? This is the 13th money Bill that we have dealt with as a Parliament, not the first. This is in fact a regular thing. It is not uncommon in the month of June to do a supplement to the budget or a variation of the budget. It is normal, but what we have a problem with is the manner in which we are invited to deal with this work, particularly when my learned friend Sen. Bharath stood forward, spoke about national security for instance.

He spoke about the OPV and Damen purchases put side by side. The OPVs cost \$2.3 billion—three OPVs. The Damen vessels cost \$1.3 billion, he said \$1 billion in savings. Madam President, the OPV contract consisted of three weaponized OPVs where all of the training was paid for, where four AgustaWestland helicopters had to fly based on those OPVs. So it is correct to say that the AgustaWestland cannot travel distances overseas because they are meant to land on an OPV. All of the training was included in the cost and, yes, they were flying under Niner Yankee Tango or Yankee registration because that is civil registration standards.

And why was that so? Because the intention was to lift the air guard from where it is with two 20-something-year-old planes called C-26 fixed-wing aircrafts to raise them up from that standard. They lack air worthiness. Brigadier knows this. Those planes if they flew outside of Trinidad and Tobago airspace would prejudice Trinidad and Tobago's air certificate immediately. There are no specifications for the engine, they are not being maintained, and they know that this Government sat down and did not deliver on the contractual end of the Government. They did not build a hangar, they did not air-condition the hangar, they did not hire the people to be trained.

The Government has cost us a billion dollars in their ridiculous and irresponsible management of the Agusta Westland contract. [*Desk thumping*] Sen. Bharath did not tell us any of that. He did not tell us that the training included training a whole crew of coastguardsman. They went to England, they were trained, they came back home, they had to be counselled when they found out they had no jobs to go and work on vessels which were already en route.

11.05 p.m.

And these supposed lemons, as they have been referred to, are happily sailing the seas along the shores of Brazil, no less a country than Brazil, while all of our

maritime assets remain without protection.

Sen. Cudjoe: “Your Government working for you.”

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: “Your Government working for you.” And worse yet, “telling yuh half de story”. So really, how much is the training going to cost us for the OPVs? The AugustaWestland was not good enough. “It cyah fly, it cyah hold”—what was it? What was the bail? Some bucket referred to by Sen. Maharaj. But it could hold a Prime Minister; it could fly up and down to Tobago; it could transport entertainers rumoured to be thinking about political life.

The fact is, this is not acceptable. Sen. Nicholas, the hon. Attorney General, said here that he was shocked that we could not remember the days of 2002 and 2009 and how crime had risen and it was a scourge. He did not link it to the decision by the United States of America to deport all criminals. He did not acknowledge that the detection and conviction rate went to 69 per cent for gangs, 35 per cent for homicide, 100 per cent for kidnapping for ransom, and he did not tell us that the detection and conviction rate for homicide, right now, stands at 3 per cent, which includes murder suicide. “So yuh know who kill who and yuh find two bodies.” Those statistics are included in the 3 per cent. “He eh go tell us that.”

He certainly said there have not been marches of labour, no police in riot gear. He said you cannot raise voices. Was he here in the state of emergency when 7,000 people “geh lock up” and as the last Attorney General used to say, pass through the system like “ah dose of salts”? Was he here when sandbags were surrounded around the Prime Minister’s residence? Big guns out, international images all over of Trinidad and Tobago, assassination plot against the Prime Minister. Sandbag the whole house, guns everywhere. Was he here when Muslim people were locked up and jailed and let go only because the state of emergency had to deal with the fact that it had to be ended, the curfew, the state of emergency was lifted?

Why? I remember well. I was in court challenging the detention orders and when it became apparent that the detention order was going to be lifted on people incarcerated, lo and behold, 12 o’clock midnight, state of emergency lifted. Was he here when the “blue flu” marches were going on? When the PSA was marching? When the farmers were marching? Was he here when Roodal Moonilal said “wine to the side” watching a big, yellow tractor bulldoze Pineapple Gardens? I mean, come on. Selective memory. This is what we are engaged in? I think the hon. Attorney General, whilst he was working hard in England as our High Commissioner, should have paid a little more attention to what was going on

in Trinidad and Tobago, because he would have seen that we had a level of discord in Trinidad and Tobago that we have never seen.

Has anybody admitted that this Government has barely reached one-third of the number of collective agreements executed under the PNM term? One-third is yet to be crossed. Because we had a public sector negotiating committee which made sure that the left hand of the State knew what the right hand of the State was doing. Of course, this Government immediately disbanded that and then we were immediately followed by the “blue flu” and every other flu, including total policing, since then.

Madam President, OPVs, they spent a long time looking for OPVs. It was not that they woke up one morning, according to the Attorney General, and just decided—was he here when the Prime Minister, through the fog of China, said she is buying long-range patrol vessels? Was he here when the Prime Minister said the war is on the ground, not on the sea? Somebody attributed ovarian fortitude to the Prime Minister then. It was that same ovarian fortitude that resulted in the state of emergency. They said that there was something so sinister that it would make the attempted coup look like “ah tea party”. That is what was said.

Who has been locked up since then? Who has been locked up for the assassination attempt? Who has been locked up in the state of emergency? Who has been locked up for the billion dollars in drugs, if you divide it up, found both locally and abroad, that have passed through our borders as trans-shipment? Who has been locked up for the well-seasoned chicken that was seasoned by marijuana found in it? Nobody. Who has been locked up for the assassination, the brutal act of savagery on Dana Seetahal? Who?

The hon. Attorney General says that they have spent caringly for the people of Trinidad and Tobago; we must believe him. I wonder if the hon. Attorney General recalls value for money spent in Trinidad and Tobago under something called the Ministry of Sport. I wonder if he remembers that. Let us look to the answers given to the finance committee on the last appropriation that we dealt with which was the budget. You know what I found amazing?

Life Sport Expenses, October 01, 2013—September 30, 2014: Official Entertainment, \$1.3 million; Contracted Services Catering, \$25.5 million; Stipends, \$28.4 million; Professional Fees Coordination, \$10 million, 9.64; Professional Fee Coaches \$7.7 million; Life Skill Programme, \$4.5million; Rental of equipment, \$1.1 million; Numeracy and Literacy Programme, \$17 million, turned out to be \$34 million given to Adolphus Daniel. That is value for money.

“Trust us. We are doing it better than anybody else ever has.”

It is true that we have spent billions of dollars. We have spent more money that a PNM Government spent in 10 years, we have spent in five years, and then Sen. Bharath pulls out a very interesting analysis. Sen. Bharath compares figures and he says that facts stand as facts. He compares figures between 2001 and 2009, i.e. eight years, and he comes up with 14.53 per cent. And then he compares 2010 to 2014 and he comes up with 7.6 per cent, forgetting to draw the analogy that it is four years versus eight. I mean, you must at least compare apples with apples.

Sen. Bharath: Average, average, average.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Yeah, but the average over the number of years where the number of years is half.

Sen. Bharath: Because it is average.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I accept that averages can be done on bases, but the point is, let us get the full figures behind it. Let us get the full figures.

Sen. Bharath: I will tell you at the end of the next term when we have served for eight years.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: At the end of the next term. And you know, I am glad that Sen. Bharath has said that he will tell me at the end of the next term. You know what? Somehow, miraculously, the other side forgets that the UNC served in office for six years, that the NAR served for five years, and that they are now into their sixth year. Six and six is 12, and five. How much? 17 years. But it is all PNM fault.

Sen. Mutema, what on earth could possess you to go back to 1961 and 1971 and you cannot remember what Makandal Daaga had to say? [*Desk thumping*] I mean, really. I found the expression in my own contribution in July 2010, where I said, “Ah never saw ah man running ah race and winning the race looking backwards”. Government of Trinidad and Tobago, you have been in power for five, now six years. This is your accountability that we are looking at. LifeSport is you; Sports Company is you; National Quarries Limited that the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs still cannot talk about, where equipment was stolen by Gopaul and Company in the form of Raldon and found in the SWMCOL estate “pushing ah garbage contract”, he has done nothing about, and he will come and tell me, “The police have to do their job”. Yes, the police have to do their job, but we had an A-team of lawyers hired by this Government who prosecuted people in the civil law to no end. So it cannot be what is good for you, cannot be good for

somebody else and vice-versa.

Madam President, did you know the Office of the Prime Minister has a National Security Council expenditure sheet? In answers given to the Standing Committee under letter October 08, 2014, by the Office of the Prime Minister to the Clerk of the House, I learnt that there was an expenditure for the National Security Council. Hear this: administrative expenses, salaries, stationery supplies, books, periodicals, telephone, furnishing, et cetera: \$22—odd million. Hear this one: Operations: \$57,986,320.98. I did not know the National Security Council had operations. This is the same Government that said “disband SAUTT, SAUTT is illegal”. Not one case brought against SAUTT in all the time it operated.

We know SAUTT operated legally under the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago by virtue of presidential power, under that combined with the Police Service Rules, Regulations 2006 as they still stand in effect and in combination with the Defence Act. We know that that constitutionality exists. Is it that this is the NOC’s operationality? And if the NOC has operationality, under what constitutional clothing are they operating? But, you see, we are not an irresponsible Opposition. We went to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and said, “Listen, we have a view on crime, we will share it with you. Here are techniques that we can use as a team to deal with crime”. And that is why it was a great pleasure to sit under the chairmanship of Dr. Rolph Balgobin in the Joint Select Committee to deal with national security.

And, Madam President, I want to tell the hon. Prime Minister something, please, most respectfully, through you: stop saying you alone passed the Standing Orders. Give Barry Sinanan the credit [*Desk thumping*] and Camille Robinson-Regis the credit for drafting those Standing Orders that you are “gallerying” all over Trinidad and Tobago about, knowing fully well that when you were in Opposition, you refused to support it, [*Desk thumping*] but you got the PNM who supported it and passed it into law. Have some decency if only in respecting the copyright laws of Trinidad and Tobago which prescribe that you have a right of paternity in respect to copyrighted work. At least, a right of joint authorship. I am sure Sen. Vieira will agree that at least there is a right there.

Madam President, where do we stand as a country? Our Auditor General says—as Sen. Robinson-Regis has pointed out, our Auditor General has made some alarming observations. Our Auditor General, looking in the report of the Auditor General dated April 29, 2015, our Auditor General says something which is incredible. Listen to this, at page 18, “State Enterprises”, which have not submitted audited financial statements. Hear this:

Caribbean Airlines Limited, 31st December 2012 to 2014; EMBD, 2011 to 2014; eTeck, 2010 to 2014; National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation, 2008 to 2014; National Quarries Company Limited—my favourite company, corruption central—30th September, 2010 to 2014; UDeCOTT, up to 2014—2008 to 2014.

But hear this, “Contingent Liabilities” at page 19:

“The Attorney General was requested via memorandum dated 23rd January, 2015 to furnish by 23rd February, 2015, certain information required to assess the value of actual and contingent liabilities relating to the Public Accounts for the year ended 30th September, 2014 as follows:

- (i) Legal matters and claims handled on behalf of the State...
- (ii) Pending litigation involving the State...
- (iii) Judgments obtained during the year.
- (iv) Other obligations that could become actual liabilities...
- (v) Actual or where applicable, estimated financial implications...”

Why is this important?

11.20 p.m.

The hon. Attorney General, who is the successor to the last, said that people have no risk of being fired. I could tell you as a matter of fact thousands of people have been fired by this Government. By December 2010, 10,000 people were fired by this Government. [*Desk thumping*] The Sports Company has paid out millions of dollars, by way of example alone, to dismiss workers, millions of dollars in judgment awarded by the Industrial Court. Do you know why the AG do not want to tell you what the contingent liabilities are? Because it is damning to the Government.

Madam President, what else do we have? We had something involving the Attorney General being requested, in writing, by the Auditor General for a legal opinion, at page 14 of this report:

“Legal Opinion Not Received

...the Attorney General has advised that advice provided by the Legal Officer in the Auditor General’s Department must be forwarded to the Attorney General for consideration and final approval.

The interpretation and application by the Board of Inland Revenue of the secrecy provisions...have posed a challenge to the audit of revenue at the Inland Revenue Division. A legal opinion on this matter was prepared by the in-house Legal Officer and forwarded to the Attorney General on 18th September, 2013 for consideration and final approval. Despite numerous follow-up requests, the relevant approval/opinion has not been received to date.”

Why? Why, when we have had an Attorney General spend close to \$500 million on legal fees, not including state enterprises, likely taking that Bill up to \$1 billion? You mean between 2013 and 2015, we cannot get into the bowels of auditing? Really? Is that transparency?

We just acquired naval assets. Hear what the note says in this Bill and the documentation supporting it:

It is to provide for a deposit on the vessels.

We have a Government talk about procurement because we passed procurement legislation. It is not proclaimed, but we are now paying a deposit for boats that have arrived. I did not realize contracts by serious entities. The reason that this Government was able to get out of the BAE contract was because there was a contract. The contract was entered into prior to the vessel being built. These vessels, apparently arrived in Trinidad and Tobago, we are now paying the deposit and we have no contract in sight. That is procurement UNC-style. Do it first, fix it after, just like how they dealt with squatters.

The Prime Minister makes an announcement, Gasparillo May 11: All squatters getting lands. Emergency Cabinet meeting, emergency legal drafting, until they figure out they are in deep trouble over that one because that is an abuse of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Desk thumping*]— who cannot get land by way of statutory leases or deeds of lease, as the legislation prescribes, because the manner in which they seek to do it is unconstitutional.

But I can tell you this, this Attorney General who talks about hunky-dory Trinidad and Tobago, I want to invite him to come and walk in San Fernando West with me. I want him to come and watch poverty and look it in its face. I want him to come and watch underprivileged people and look at them in their face. I want him to come and see unemployed youths. I want him to come and see people who have been dismissed and watch them in their face, because I could tell you this, if that was COP delivery of love and affection COP and UNC-style, we “doh want none ah dat in San Fernando West.” [*Desk thumping*] None of it!

My learned colleague, now not sitting in the Parliament, frequent grumbler, down in Embacadere talking to people asking “if dey go vote for her, if she pave a road to the beach. Really? Now yuh coming tuh do dat? Five years later? San Fernando West in desperation.

The highway to Golconda—Madam President, let me tell you a story—has an interesting story. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago instructed that the opening of the Golconda bridge overpass had to be brought forward, no problems. It could be done. It was done at a cost of over \$33 million to bring forward the date by a few weeks because people had to work overtime, et cetera. Big fanfare, bridge open. But do you know what? They forgot to run the drain through the rest of the highway and the whole thing collapsed in a major section of it, \$33 million later.

St. Joseph, a bridge for \$15 million “whap”, gone just like that. But investigate Las Alturas that has a contract behind it, that has a design/build contract behind it. Investigate that. Call a whole commission of enquiry, pay lawyers all kinds of money, keep people busy. No problems. One rule for you and one rule for the rest of Trinidad and Tobago. That is how it rolls in the world of the UNC. That is how it rolls.

Madam President, the baby grant, the hon. Minister says in some fancy footwork: Okay, baby grant, we are going to shift it around, we have rationalized, we are still robust. Baby care grant, when you do the mathematics, hon. Minister, you know this, I have said this before, if you take the poverty index, you look at the number of live births, you realize and you do the multiplication, the maximum cost for the baby care grant is \$18 million to \$20.4 million. Why on earth would you need \$68 million still? What for?

Madam President, what are we dealing with next? Baby care grant, vessels, CEPEP. Oh Lord, CEPEP! Wonderful, Miss Awai. Let me read you something, hon. President.

“Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am of the considered view that CEPEP was conceived in the lust for power and the desire to retain at all costs and by all means necessary the Office of Prime Minister by the hon. Member for San Fernando East. Consequently, commitment to principles of transparency, accountability and good governance were never vital ingredients in the conception and implementation of this programme. The lack of these basic ingredients of transparency and accountability in public expenditure is vividly brought to light in both these reports. It is indeed a telling indictment of the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this billion-dollar programme, this billion dollar slush fund as the reports will indicate, provides compelling evidence that the programme is a means by which to get state funds into the hands of persons who are supporters of the ruling party and the Government.”

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

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. C. Robinson-Regis]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam President. I wish to thank my colleagues for that lusty “Aye” that was said. If I may continue reading, with your permission:

“It is a billion-dollar pork barrel politics and the pigs at the trough are the friends and family of the PNM, in a feeding frenzy. From its very conception to initiation and implementation and execution, CEPEP has been a fraud committed on the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] From the selection of contractors, the lack of financial management to the vagueness and nebulousness of the roles of the Ministry of Public Utilities, SWMCO and the abandonment of responsibility by the Ministry of Finance and...intimate linkage by the Corporation Sole, CEPEP has been a calculated exercise in deceit by the Prime Minister and the Government.”

The words of one Mr. Ganga Singh, Member of Parliament for Caroni East, under a UNC banner Friday, March 02, 2007, pork barrel, pigs feeding at the trough. And today CEPEP needs money for 53 or 54-odd contractors more, \$75 million for two months. Really, Madam President? How quickly the tides have turned from pork barrel politics and pigs feeding at the trough. Can we accept this Government at its word, and if so, which word and when? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, Ministry of Sport again, engaged in the production of contracts to clear corporation lands. Really? Corporation lands? They gave us a whole list in their discovery some 53, is it?—lands, contract number, et cetera. Project 141, upgrading of 153 corporation grounds, approved allocations, tens of millions of dollars. Do you know what the law prescribes? That the corporation is to expend the money to clean these lots and the corporations were in fact doing that but the Ministry of Sport spent \$50 million, \$60 million-odd and more to clean these lots, 153 corporation grounds.

This Government tells us: “doh worry tuh check the facts, double payments is

nothing big. Doh worry if the corporation paying for it, we go still pay somebody else to do the same thing and not have them turn up. Is okay doh check. Trust meh, because we are led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC MP, Member for Siparia". Really?

Madam President, I want to ask the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, in the little time that I have left, a very serious question. It anchors back to what Sen. Roach was raising earlier. Rarely we sit as a Parliament, we passing law, we accept that the Government has a good legislative aim. We try our best to help them out. I have a letter here from Lloyd's of London. It is dated June 03, 2015 addressed to:

"The Honourable Larry Howai

Minister of Finance and Economy

The Insurance Bill, 2015

We write to express our concern over certain requirements within the Insurance Bill, 2015 currently before the House for consideration.

In 2014 the Lloyd's market wrote...(TTD445.2 gross) in Trinidad and Tobago, and this constitutes an important component of Lloyd's business in the Caribbean...Lloyd's has for many years enjoyed a strong relationship with the Trinidad and Tobago market providing significant additional capacity and expertise which is not available locally. It is therefore important in order for Lloyd's continued provision of specialist coverage to Trinidad and Tobago that the Insurance Bill, while applying an equivalent standard of supervision to associations of underwriters, nevertheless also recognises the unique aspects of the Lloyd's market and the coverage offered therein.

Lloyd's is supportive of Trinidad and Tobago's goal of modernising its insurance legislation, and greatly appreciates the consideration given to our comments on previous drafts of this legislation, however the accelerated progress of the current Bill has impeded our ability to properly analyse and respond to its provisions."

Let me repeat that:

"...the accelerated progress of the current Bill has impeded our ability to properly analyse and respond to its provisions."

Stick a pin. Recall that the Opposition is on record, as I spoke on behalf of the Opposition, of putting out into the open that I begged the Minister of Finance and

the Economy repeatedly to bring the Insurance Bill back to the Joint Select Committee and with a very heavy heart, because I enjoyed working with the hon. Minister in joint select committees. He was an excellent Chairman, et cetera. I ambushed him at every turn in the corridor: "Please bring the Bill back, please bring the Bill back, we need comments on the final Bill." Reluctantly, the PNM said we cannot vote in favour of this Bill because we will not be a party to tick-the-box legislation because, [*Desk thumping*] unless you have adequate reflection from the industry you could end up in jeopardy.

This letter goes on to say that Lloyd's has problems because Lloyd's is an insurance market, rather than an insurance company; that Lloyd's proposes amendments to the Bill to seek an exception; that Lloyd's deposit by association of underwriters is at risk; that documents and information relating to insurance business to be furnished to the inspector posed difficulty; that the product approval of Lloyd's required by the Bill is difficult and almost incapable and that term life business that Lloyd's engaged to is at risk. Half a billion dollars from one entity alone at risk. Why? The Government would not allow for adequate consultation on the legislation.

11.35 p.m.

The Independents all accepted, "We trusting de Government; better something rather than nothing. Let us get it passed over the hurdle." Madam President, I learned after section 34, "De Opposition not saying yes" to anything unless we check it ourselves. [*Desk thumping*] I want the hon. Minister to speak to this Lloyd's issue directly because the insurance industry contributes 27 per cent of the GDP of Trinidad and Tobago. Lloyd's is a major, major market player. Those of us who have professional indemnity insurance will tell you, if you get professional indemnity insurance from Lloyd's, it is one-third the cost available locally—there is a massive impact upon it. I want to know when the Minister was going to tell us about this.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Never!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I want to know when Sen. Bharath was going to tell us about this.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Never!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I want to know when the Independents would know that they may have innocently participated in something which could be a huge difficulty for Trinidad and Tobago, driving costs up? When, Madam President?

Sen. Robinson-Regis: Never!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Sen. Bharath spoke in his contribution for a glorious two minutes on the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications; “ah whole two minutes”, 39 to 41, I counted. I want Sen. Bharath to speak to a specific item which is included in this appropriation variation. That has to do, if we look to the documents that were given to us by the Parliament—if I could find them—when we look to the description of the project to be implemented by the Government, so let us see what that had to say. In the Senate documentation which came to us, we are, specifically for the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications dealing with \$28.6 million in terms of variation. The Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications has told us in the Parliament that the reason for the variation in Head 48 is:

Funds are required for the development of the strategic plan of the former Ministry of Communications, now the Communications Division of the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, and to implement this item.

So, I accept that my learned colleague has inherited a plan and, Madam President, I was shocked to find out what this plan really means, because when you look to the wording of the Bill, it says that, “...this is to fund urgent and critical matters...” Hear what this fund actually is, \$21,154,155 is requested for the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications. Why? Hear this, it is requested to pay for the months of June 2015 and July 2015 outstanding requisitions. What for?—rental of billboards, production of content, administration, television production, social media, Columbus Communications, administrative costs. What for? Hear the programmes, Voices and Icons.

In fact, Madam President, that \$21 million is really to catch up to the \$50 million approved by the Cabinet already. So I am now spending by way of urgent and critical variation as a taxpayer in Head 48 of the Ministry, I am spending \$50 million on Voices, on Government propaganda? [*Desk thumping*]*—on paying Tony Deyal US \$10,000 a month, every month, to produce information for me—not listed as an employee because he is consultant in double capacity; really, Madam President?*

Sen. Cudjoe: Your Government working for you.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Your Government working for you? Not a scintilla of useful information provided in those things. We are brandishing the words “Happy, wid ah PP and ah smile under it”. You know what I call that? Sloppy with “ah double

P an' ah frown under it." [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, the simple reality of Trinidad and Tobago right now is that we have a Parliament that has been held to pressure, by the lack of a parliamentary agenda. We have a Government, filled with some very nice people. "Ah like dem", some of them very much. Some cute according to Sen. Cudjoe, but you have to have some discipline and coordination. [*Desk thumping*] You have to bring legislation to Parliament that makes sense. [*Desk thumping*] "Yuh have to do de homework" behind it. None of us here are brilliant rocket scientists opposite. Some of the work is just not up to par, and I do not want to be pejorative to the many public servants who have worked on the Bills, because they receive the policy of the Government. If the policy is bad, and the prescriptions as to policy is bad, you are going to end up with a bad product.

Madam President, I do understand that I am to be given the privilege of bringing greetings shortly, on behalf of our Bench, as this may be our last sitting in Parliament. It gave me no great pleasure to beat on certain issues. I like the Members opposite me, tremendously.

Sen. Robinson-Regis: What? "Wah wrong wid you?"

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I have to say that. [*Laughter*] Perhaps it is a touch of death to say that to some. I will certainly spend a little time when we bring farewell in a short while, but really and truly, six years is enough; country tired. We are in the sixth year, [*Continuous desk thumping*] after May 25, 2015, we crossed over into the sixth year. "We tired", we need some relief. "We doh even have ah pension" to collect now that we are in the sixth year, [*Interruption*] because the Government has not supported the increases that ought to be there.

Madam President, most respectfully, this is not transparency. This is not regularization. This is not proper governance. It is time that Trinidad and Tobago took the yoke off its back, because we are dragging a dead political carcass behind us. [*Desk thumping*] It is time that we went to the polls and let the people decide.

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): [*Desk thumping*] Well, Madam President, hon. Senators, you know, Sen. Al-Rawi started by congratulating my colleague Sen. Vasant Bharath on being a good debater, but I think he takes the prize. Because he, of course, is eloquent and he understands politics now, he says, and he played it to the hilt. Even at the end of talking basically about the Government overstaying its time, in his words, and a tired country from his perspective,

waiting for the Government to go, I want to say that it is much more difficult than that, Sen. Al-Rawi, and that it rests with the people not with the politicians. [*Desk thumping*]

I also wish to say that all the talent for debate is not necessarily what is going to determine what makes the people think and feel, because there are facts “from your perspective”, but there are facts as well, the people see and feel and have experienced. I would not talk about 2010 or anything that happened before 2010. I will make some comparisons on the issue of expenditure because I think it is important. I want to say that 2010 has already been decided, and what is at stake is not 2010, but 2015. [*Desk thumping*]*—*2010 was decided because in your own words your Government did so well, and governed so well, that the population took the decision to put a new Government in.

When they go this time in 2015 to make a decision, they will have to calculate what they did in 2010 and why. They will have to look at the last five years, and they would know and feel and remember the experience of the last five years. When they go through it, they will remember that they brought this Government in with a lot of hope and expectations; that they were perhaps disappointed in the early period because delivery was slow and expectations were high; that they were disappointed sometimes with what some of the Members of the Government did or said, and what happened in the process. But they will also reflect on the fact that the Government during the last five years, they killed nobody, they locked up nobody, except during the state of emergency, which was done for a purpose, being under threat; that we have not discriminated against anybody in the country; that anybody in this country can speak freely on any matter that they wish; and form themselves into any kind of organizations that they want, and articulate the case.

Yes, the Government sometimes and Ministers sometimes do enter into debate with them, but that is part of an open democracy. The Government expressing its view, from its point of view, and responding to what others have to say or choosing to stay silent if they wish to. They will reflect on all of these things and then they will reflect on their condition, and whether things have improved; whether they feel better; whether the services have been delivered; whether things have been done; whether their condition as a community, as individuals in the community; whether those things are better. At the end of the day, they will go out of enlightened self-interest, and they will cast their vote after listening to the entire campaign, and after reflecting on all of this, and after talking with people whom they know. That is the process by which the people make their decisions.

I want to say that that is not determined by the politician. I want to say that again. Politicians seem to feel that they can determine the future of an election; that they can determine the future of a country. It is the people who do that. That is where the power is. They determine whether the politicians get to speak in the Government or in the Opposition. They determine the fortune of the country, by the people that they select. It is very important to remember that. No amount of persuasion, debate and misinformation, and packaging of information is going to make any difference as far as that is concerned.

At the end of the day, the country is much more enlightened than it was in 2010. It is more enlightened now than it was in 2007, and before, and it is much more in a way sophisticated. It has a capacity in my view, after all the old talk and all the machinations, for a significant capacity for discernment.

11.50 p.m.

At the end of the day the people will decide, so let us not be too hurry. It is not illegitimate, as I think the Attorney General was pointing out, for the Government to govern until the end of the term of Parliament—and we are getting there—and to do what is required as part of the work, part of the agenda, in that parliamentary term. It is true, we might be able to make the Parliament more efficient, more effective, as Sen. Roach was saying. It might be, for instance, at some point in time, we might be able to get Bills from the LRC to go straight to committee in the Parliament, so that when they come to the Parliament there is less, what you might say, contentious time, although there might be differences of opinion on policy, or matters such as that. But I want to remind people that this is a work, that is to say our work is to get the legislation right.

There are some parliamentary institutions in other places, they may not function like us, like in the House or in the Senate of the United States, or in some of the parliamentary systems in Latin America, and even in the British Parliament, but sometimes there are Bills that make it through an entire session and there is never a consensus on the Bill. It takes the entire session. That is the way it works sometimes, and sometimes you can have a Bill that reaches quick consensus and easy passage, and that is normal in the process. But I know we all do our best here and we try to serve the country and serve the Parliament well, and I want to say that in doing so we do the country a service and we give them justice, so to speak, for having given us the opportunity to serve here.

I want to say that we have governed over the last five years with a certain kind of approach, a certain kind of philosophy. We are committed to the principle of

sustainable development, and we approach that sustainable development from the point of view of economic and political inclusion for the many, for all, and we have always approached this from an economic point of view in terms of prosperity for all, which means less of a spread in the ownership of equity, in the wealth process. So that you do not have a very big gap between the rich and poor in the society, and we addressed the issue of vulnerability and poverty in the society.

When we came in, we came in with the commitment that we would reduce poverty at the rate of 2 per cent a year, and we do not have poverty figures for 2014, but I want to say that if we look at all the other numbers, the percentage of unemployed 3.3 per cent, and the figure that Sen. Larry Howai was reporting, 3.3 per cent comes from the CSO. I do not know why Sen. Al-Rawi cannot find the numbers, but those numbers were published in both the *Guardian* and the *Express*, and in the *Newsday*, and they were sent out by CSO, as it normally does, to the Central Bank which then distributes it because the Central Bank then incorporates that in its quarterly report and their press conferences that it has from time to time. But those numbers would tell us that the situation has to be economically better in terms of the management of inclusion, the management of poverty, and the management of the equity spread and opportunity available to the citizens of this country, and that is what we are committed to.

That is what we have been committed to from the beginning. When the price of oil dipped in January and everybody was anxious about what we would do, and many were crying that we should move to austerity measures, the Prime Minister and rest of the Government, very calmly, said that we would not go there, and we would cut, yes, we would cut a billion from PSIP, we would cut three and a half billion dollars from the operational expenditure, recurrent expenditure, which in fact is what has made it possible for us to come to the Parliament, both Houses, and say that we are not going to add any new money, we are not going to ask for any new money, we are going to get it out of here and vary it, because we had already taken those decisions and, therefore, there was slack in the system to allow it.

When we took those decisions the country was very calm. There was no panic in this country at that time. There is no panic in the country now, although Sen. Al-Rawi would like to have it, and there has never been, at any time, in the management of the political economy in this country over the last five years that there has ever been anxiety or panic about the fact that somebody is going to be under extreme pressure in the society because of the decisions that the

Government would take or because of some kind of mismanagement that would occur. You can trace it from the time of the Government's intervention in the middle of the Clico crisis, in the middle of contractor's crisis in terms of debt that was owed by the Government to them, and all the trade union negotiations into which the Government had to enter from 2010 and 2011, and ongoing.

Since then all those matters have been managed. The oil crisis—so-called—has been managed in January this year; the country continues to be stable, growth is a factor, and we did move the country, not from -3.3, because that was revised by the same CSO, and it entered into—because that is what they do, they put the numbers and then they revise it the next year, and the next year they might revise again, and over a five-year period—that has been going on for nearly 60 years in this country. But it serves their purpose to insinuate improper motives and to misinform the population about these matters, but the facts are that there has been no crisis in the five years, either in political terms or in economic terms.

The propaganda of the Opposition is that somehow their governance is better in economic terms and in terms of political stability, and I want to say that that is not in fact so true at all. The last five years of this Government, all the ups and downs notwithstanding, because of various things from the beginning to the end in January, in terms of the oil crisis, all of that, this has been a Government and a period of stability, it has been a period of growth, it has been a period of development in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to say that we have seen good stewardship in terms of the management of the political economy, the management of the condition of the poor, the economically weak and the vulnerable, the management from decline, -4.4 per cent in 2009 to growth and recovery from 2012 with average investment of about US \$1.5 billion every year, and over those three years.

We have seen it in terms of management of the revenue without the raising of any taxes in the country. We have seen it in terms of delivering goods and services in every part of the country for all the people everywhere, and we have seen it in terms of preparing the platform for growing out of the middle income trap, because that is the challenge that we are facing here in Trinidad and Tobago at this time in our history.

This Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2015, asks for \$1.4 billion to be transferred to various Ministries for payments to staff of the public service, the teaching service, the Port Authority, WASA, and four regional corporations, and that sum constitutes 64 per cent of the total appropriation. So, 64 per cent of the

variation that is taking place here, \$2.189 billion, is in fact going for what? It is going for wages and salaries well earned, properly negotiated by due process for public servants in the country. The rest, 36 per cent, is for variations to the development programme, \$539.89 million, 23 per cent, and then the recurrent expenditure \$268 million, 12 per cent.

Now, this is very clearly outlined here and there have been things raised about CEPEP expenditure, for instance, and other expenditures, but that is not where the bulk of the money is going. It may seem, in a sense, contradictory to be trying to arrange with the Manufacturers' Association and with the American Chamber for workers from CEPEP to move into more conventional labour and more sustained endeavour, and to manage that process carefully and still, at the same time, having money for CEPEP, but we need to understand that you have a situation in which this has become part of the culture of the place, and I will say something about how we got there. It has become part of the culture of the place that people have to be sustained with livelihoods, and, as a result—while not making an excuse for it, because this is not sustainable employment and it cannot continue forever, sooner or later these things are going to have to be managed—the point is that you cannot simply throw people on the street in this critical time of their lives, in the middle of the year. They have been employed, you do not want to put them out and, therefore, you want to continue their livelihood and their ability to do it.

I want to say something about the expenditure in comparison. Now, I want to compare a little bit 2002 to 2010 expenditure, and what would essentially be expenditure from 2010/2011 to 2014, because there is no way that we can compare 2015 expenditure just yet with those numbers. We need to use the numbers that are pretty well fixed and determined. I just want to make the point that the total expenditure, Madam President—the total expenditure increased in 2002 from \$14.2 billion to \$46.7 billion in 2010. Now, that is an increase of 228 per cent over the period. The highest budget of all was in the year 2008 when it was \$53.8 billion, so just work with me a little bit and keep this in your head. The expenditure in 2002 was \$14.2 billion and in 2010 it was \$46.7 billion, an increase of 228 per cent, and the highest budget was in 2008 when it was \$53.8 billion.

12.05 a.m.

Now, it went down in 2009 because of the decline, and then of course in 2010 as the oil price picked up. You would remember in 2009 you got hit externally by a triple whammy, which was the drop in the price of oil, the drop in the price of real estate and the financial crisis. Then, inside here in Trinidad and Tobago, you

had the crisis here with the largest insurance company in the country.

The largest increase in total expenditure was in 2006, when it increased 36 per cent over the previous year. In 2008, it increased by 35 per cent over the previous year and in 2005 by 32 per cent. The average annual percentage growth in total expenditure, from 2003 to 2010, was 17 per cent. For the period 2003 to 2006, the first full four years in office of that former administration, the average annual growth rate in total expenditure was 27 per cent. The corresponding figure for 2011 to 2014 was 9 per cent. This is a comparison period for period, average for average, increase for increase over a given year. It shows you by comparison that any charge of flagrant disregard for rules and abuse of expenditure pattern is not, in fact, true. [*Desk thumping*] I want to go on a little bit about this.

Sen. Bharath made the point that we are not coming here for any new money. The Leader of the Opposition got up to say that they were not claiming that, but the point is it has been reported as if the Government was coming here to ask for additional funds, and that is not true. What we are doing is moving money around from one place to another, and the reason we have it is because we took the decision in January of this year to cut expenditure, in both recurrent expenditure and in the PSIP, based on the existing budget which was read in September last year.

For five years, throughout the life of this administration, we have been pursuing policies to protect and shield the vulnerable and the poor, to create jobs, which we have. We have created over 50,000 jobs in this country in the five years, about 56,000, and this is according to CSO figures. We have increased incomes for the working poor because we have increased the minimum wage twice in this country, [*Desk thumping*] and we have increased the wages for workers in all categories twice, including public servants and workers in other state enterprises. [*Desk thumping*]

At the same time we have created conditions for the middle class to grow; for them to save more by benefiting from tax breaks. For instance they get tax breaks for pensions, they get tax breaks for mortgages and they also get an opportunity for low-interest housing loans. I want to say that large numbers of public servants, who now will have both the capacity for savings with tax incentives, as well as more disposable income, this is part of not just keeping, but growing the middle class. It is an important part of all development.

We have also been very careful to support micro enterprises, small businesses, to support entrepreneurs, to support innovation, to support new business creation,

to support medium enterprise and businesses generally, because we want more businesses, because they create wealth and they create jobs, and we want investment, local and international, to grow the economy and expand opportunities and improve the quality of life for everyone.

Sen. Roach was saying that Sen. Dr. Balgobin said that you do not want everybody to get a university education and there are other options for education and for the management of talent. Sen. Roach was saying should we not spend some time on entrepreneurs, well we are. There are so many programmes. Sen. Karim talked about them. We have the idea2innovation programme; we have the social innovation programme called Lumination. We have the Centre for Enterprise Development in Freeport. At UTT there are entrepreneurship programmes linked to various kinds of new industries, fashion being one of them, and we have systemically promoted this. There is the Fair Share Programme; there is the Micro, Small and Enterprises Programme with the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, and we have done this.

Having brought the country from decline to growth, from recession, so to speak, in 2009 to recovery, from uncertainty to confidence in the future, we can now together with meaning, address the issue of productivity so our country can be more competitive, and all our people more prosperous. This issue of productivity is a very important thing, because Sen. Drayton talked about that, but you do not get the productivity just so. In managing this period, where we are moving from decline to growth, it was important to create the conditions in which the salary increases, the wages increases, the respect for workers, would in fact create the kind of atmosphere that would give us the opportunity now to address this issue of productivity seriously, because it does have to be addressed.

It is an important part of our sustainability going forward. Without that productivity we are not going to make it. We are going to become less and less competitive. But it is important to build that on a certain platform, and we have done what is required to make that possible.

I want to emphasize that in order to pay the wages and do the other things, over \$2 billion worth, we could have gone and borrowed the money. We could have gone and taken the money from elsewhere, but not doing that of course was a choice, and the reason for not doing that is because you do not want to add to the debt stock that you have. I want to say that this is an option that was taken, and it is a good option, because every Member of this honourable Senate knows that in the budget you do not anticipate by placing a number, what the wage negotiations are going to yield in terms of demand for payment. So it is always

after the negotiations that you have to find the money, and this was done in this period and we found the money from within the originally allocated budget in September 2014.

I am sure the Minister of Finance and the Economy explained some of the variations before, and I am sure that he is going to answer many of the questions, but I do want to get to this business of the comparison again, because I want to say something about it.

I talked about the difference in terms of allocation in the years, and I do want to make just one more point as I go forward, which is that I mentioned the comparison in expenditure and I showed that the percentage is smaller on average, during the years that we are in Government, and I gave the numbers. I showed how dramatic it was in some years, moving from \$11 million in one year, 2002, to \$53 million in 2008.

It is important to understand that though, because it also explains something else which is—and this was addressed by hon. Minister Vasant Bharath, when he used it by quoting an economist who talked about how hard it is for a family to change their expenditure pattern, the level at which they had lived. The problem was, in 2010, with a -4.4 decline in 2009, and the country having attained an expenditure in 2008 of \$5.8 million in expenditure, you could not go in 2010 to begin to cut. The unemployment was also high. I have all the numbers here, and they are all from the CSO.

You could not go to cut at that point; you had to manage. You had to get country back from decline to recovery, from decline to growth. Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir talked about the fact that the problem with the growth is that it is relatively flat, you cannot seem to get out of it. I mentioned, as I talked here earlier in this debate, the fact that we are facing that big challenge of the middle income trap, which many other countries have faced and are, in fact, facing. Therefore you had to manage to get to the point, where at the end of five years I think we have gotten there, that you can begin now to address the challenges that the economy must face in order to make this economy sustainable.

Madam President, I do want to make one point in the expenditure pattern. When you adjust the expenditure for the different years under the two administrations, by using the retail price index in a situation where real government recurrent expenditure had its peak in 2008, when it was \$21.8 billion in year 2000, at the same base rate, this makes our real expenditure in 2014 only 3 per cent higher than 2008. This is not any hocus-pocus; this is very real.

If you are going to make the comparison, you have to make it in comparative

value for the dollar, on the basis of one comparable base rate. Therefore, again, you begin to see that it is not so much the amount of dollars, but the comparison in terms of the value for money and in terms of the cost of money at the different points in time. I want to say that in terms of value for money, there is a lot that we can see in terms of real achievement.

We can see it in the highways that have been built. We can see it in the box drains that are often maligned. We can see it in the community centres all over the country. We can see it in the police stations, the new ones that have been built. We can see it in the children's hospital. We can see it in the Oncology Centre. We can see it in the landslips that have been addressed in various communities, after years of rural neglect. We have seen it in the water-for-all programme, which is ongoing and which has made significant progress in terms of more people accessing water in their homes, and all of these things.

12.20 a.m.

So, it is not just the spending and the expenditure, and I do take the point by Sen. Dr. Mahabir that the whole business of expenditure and the pattern of expenditure, and the management of revenue together with the change in the pattern of expenditure being very critical, very important, something that we must address for sustainability. But, I want to say that in all of that, when you make the comparisons, I think the Government comes off very well in terms of its management of the economy and the management of the finances in Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, I want to say as well that a lot was mentioned here about land and about squatters and so on, and I do not want to get into that because we have a Bill before us on that, and we are not debating that. But, I want to say that we have understood the importance of land in economic terms in this country, and we also understand how the pattern of suppression of development of land in the years preceding 2010 has had a certain effect on the society. We have seen for instance how it has affected the management of properties and government rentals in the Port of Spain area, and we have seen how it has suppressed development in the areas outside of Port of Spain.

And on the basis of that we have made some decisions, and one of the decisions we have made for instance is that in all established single family plots and layouts and development over 10 years old, where the plot size is a minimum of what is essentially 5,000 square feet, property owners will have the option of adding at least one residential unit. So that there will now be a standard density of

two integrated residential units on each standard lot of 5,000 square feet and over. What that means, that has a significant impact on any family that owns a 5,000-square-foot lot that wants to build an extra house or an apartment, et cetera, for a son, or a daughter, or whoever it is that lives on that same property, it allows them to monetize that in a very significant way.

And we have made policy decisions that on the basis of location, on the basis of site topography, on the basis of the unique characteristics found at the site, the plot size, the submission of plans and the satisfying of requirements having to do with parking and so on, we have made arrangements for the change of policy in a number of areas. So that in districts classified as C-1, which are really neighbourhood districts, located in any local community, you can get up to three storeys now, and you can also do that in a rural town. We have also revised it for the urban town where you can get up the six storeys, and we will identify those towns. We have in fact identified those towns in places like, in the first instance, places like Cumuto and Rousillac will be able to do two to three storeys, places like St. Helena Village, Siparia, Princes Town, Rio Claro, Marabella, will be able to do three to six storeys; places like Curepe, Sangre Grande, and San Juan, four to six storeys; places like the boroughs, you would be able to do four to eight storeys; Point Fortin, Couva, in places like Chaguanas, Tunapuna, Arima, nine to 12 storeys.

In the second city San Fernando up to 20 storeys depending on where the location is. In the national centre, capital Port of Spain, 25 to 30 storeys; and in special-use district, like the San Fernando legal district, depending on the site and being very area specific, six to 20 storeys there. And then in terms of more effective land use for residential categories, the maximum building height for rural towns and rural districts would be two storeys; for urban towns, three storeys; for municipal corp five to six storeys. That means you can build apartment buildings. For the boroughs seven to eight storeys; emerging cities, 10 to 12 storeys; and others up to 16 storeys.

So, what we are doing is really freeing up the land and giving people an opportunity to use these as assets for development of commercial options and commercial possibilities, and it is in that context that you need to see what we are doing with making land available to those who have none—that is to say, land for the landless—and then making land available for those who are squatting and have no security, which means regularizing these people and bringing them into the equity ownership process so that they can enter eventually the economic mainstream. So, there is a method to what we are doing and they are linked to various things. We have a number of buildings in this country that have been

unplanned; we have a number of people who have very nice buildings for which they have never applied for permission; and all of these matters are going to have to be treated with.

But, I do want to say something about the CSO before I go on. And, it is important to say that because so much has been said which is untrue, known to be untrue, which misrepresents the facts, and is said anyway, because it suits the purposes of those who say these things to say them, knowing that when you say something it is hard to come back to refute it, and I want to say this about the CSO. We are taking a note which will be before Cabinet this week.

Hon. Senator: Today.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Today, yes. And I want to say and I will just read part of what it says:

A perusal of the records of the CSO has revealed that employment in the temporary positions has persisted for over 40 years. Initially, members of staff were employed on a three-month basis, with two or three days' break between employment periods. This time period was increased to six-month employment periods with the same break periods in-between. Eventually there were no breaks between the employment periods. This pattern of employment has continued in respect of certain positions identified—with so and so and so.

I do not want to go into this. The main point I want to make is that there are 132 people—

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

Motion made: That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. F. Karim*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Madam President. Thank you very much Sen. Karim, thank you very much hon. Senators. The point I want to make here is that 132 members of staff have been categorized in the CSO as temporary workers without any benefits whatsoever except their salary for the last 40 years. "Some ah dem dead in the job", some of them retired in the job, and these are the 132 now who remain, and what we are trying to do is to make sure that they now have some kind of benefits in terms of fairness to these people who have been treated in this way.

And I want to just make one second point, and that is that the CSO—this is another document going to Cabinet—was established under the Statistics Act, Act

26 of 1952; so it was established in 1952, and is this country's so and so and so—I do not want to deal with that. But, what I want to say is this, I want to give a bit of the history. The CSO was changed from department—it was an autonomous department—to division status in the mid-1990s. This change in status has over time led to a reduction of independence, poor facilities and continuous movement of office between Ministries. These were compounded with the failure to find suitable accommodation, not only in my time—inadequate numbers and diminished technical staff ability, inability to coordinate data production activities. By 2005 the challenge at the CSO had already reached crisis proportions. It had reached such crisis proportions that to treat with the challenges a number of initiatives were undertaken.

So, in 2006/2007, they hired Statistics Sweden to identify an appropriate model for restructuring. In 2008/2009, CSO reviewed the reports and identified the gaps, resulting in the preparations of new terms of reference to address the gaps. In 2012—that is under me, I take responsibility for that—the Statistics Sweden was retained for a 13-month period to deliver on three tasks: defining core products to be delivered through the CSO; designing of an organization; creating an IT master plan. In 2013 the consultancy reaffirmed the value of CSO as the main central organization for statistics. Coming out of these initiatives, a number of recommendations were made to complete an organization reform, legislative review, organization restructuring, technology support and improvement product development supply—these recommendations were made in mid-2013 and included in a recommendation for the establishment of a national statistical institute, and this is going to Cabinet.

So, I want to say that to the extent that we were able to deal with the damage already done, we have tried to do so, that all the information put out by the Opposition is absolute and sheer propaganda, and it is false information. I want to state now where the CSO is as an organization. First of all, they lost their building but they are not in that state now. They are now accommodated at Park Street and at Capital Mall. This is 32,000 jointly, space for the CSO, temporarily. They have furniture and equipment, and as of January 2015 all members of staff of the CSO have been reporting for duty to these two locations. And I want to say that the 3.3 per cent unemployment figures that you got were based on the end of 2014, which means that the CSO now is only one quarter behind, and they will catch up with that at the end of June. [*Desk thumping*]

So that we should be on stream in this year as we go forward. They have already taken care of the inflation data and that is now systematic. It occurs every

month. It is a matter almost like rotation. It takes place, and we have done that. We have achieved that.

12.35 a.m.

A suitable site has now been identified, Plaza 47, Fredrick Street, and this will be outfitted and designed in accordance with the recommendation of the Swedish consultancy report, and the CSO will move into this building sometime this very month. [*Desk thumping*]

The five quarterly labour force reports were completed in 2014. The labour force reports for the 2nd Quarter and 3rd Quarter have been completed this year. Third Quarter 2014 has been published on the CSO's website and the 4th Quarter Labour Force Bulletin has been completed and will be published shortly, and the 1st Quarter 2015 will be completed in June 2015. In other words, the backlog in the production of labour force statistics has been removed.

The quality of the ASYCUDA data supplied by Customs was identified as the main issue impacting the generation of trade statistics to monitor and improve the quality of the ASYCUDA data. It was necessary to create a Trade Statistics Editing Unit that operates in an electronic environment.

The Trade Statistics Editing Unit was established in December 2014, comprising 12 officers and a supervisor, and the unit will edit and verify the ASYCUDA trade data received from Customs, and again, that is now able to be current, we are producing that data. The trade statistics section continues to generate trade data for users on a daily basis. The trade statistics section produced all merchandise trade data required for the Review of the Economy 2014, as well as all the requests for the trade data were supplied as far as possible. Trade data up to December 2014 is now available.

The national accounts division is now adequately staffed, such that all sectors of the Trinidad and Tobago system of national accounts are manned by a sector specialist. The survey of the establishments, one of the primary sources of data for national counts for the three years, 2011, 2012 and 2013 were carried out in 2014, as a backlog developed over the years in conducting this survey. GDP at current and constant prices were produced for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. The compilation of the monthly index of retail prices is entirely up-to-date.

Now these are the facts, this is the truth, and when we move into the new building it will become very clear that that did not happen overnight, that it took time and energy and coordination in order to do that. And while all this was going on—I have to give credit to the employees that even when they were at home they

were working on shifts to make sure that the work went on. And I want to say that I am thankful and grateful for that. I am glad that they were able to do that and I am glad that we are in this position now and the CSO from here on will only grow from strength to strength. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to say that the same CSO that they are complaining about now is the same CSO that was used to develop Vision 2020, and it was not in any better position then. It is in a much better position now than it was then. [*Desk thumping*] And all our policy documents, all the budgetary information, et cetera, part of that information, some comes from the Central Bank, of course, but part of that information came from the CSO. The criticism by Moody's and the documentation of the figures that they had, came from the CSO. I want to say that. All they are complaining about data, the data that they used, came from the CSO. So I want you all to understand that there has been a tremendous con job done here and perpetrated on the public and carried out by elitist elements in this society as well, and I want to say that these are the facts. But, as we go forward, I want to say that the country is in good shape now, and it is in good hands.

We will move to intense diversification of the economy in the next term of this Government. [*Desk thumping*] We will continue the infrastructure development of roads, ports and other infrastructure in this country that we need—hospitals, et cetera, including broadband, to deal with the issue of access of people, including the business of business competitiveness and, of course, the issue of international connectivity.

We will go for productivity improvement as a major strategy for the country and we will work with the various sectors of Government, labour, et cetera, to make this possible. We will have international partnerships for energy growth, in addition to what the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has already initiated, to take care of the future—2017, 2018, 2019, et cetera, as we go forward—and this internationalization through partnership will also give us an opportunity to grow in a sector that has been a traditional growth sector even while we intensify the diversification.

We are going to strengthen the good governance that we have achieved through things like procurement, the planning Bill, what we have done in terms of legislation to strengthen the FIU, to manage the situation with crime; and in terms of good governance what we will focus on is an innovation-driven public sector which we need to make this country competitive. We need to make our state enterprises more performance driven and, of course, hold them to account for

profitability.

We need to strengthen, of course, the independent institutions of state. And now that we have done so much infrastructure and are continuing with the infrastructure in terms of higher education and health the main focus will be on the issues of quality. And we will continue to strengthen transparency and accountability in the system everywhere. Sen. Dr. Mahabir mentioned the issue of maintenance. The issue of asset management and maintenance will be a big thing for us in terms of new buildings, first of all, but then transferring that to the other state buildings which have been so neglected for so long.

There is much more that I can say, Madam President, but I thank you for the opportunity at this late hour to be able to say a few words and to try to put on the record facts as they exist in order to correct some of the misinformation and in order to give clarity to some of the policies that we are putting in place as we go forward, built on the platform of genuine achievement and linked to this business of variation that we have come here to address in this honourable Senate this evening.

I want to thank all Senators who have listened to me during this late period. I know that it is very stressful to spend these long hours in the Senate, and I want to say that I have not spent five years but I have spent four years here in the Senate. I have enjoyed the time that I have been here. It has been a collegial place by and large. The cut and thrust has been quite good and it keeps one on the alert. And more than that, with my colleagues on the Government side I think it really has been a wonderful experience working with you and with all Senators, it has been wonderful.

Madam President, it has been a pleasure to work under your charge. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine): Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I made a commitment that I would speak for 15 minutes. It is now 12.44 a.m., so I should finish at 12.59 a.m. Madam President, the Bill before this Senate is a Bill:

“...to vary the appropriation of the sum the issue...authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2015)...”

The former budget, the previous budget.

The relevance of this particular piece of legislation to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs is that it seeks to vary Head 40, Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs by an amount of \$693,800,000. So that is \$693.8 million. And that

is the single largest movement in this Bill and that is why it is important that the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs speak, albeit, for 15 minutes in the end of this debate because the largest movement here has to do with Head 40, Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs.

And how did that come about? It came about because when we passed the budget last year, \$6 billion was allocated to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs for what we called subsidy liability. And the subsidy liability, those are moneys that are put aside to deal with the country's subsidization of liquid fuels, gasoline and diesel and so on. What happened since that budget was read in 2014 is that we had a significant fall in the price of oil. The budget as you know was predicated on \$80 per barrel and a gas price of \$2.75 per MMBtu, which is net back.

The oil price since the start of the fiscal year—and the fiscal year started on October 01, 2015—the oil price for the first seven months of this fiscal year has averaged around US \$60 per barrel and that is for what we call the Trinidad basket of crudes. That is not West Texas Intermediate nor is it Brent. It is the Trinidad basket of crudes. The exact number is \$59.81. The West Texas number is \$60.06. The Brent number is \$64.95. As a consequence of the fall in the oil price, the subsidy on liquid fuel to the population is less than we expected. We had budgeted \$6 billion, of which \$3 billion was to pay arrears to Petrotrin for subsidy and \$3 billion was to deal with the subsidy, liable for the current fiscal year.

For the current fiscal year thus far, the subsidy is TT \$1.048 billion, for the first seven months of the fiscal year. So it means that we will not consume, it is very unlikely that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs will consume the entire \$3 billion that was put aside for subsidy liability in the current fiscal year. The other \$3 billion that made up the \$6 billion, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has arranged to pay that money to Petrotrin. So that is why we have a savings, so to speak, in Head 40, Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, and that money is being redeployed in terms of expenditure to other parts of the Government in terms of expenditure.

As I said, I will not be long. I want to deal with some of the issues that were raised by the previous speakers and we had a contribution coming from our colleague Sen. Small, where he touched on some very important issues regarding the energy sector. The first issue which I thought I should deal with is the issue of Petrotrin and the comparison to the NGC. Sen. Small would know that they are two very different companies, very different, and they have two totally different taxation regimes. Petrotrin's taxation regime comes out of the Petroleum Taxes

Act and NGC is only subject to corporation tax. So Petrotrin is subject to supplemental petroleum tax, petroleum profit tax, royalty, unemployment levy and so on. And most of the taxation that Petrotrin pays comes off from the top line. So the SPD comes from the top line as does the royalty. So it is two very different companies.

The other point which I wanted to make is that a large part of Petrotrin's expenditure is going towards debt service. As you know, there are two bonds that the company had to take out in 2007 and 2009 respectively to finance the gasoline optimization programme and the Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel Plant. And those bonds have proven to be a significant burden to the company's cash flow. The other point that Sen. Small made had to do with the Gas Master Plan. He asked for an update on the Gas Master Plan. And that is why I thought it was important to speak on these issues, because this is the last opportunity we will have to speak on energy in this Parliament, and energy forms the basis of a significant part of our economy.

12.50 a.m.

Cabinet took a decision to do a gas master plan for this country about a year ago and we are now coming to the point where the Natural Gas Master Plan is beginning to crystallize. In fact, on Friday, the consultants, Poten and Partners, are going to do a presentation to the Standing Committee on Energy and a number of the members on that standing committee are members of this Government Bench here in the Senate. But we have already seen some preliminary work coming out of the gas master plan and it is important that I speak to that because that speaks to the future of the country. It does not speak to the last five years. It speaks to what we must do going forward.

It is a road map for the period 2015 to the period 2025. And three observations, I want to report to the Parliament, have come out and are really significant observations. Observation number one is that the country is not getting the revenue from the LNG industry, liquefied natural gas industry, that it should be getting, and that is something that we, as a country, must correct going forward.

The second point deals with, where do we get the best value for our natural gas within Trinidad and Tobago? So we have methanol, ammonia, iron and steel and LNG and we, as a country, must determine where we get the best value for our gas within Trinidad and Tobago.

The third issue that has popped up from the Natural Gas Master Plan is that we have a significant amount of natural gas stranded in what we call small pools,

and it works out to almost seven trillion cubic feet of natural gas—a significant amount of gas. That gas will not be produced under the current fiscal regime, and given the current commercial and legal arrangements that obtain in Trinidad and Tobago. So that moving forward into the future, we have to treat with those three issues very significantly. And I thought I would give an idea of what is in the gas master plan.

The other issue that has been dealt with, not just by Sen. Small but by other speakers in the other Chamber, is the issue of the natural gas contracts, and there are two significant natural gas contracts that NGC has. One is with BG, which expires on December 31 of this year, and the other one is with BP, which expires in 2018. The contract with BG, it is not our intention to allow it to expire and go into abeyance. There are talks going on right now for the renewal of that contract. And, of course, BG is not going to fold up all its infrastructure and walk away on December 31, 2015. That is why they are actively developing the Starfish field and the Bounty appraisal well and so on. In like manner, there are talks going on with BP with regard to the renewal of a 2018 contract. There is an MOU which has to be finalized between NGC and BP.

So those are very important things for the future of the country which I thought I should speak about. With regard to Mitsubishi, US \$1 billion of foreign direct investment, it is a very complex project involving three Japanese companies, a local conglomerate in Massy and the NGC. It is a green field project in a green field industrial estate. So it is a green field project in a green field industrial estate and there are a lot of infrastructural issues that we are putting in place, such as the supply of water. Water is critical to the production of methanol. The ports have to be upgraded and so on, and of course, the project will be supported by, of course, the supply of electricity across the fence from TGU.

In terms of gas supply for the country, one of the legacies, I think, of this Government—in my last six minutes of speaking—is that we inherited an upstream sector that had stagnated. I make no apologies for saying that because it is something which is supported by fact and data. There was one rig working offshore in this country when we were in mid-2010, and rig days and so on, all the proxies, all the metrics that tell us how activity is trending in the upstream were down. That has now significantly turned around. In fact, drilling in 2014 is twice as much as it was in 2010 and drilling in 2015 is already 14 per cent ahead of where it was in 2014.

So we have seen an upsurge in activity on land and offshore. We have put out the first land-based bid round in this country in 15 years. It was a tremendous

success and we expect that the results of all this drilling and exploration of the last four years, and continuing into the near term, will begin to bear fruit in the future.

So there is the Juniper Project taking place right now and the rig is actually on site and is drilling. The platform is almost 35 per cent complete and there is the Oilbird Project with EOG. There is the BG Bounty Appraisal Project going on right now. There is the BHP Billiton Angostura Phase 3 Development Project, and there are other projects in train for BP. We have gotten BP back to a point where the company is investing again.

I wanted to deal with some of the comments made by the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph in the other place who is an alumnus of the Senate. He made some very unfortunate remarks in the other place last week. It shows the extent to which he does not understand the energy sector. Of course, he is a pharmacist and he is more accustomed to dispensing rather than prescribing.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Deal with the argument, “nuh”.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: But the constituents in St. Joseph will treat with that in due course.

Sen. Al-Rawi: We will see.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: He sought to make issue of my contribution in the other place with regard to my reference to helicopter flights. Well, if helicopter flights have increased by 59 per cent and these are helicopter flights for oil companies, it must mean that there is more activity—significant increase in helicopter flights, and Minister Karim is supporting the helicopter industry through his training. And that means that they are going offshore to drill. They are not going offshore to sightsee. They are not taking helicopter trips around the country to sightsee.

So I thought I would correct the misinformation and the misunderstanding, and one hopes it is misunderstanding from the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, in the other place.

Madam President, I had not intended to speak because of the late hour, and I have three minutes. I promised the Leader of Government Business I would speak for 15 minutes. There was something Dr. Tewarie said that resonated with me, and it was that in the last five years it is undeniable that there has been political stability, social stability and economic stability in this country. And when he said that, I realized that we had been part, we had contributed to that stability and all societies like to exist in a state of stability.

It has been a tremendous honour to be the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs of this country and I hope to carry on in that capacity because, of course, we do not end—stop being Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs tonight. It has been a tremendous honour to be part of this Parliament, part of this Senate, and I want to place on record and recognize that the stability that we have as a country, this Government has lasted five years. The Opposition says we are now into our sixth year. [*Desk thumping*] But on three occasions in the history of this country, governments have failed to go to the five-year term. It happened in 1995; it happened in 2001 and it happened in 2010—on three occasions.

In this case, a Government has gone to a full five-year term and a Government that came in as a coalition, and I think that has a lot to do—that stability has a lot to do [*Desk thumping*] with the leadership of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and we place on record our recognition of her leadership over the last five years.

It has not been easy. It has been a challenging experience at times. The energy sector has been stable. I looked at the oil production numbers. For the last four years oil production has been the same, around 81,000 to 82,000 barrels of oil. [*Interruption*] Right. But black crude and condensate is about 81,000 to 82,000 barrels for the last four years. Prior to that there had been a precipitous decline. I think Minister Bharath gave some of the numbers earlier.

We have had challenges with gas supply at Point Lisas but we have been able to manage that situation. No company has shut down. No company has left. When I inherited that situation in 2011, people came to me and they told me things like, “Shut down two plants and that way you will have two fellas “vex” with you instead of 25, and we decided not to do that. We decided that we would be as fair as possible and manage that situation and coordinate the shutdowns with the downstream and the upstream. And we have soldiered on and there is light at the end of the tunnel. Companies are drilling again and reserves will be produced in coming years.

So I would end by saying that, again, I want to place on record my thanks to my colleagues, and when I say, colleagues, I mean all colleagues in the House: Government, Opposition and the Independent Benches. I have learnt a lot in the last five years and I am one of the three persons who started off here in 2010. My first contribution was on July 06, 2010. It was on a Motion on the state of the economy, a Motion that was moved back then by then Sen. Mary King.

So it has been a great experience. The country is stable. The country is prosperous. In almost every economic metric that you look at, there has been

improvement. Foreign reserves are US \$10.8 billion, an increase over the US \$8.8 billion of 2010. The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund has gone from \$3.5 billion in mid-2010 to \$5.5 billion today. So it is not correct to say we did not add because somebody said we did not add to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. We have added to the fund. Unemployment is low. Inflation is under control. Sen. Dhanayshar Mahabir, who is very tired, would know about the Phillips curve, the relationship between unemployment and inflation.

The country is stable, the country is prosperous and we look forward to taking the politics to the next phase, because after we leave this Parliament here today, we move on to a next phase of politics which is the politics of the platform and I hope that I could extend my political career now to the politics of the platform and take the message of the good work [*Desk thumping*] of the last five years to the streets and to the political meetings and so on.

So I close, Madam President. Thank you. You sat next to me for a couple of years here on this bench and we thank you for your guidance and leadership. Thank you, colleagues. I close with a line from one of my favourite poems. It was a poem that was a favourite of John F. Kennedy:

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep.

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep.” Robert Frost.

Thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: The Minister of Sport. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Sport (Sen. The Hon. Brent Sancho): Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me to join this contribution. It would be remissive of me if I do not use sporting terminologies to explain during my contribution, joining as a late substitution in this debate. Like some of the great late substitutions, a la Roger Milla in Italia 90 who ended up most goals as a substitute for most of his appearances. And who could forget Ole Gunnar Solskjaer for Manchester United, coming off the bench to win the European Cup for Manchester United. [*Desk thumping*] I hope to walk in the same light as those late substitutes.

Trading my shorts, boots and socks to wear suit and tie every day is truly a privilege and I would like to thank this side of the bench for giving me that opportunity [*Desk thumping*] to further serve my country.

Sen. Hadeed: Happy “tuh have yuh, man.”

Sen. The Hon. B. Sancho: Coming into the Ministry that I serve in, I have come in at a very good time for sports in this country. I have inherited three world-class facilities: the tennis centre in Tacarigua, the Aquatic Centre in Couva with a diving pool—[*Desk thumping*] swimming, and also the velodrome, which is considered by many to be the best this side of the world. [*Desk thumping*]

1.05 a.m.

I say this, Madam President, this country now stands at the cusp of being a major player in the sports tourism industry. With Rio 2016 right around the corner and now direct flights out of Tobago to Brazil, we have already been inundated by approaches of several national sporting bodies to use our facilities as preparation for Rio 2016 and that is, for a tiny island, a tremendous feat.

I stand to endorse Sen. Balgobin's remark about sport as a career choice. I myself as a young man growing up in Belmont will always remember the days of walking from St. Francois Valley Road down to the Queen's Park Savannah with my neighbours, colleagues and friends from Serraneau Road in Belmont to train and play for the local team, Belmont Fifth Dimension. I remember every day the different stories we told on the five-minute walk down to the Queen's Park Savannah and realizing once the team, Belmont Fifth Dimension, was no longer around, the immediate rise in criminal activity within my small community. A direct correlation between sports or the lack of sports and the rise in delinquent behaviour.

I would like to endorse Sen. Balgobin's remark that the time has come where this country has to seriously look at implementing a school designed for young aspiring athletes to harness their skills. Major countries around the world such as Australia, USA—Sport Australia, for example—have used these academies to further the development of the young athletes, and some of the more prominent world athletes would have come through the ranks of these sporting academies. So too the young talent that we have in this country in many of our various disciplines, despite the lack of a bona fide academy or a bona fide sporting academy, have still managed to just scratch the surface on the international stage. I would like to not only just endorse Sen. Balgobin, but also assure him that the plans are well on the way in my Ministry to start putting together the blueprint for the first ever sporting academy in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

As like any good late substitute, we try to whet the appetite and move on, but I would like to say in closing—as I know we have been here for quite some time, I would like to thank—although I have not gotten the opportunity to meet most of you intimately, I have had the opportunity to have conversations with one or two. My time here, although short, has been very, very, very good. Very good. I have

been listening attentively to some and most of you speak, it is really an eye-opener, and I would say that the country is in good hands with the persons that sit in this room as it relates to legislation and guidance of this country. I would like to congratulate you for a job well done, for most of you who have been here for the extensive period of time, as it has really been an educational walk for me for the past couple of months.

I would also like in closing, Madam President, I look forward to the beginning, this being my maiden contribution [*Desk thumping*] to the Senate, to continue [*Desk thumping*] along the path of so many that have graced these hallways and I look forward to the challenges that lay ahead eagerly, and as I say to most of my staff, we will get it done as a next term project. So in closing, thank you very much, Madam Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Karim: President.

Sen. The Hon. B. Sancho: Sorry—Madam President. Thank you very much, Madam President, for allowing me the opportunity to be your late substitution here tonight.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Hon. Senators, let me take this opportunity to congratulate our player who I noticed was warming up on the lines for the last two days. It was wonderful to see you come off the bench and I congratulate you on scoring a beautiful goal. [*Desk thumping*]

Minister of Finance and the Economy. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Thank you, Madam President. I also will try to be short, try to complete. I think a lot of the questions which have been asked have been answered in some ways, perhaps not as comprehensively as perhaps those who asked the question would have liked, but certainly there are a few areas that I must touch on before we close off or before we wind up this debate. I want to, of course, recognize the fact that this is perhaps the last debate of this session, this Parliament, before it is dissolved and, of course, in doing so I suppose I have the singular honour of perhaps closing off the last debate in this particular Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

During the course of the debate, my colleague Minister Karim mentioned a number of persons in the business community whom he certainly liked to have on record for the development of the future entrepreneurs of our country, as well as

Sen. Robinson-Regis also added to that number, and I would like in certainly closing off this morning to identify two other persons, or not two others, I think one of them Sen. Robinson-Regis had mentioned which is my good friend Mr. Robert Yorke who started off from very humble beginnings in Tobago, and I certainly would like to recommend him and commend him.

The other persons I thought certainly had an impact on me in my career in the financial sector was Mr. Cyril Duprey, who built a major institution starting literally from nothing [*Desk thumping*] and I thought certainly it be would be remiss of me if I did not identify him, our paths having crossed when I was 17 years old, many decades ago. Certainly he was a kindly elderly person at that time who certainly provided guidance and support, and I will certainly want to recognize his contribution to Trinidad and Tobago and certainly to our entrepreneurship in the future.

So there are a few areas that our colleague—Sen. Dr. Mahabir had mentioned a few areas in the economy and certainly he quite rightly identified two areas, stagnation and the possibility of inflation. Of course, stagflation is always a challenge, but the whole issue of the stagnation of the economy and of economies generally, and uncertainty, and the level of risk which has certainly grown to a much higher level than we have seen in the past. And as we try to move away from quantitative easing, I think the world will say in an economic environment, operating in a particular context, which we have never really operated in before, where there is this continuing slowdown which requires very significant structural reforms at all levels of the global economy including here in Trinidad and Tobago, and there are many areas that we need to deal with.

I was looking at the numbers for a number of countries, United States, Japan, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Brazil, Jamaica, ourselves, China, India. If you exclude China, the rate of growth in 2012, 2013 and 2014, the average rate of growth for the other countries listed, excluding Trinidad and Tobago, was .85 of 1 per cent in 2012, 1.3 per cent in 2013 and 1.8 per cent in 2014, in a sense indicating the new characteristic of the global economy with very low levels of growth.

And similarly in Trinidad and Tobago, we have struggled with that level of growth although to a large extent the challenges have been in the energy sector which the hon. Minister has worked very hard to turn around. We have stabilized the output of oil and significant investments are now taking place in the upstream which we expect to see bear fruit in the years to come.

If we exclude the energy sector which has tended to drag down our overall rate of growth of GDP, the non-energy sector has been averaging between 2.3 to 2.5 per cent, on average, rate of growth over that period of time. So that in the context between 0.85 and 1.8 per cent rate of growth has been a relatively reasonable level of growth in the current environment. It does not mean to say that there is not a lot for us to do. There is quite a lot for us to do, particularly in the area of structural reform which will pose the major challenges for our economy as well as economies globally as we move forward.

Some numbers had been quoted by Sen. Al-Rawi. I am not quite sure using numbers quoted by the former Sen. Mary King with respect to unemployment, inflation, foreign direct investment and so on. The figures I had for 2010—I am not sure whether we are using the same years. Whether he used 2008, 2009 or 2010, I do not recall. But certainly using 2010, unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago was 5.9 per cent—which was reasonable—versus our current 3.3 per cent; inflation I have for 2010 at 10.5 per cent; and debt to GDP in 2010 at 46.9 per cent. So those are my numbers and right now certainly the metrics are considerably better than they were at that time. Our growth official reserves at that time amounted to \$9 billion and are currently about \$10.7 billion.

So there are some differences in the figures, but I think generally on all sides we agree that the macroeconomic data is good. What we need to deal with are the underlying factors in any economy which give rise to sustainability over the long term, and certainly as Sen. Small indicated—I mean, we have been fortunate to enjoy some reasonably good prices for our commodities that we have exported, and that has certainly helped over the years in ensuring that we have been able to maintain a certain level of standard and a certain level of prosperity throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

An issue which has come up has been the question of the THA and the amount which was given to the THA, and the fact that there was a shortfall of about \$102 million. I want to say that it is something that we have to sort out with the THA. I received some figures earlier today which suggested that the difference may not be as wide as the THA has indicated and we need to do some work on it. The amount which the THA would have gotten for this quarter should have been \$543.6 million.

1.20 a.m.

And the Ministry of Finance and the Economy made two adjustments: one for actual revenue collected by the THA for the first quarter which we estimate at \$68 million, and then less a further adjustment for the amount transferred to the development programme by the THA in the second quarter of \$79 million. So that

those two adjustments would have brought the numbers down, closer in line to the figures which the Ministry of Finance and the Economy passed over or provided to the THA at the beginning of this quarter.

So, I think the issue for us and I have to admit that we, ourselves, perhaps, should have been more proactive in working with the THA to have this matter sorted out, and I have to say that the THA has been very proactive. They have reached out. Sen. Cudjoe mentioned a couple of emails that they have sent. But more than that, Mr. Jack did call me himself—Joel Jack who is the Secretary of Finance—and I did speak to him, and I have to get back to him which I have not done, and similarly the Chief Secretary called also.

So, it is not that they have not reached out, it is just that we have not been as proactive in getting the information across to them as we should have and we take responsibility for that. But I would like certainly to say that, I think, from the figures that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy have given me, there is a basis on which they have computed those numbers and the assumptions they have made are reasonable and I think it is a question of working it out with the THA. So I do not think that that is an issue that cannot be sorted out between ourselves.

A number of issues have been raised—the Auditor General’s Report. There have been a number of cases of overpayments identified and there have been times of overpayments but there has also been—part of it is really structural in nature, if I could use that term. What tends to happen is that a number of employees—a number of persons are brought into the public service on contract and you would fix the salary in relation to what people in that particular position, you expect would normally enjoy and then you ask the CPO to give you a confirmation of the salary. Sometimes the CPO would not confirm the salary for some period of time.

So sometimes you have—[*Crosstalk*] I was trying to be a little—[*Laughter*] But as Sen. Small is saying, yes, it sometimes takes years before the CPO writes to the relevant Ministry and says, “Listen, this is what the salary should be. So what would happen then at that time is you have these persons who would have been getting a salary on a monthly basis over the past few years suddenly being told that, you know, you have been getting a salary of \$10,000, it really should be \$9,500, but you find that out somewhere down the road. And there are quite a number of positions in the public service that are affected by that and we are in the process of trying to identify how best we could close that gap respecting all of the protocols of the Constitution and the Government and so on, that, of course, the CPO has that independent authority to be able to fix those salaries.

Ministries and Ministers and Permanent Secretaries cannot just fix those salaries on a permanent basis. They have to be done by the CPO. Then, how do you close that gap so that you do not end up with a few thousand people who have a different salary and so on. So the numbers suggest a bigger problem than there probably is and how do we fix this particular system to get it to work in the way that it should work. So that once we can do that, we should be able to close that gap in terms of the number of instances of overpayments.

Again, similarly, with respect to leases, in many cases, some of these contracts, the leases have to go to the Commissioner of Valuations and they have to go to the Commissioner of Lands. And what tends to happen is, again, the timing of when the feedback comes back to say that this is the value of the lease and this is what should be paid, or this is the least payment that should be paid. It sometimes takes several years and you end up in a situation where you continue to pay based on the old contract and the old lease arrangement, pending getting final agreement from the Commissioner of Valuations and from Cabinet on what the lease payment should be. So you do end up with quite a number of such contracts.

And again, those are some things that we are currently working on but we understand that it requires a reengineering, and perhaps, some kind of parliamentary approvals to get a system in place that would help to smooth some of this. It will involve perhaps removing certain authorities from certain positions within the bureaucracy and the government bureaucracy.

I would like to say, Madam President, that since May 24, 2010, the Auditor General has been able to complete 218 audits and between December 04 and today, we have been able to speed up that process. We have had 50 audits completed and 40 audits are carded for completion in the next month and we expect that process to start accelerating based on some of the changes that we have made. So we expect to be able to significantly improve a number of these areas.

One of the points that was raised in connection with that was, I think, the NLCB audit, and the NLCB audit was said to be back to 2009, but in 2010 when the new board was appointed, the audits were only up to 2002. The board, since then, has been able to bring those audits up to 2009. Audits for 2010 and 2011 are currently with the Auditor General and we should be able to get that completed before the end of this month, and we expect that the 2012 audit would be completed before September—yeah, the 2012 audit should be. So, by September, we should be in a position where, having inherited a backlog from 2002, we should be up to about 2012 and we should be fairly close to bringing all those audits up to date as far as the NLCB is concerned.

Another issue, another question, another point that was raised, and I think this was raised by Sen. Al-Rawi. I am not quite sure if I understood or whether the Senator understood. The impression I—what I heard was that the suggestion was that we were giving \$68 million more for the baby grant. [*Crosstalk*] Yeah, it is really taking \$68 million from the baby grant. In total, the baby grant would not be more than about \$20 million this year based on the 3:5 criteria that we have established; \$32 million has been transferred within the Ministry to implement other projects that the Ministry is doing and \$68 million is being transferred from the Ministry to make up the amounts needed to pay the salaries and so on. So, it is not \$68 million more for, it is \$68 million from, so we are taking it from that Ministry.

Sen. Al-Rawi raised an issue concerning a letter from Lloyd's, which I have to confess I did not see until just now, dated June 03, which would have come in last week. It claims to have been sent by email, I have no record of having seen it come to me directly and I say that for the records. I do not know whether they may have emailed it to my secretary. I was saying to Sen. Al-Rawi that, perhaps, they may have sent it to her, she has been out of office for the last week, and I do not know whether that could have accounted for it. I really do not know what happened.

But the letter came in a week ago, on June 03, today is June 10. It is the first time I am seeing it, and I will certainly ask the Central Bank to take a look at it to see the validity of the concern that is being expressed. I find it very strange that I did not receive the letter nor did they send a hard copy to me, but Sen. Al-Rawi got a hard copy and I find they could have given me a hard copy too [*Laughter*] in addition to giving him one, but I understand—

Sen. Al-Rawi: I gave you one.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: But you gave me one. So I want to thank Sen. Al-Rawi for giving me a copy of the letter which was addressed to me.

But it is a very serious issue because it is a suggested change to the Act—the Insurance Bill that we were debating and it is claimed to have been sent on June 03. Although, I think, by that time, we would have already tied up most of this. The insertions they are asking for here in this annex is that the Minister may upon recommendation by the Central Bank make regulations exempting any licensee, person or class of persons from any provision of this Act, either absolutely or subject to such conditions or modifications as may be specified by the Minister.

And I find it to be a very dangerous change that I have the authority to exempt anyone from any provision of this Act. It is something I will certainly send to

Central Bank. I mean, I am not an expert in insurance but it did strike me as something that, on first blush, from a policy point of view, I do not think I want to give myself, or the Minister, that kind of authority to exempt anyone from any provision of the legislation. Again, I say that for the records. But again, I say that I did not receive this. This is the first time I am seeing this particular document.

Madam President, I actually had prepared quite a number of things to say, including all of the things which we have done over the past few years, accounting for the expenditures which have occurred. But all of my colleagues, I think, have expressed and elucidated and certainly expounded on all of the accomplishments and so on. So I would not go into those now, I was aiming to finish at 1.30, so I think we are about there at this time.

So, with those few words, Madam President, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Madam President, in accordance with Standing Order 63, I beg to move that the Bill not be committed to a committee of the whole Senate.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be read a third time and passed.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE (Adoption)

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Thank you kindly, Madam President. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that the Senate adopt the Second Report of the Standing Orders Committee of the Senate, Fifth Session (2014/2015), Tenth Parliament.

Madam President, as Senators will recall, the First Report of the Standing Orders Committee of the Senate for this Fifth Session was adopted by this Senate on March 31, 2015 and these new Standing Orders have been declared by the President of the Senate to come into operation on June 16, 2015. The 2015 Standing Orders have provided for the establishment of new joint standing committees to enhance the legislative and oversight capabilities of the Parliament. These committees began their work during this Fifth Session by mutual agreement with the House of Representatives and have been working effectively as evidenced by several of the committee reports presented in the Senate today—

well, yesterday.

1.35 p.m.

By my calculation, Madam President, some 16 reports have been presented. Nonetheless, on Friday June 05, 2015, the House of Representatives adopted the report of its Standing Orders Committee to amend a few provisions in relation to the operation of the Joint Standing Committees. These changes are intended to rationalize the structure and operation of these committees from the next Parliament.

It is, therefore, now necessary for the Senate to give consideration to these changes to ensure that there is consistency in the Standing Orders of our two Chambers. The amendments, as listed in the Appendix to the Committee Report, do the following:

Stipulate the new committees on:

1. Energy affairs.
2. Foreign affairs.
3. National security.
4. Human rights, equality and diversity are to be considered departmental committees appointed pursuant to section 66A of the Constitution.
 - to expand the general powers of the departmental committees to include the examination of Bills and other legislation as referred to it by the Houses; and
 - to expand the remit of the Committee of Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity and to create five omnibus departmental committees with oversight responsibility pursuant to section 66A of the Constitution, based on the general sector of administration of the State.

It is in these circumstances that I ask the Senate to adopt the report of the Senate Standing Orders Committee to give effect to these amendments which were also approved by the House of Representatives.

In light of this, Madam President, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senators wishing to join the debate may do so now.

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to make a very short intervention on this most very important Motion standing before this Senate at 1.37.45 a.m. These amendments to our Standing Orders, which are already passed by this Senate and due to come into effect on June 16, stand as a very material fillip and improvement to the structure of the workings of the Parliament.

Indeed, the referral to committees of legislation which the House and, as a whole, the Senate should direct to committees is but one example of how we may make better use of parliamentary time. It is certainly a very welcomed approach and the Opposition has been very pleased to see its work, which was begun many years ago, brought to life under the current Government, in cooperation with Government as it was indeed a bipartisan or a multi-partisan approach, insofar as Independent Senators certainly participated.

I am confident that Sen. Helen Drayton, who also sat on this particular committee and who has lent a great deal of assistance to this committee would be equally pleased, and permit me not to say so as a Member of the Opposition on behalf of someone else, but simply as someone who has witnessed the extent of work that she put into the committee as a whole.

Madam President, the Opposition, the People's National Movement, is very pleased to endorse the recommendation standing before the Senate, which is the subject of this Motion and it gives us great pleasure to certainly give 100 per cent commitment. We look forward to the operationality and implementation and working of these new rules, certainly when we return to the Parliament into the Eleventh Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Madam President.

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to endorse the views expressed by Sen. Al-Rawi and to support the endorsement of these new rules. Our own Sen. Helen Drayton, I think, has put in a lot of time and she certainly has collaborated with many of us on this bench as she has tried to work with colleagues across both Houses to produce a body of changes which are really meant to fundamentally transform the way that this Parliament functions, the way it operates and the way that it makes democracy more and more relevant to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I note, even at this early hour, 1.40 a.m., that these new rules really represent the product of a broad collaboration and I certainly welcome it and endorse it fully. I am sorry that my colleague, Sen. Drayton is not here but I think she would certainly have wanted, at least one of us to rise and to recognize the sterling work she has contributed to this and to say that we endorse it as fully as we can. So, I

cannot speak, of course, for everybody on the bench, but certainly I can express sentiments on my own behalf and to hope, therefore, that we can give this a speedy resolution and get it on its way. Thank you, Madam President.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Thank you, Madam President. I want to thank Sen. Faris Al-Rawi and Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin for their cooperation, and their sentiments are reflective of the collaborative approach that was taken to bring the Standing Orders into operation, and that I think when one would reflect, having regard to the experience of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and myself, when we reflect, I think that this Parliament, this Tenth Parliament, has been the most aggressive Parliament in the context of asserting legislative authority in this country and the expansion of legislative authority and I think both the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House ought to be congratulated for their guidance in this regard. [*Desk thumping*]

So, with those few words, Madam President, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

TRIBUTES

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. G. Singh): Thank you, Madam President. Before I beg to move the adjournment of the Senate, I wish to invite Sen. Elton Prescott SC to make certain remarks and subsequently, by guidance from the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Sen. Faris Al-Rawi, to respond for the Opposition and myself eventually.

Sen. Elton Prescott SC: Thank you very much, Madam President, Leader of Government Business and my Senatorial colleagues. I imagine that anybody would guess that at a time like this we would all want to join in paying tribute to our colleagues for their contributions over these past five years. I think it would be appropriate for me to make the observation that this is one aspect of human behaviour that we often see that we take our time and develop to a point and then all the activity ends with a big flurry and after that it is silence. In the next few weeks or months, I suppose we will all be determining our future and I trust that the public makes the right decisions when the time should come.

I came into the Parliament in June 2010; Sen. Dr. Victor Wheeler and I were the only Independents who came in at that time and have remained. We met Senators Dr. Balgobin and Drayton here. So those were the experienced Members of the Senate. But there were quite a number of others and we have lost them for

one reason or another.

I think I could remember those who were here. Perhaps, I could start from the beginning. There was Basharat Ali who coordinated the Independent Bench when I came here, a man of great experience, wisdom and diplomacy in the way he treated with us. There was Subhas Ramkhelawan who replaced him briefly and then went off. There was Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight, revered. She has now passed on. But we grew to understand her subtle ways and her capacity for sitting very patiently and awaiting her turn so that she could deliver a blow from time to time where needed and keep Senators on the right track.

Then there were James Armstrong, Lennox Bernard and Harold Ramkissoo, all of whom were removed in one fell swoop at the hand of His Excellency. But one need not lament because he replaced them with young men, three of whom are to my right, who have proven to be quite erudite in their presentations and thorough and, perhaps, exciting might be a good word to describe at least one of them. He manages to keep us all entertained, even while he was delivering with wisdom. So we were able to welcome them.

I need to place on record that among those of us who have steered the entire course on the Government Benches, Senators Vasant Bharath, Kevin Ramnarine, one more, and Fazal Karim, they were here when we started and they have all grown in their respective roles. Sen. Bharath, of course, had the experience before. Sen. Ramnarine reminded us at the very beginning that he was the youngest Member in the Senate, and I have reason to think he has been overtaken.

That brings me right away to Sen. Avinash Singh. I do not know if people do this kind of thing but I merely comment today that he was the fastest rising of those who have learnt to deliver in the Senate. [*Desk thumping*] He has become an excellent speaker. The distance between, well rather—let me put it differently, his learning curve was very, very brief. Congratulations, congratulations. [*Desk thumping*] You really have done quite well.

And if my memory serves me correctly, Sen. Sharma Cudjoe was here in 2010 and she too started slowly but you could see the sun shining in her path and she has delivered exceedingly well up to this point. I know people outside in the lay public have different views of her. I think it is the mannerisms that she uses when she delivers but you could never be mistaken as to what she wishes to say and you dare not, as some of you would know opposite, interfere and not get repartee from her.

Maybe I should not keep too many encomiums on any particular side because

this bench remains independent. I had spent many hours not realizing that I was on TV sitting behind Sen. Faris Al-Rawi and people began to comment on the fact that my countenance tells them when they should not accept anything Al-Rawi says. So I learnt later to shift my chair a little to the left and to avoid being seen.

Madam President, we have had, at the beginning, the leadership of Sen. Timothy Hamel-Smith, who was quite an excellent choice and he was supported by Sen. Lyndira Oudit, who I had grown to like and I particularly missed when she too went on. But I am not lamenting, because your sojourn in the Chair has been marked by your grace and a certain degree of maturity. [*Desk thumping*] Even in the wee hours of this morning, you could find a bit of levity.

1.50 a.m.

I heard you make some comments using a “football lingua” that I did not anticipate from you, only because I do not know your history. Of course, I do now know where you played your football. [*Laughter*] It is pleasing to me to know that even at this hour of the morning, you have managed so well. Let me congratulate you on your persistence in the last hours, when we tried to work the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Bill into being. I noted that you made your contributions throughout, and we were the beneficiaries of that.

The work we have done here over the past four years, may well, in years to come, be seen to be of value. I think that we have all put our best foot forward. We have given with diligence to the Parliament what we know. We have delivered ourselves of our intellect and our experiences. I trust that Trinidad and Tobago could come to appreciate that this is sometimes a labour of love, and it is certainly the best that anybody can do for a society.

I thank you very much for the opportunity. [*Desk thumping*] Thank you all for—I almost forgot I actually have names here and intended to mention them—Cindy Gibbs-Mohammed and Melissa Ramkissoon, who joined us recently. [*Desk thumping*] Best wishes to all of you. Thank you very much.

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi: [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, it gives me great pleasure to stand, to acknowledge the tremendous privilege that we have all had to serve as Senators of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I am a third-generation politician on my mother’s side, several generations on my father’s side, but in a different country—in Iraq. It was certainly not my intention or born aspiration or even in my contemplation, in my early years growing up, even at law school, to be a politician. It took me a very, very long time to even refer to myself as a politician, having qualified and practising law.

I do recall, however, on June 18, 2010, in being introduced to Trinidad and Tobago as a Senator. I recall understanding what it was to come into public life and public scrutiny, something that everyone in this room understands. What really was of great impact was the first time I stepped into the Red House. It did not quite grip me until stepped on to the welcome mat. When I stepped on the welcome mat, I got a sense of immense understanding of how many other citizens of our country had stepped on the threshold of the doors of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, even before it was a Republic in that very building, as a legislative council, as a legislative seat.

I thought to myself what a great privilege it is to stand and serve your country. I want to say that I have come to have a profound respect for all persons who have served in the Senate. For those opposite, for those who sit behind, on the Independent Bench, for those on my own bench, it has been an incredible, incredible learning curve.

I recall meeting Sen. Kevin Ramnarine and Sen. Danny Maharaj in the tea room in the old Red House—three young lost men, we were, standing then—did not have a clue what we were getting into.

I recall, in 2010, what it was like to enter into a Parliament in a position of 29-12, and boy did I come to understand the expression, the winter of Opposition. I have to say that Opposition is a very interesting perspective. One understands what it is like to witness a Government have to take the yoke of Government, to have to stand by the implementation of policy. One understands as well, that in Opposition you are required to do triple time. You are your own research engine. You are required to be ready every time, all the time. You must inherit and justify all of the actions and positions taken from those who have come prior. Certainly, being a new PNM Senator was certainly not an excuse for anything that is PNM. That was a very interesting perspective to learn that generational politics, from those that precede you, come to visit you and for whom you represent.

May I say, Madam President, that there have been significant people not yet on the Emmanuel George line, [*Laughter*] but there have been significant people opposite who I wish to recognize. The Leaders of Government Business opposite, starting with Subhas Panday, then with Emmanuel George and now with Sen. Ganga Singh—has been a very interesting experience.

I wish to say that I have great respect for all of them. I wish to say that Sen. Singh, in particular, has held a standard as Leader of Government Business that has been superb, to say the least. [*Desk thumping*] He is someone, if he speaks to you as Leader of Government Business, and tells you that X is X, you can

guarantee it, that it is going to be that. I think recently we have had a few hiccups, from other directions, [*Laughter*] but generally in large part, Sen. Singh has demonstrated that he is man of his word, and I wish to pay him an open compliment, for handling the Senate in the manner that he has opposite us.

Madam President, the Senate of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is incredibly blessed, to have in it, independence of minds that sit on the Independent Bench. I think that we are very, very fortunate as individuals to be in this particular Chamber, because we are removed from just bipartisan politics. We have an independence of space and mind, which I think as a Republic, we ought to be very grateful for.

I wish in particular to express the Opposition's profound gratitude to the Members of the Independent Bench, under the various coordinators that have sat—Sen. Basharat Ali, Subhas Ramkhelawan, and now, Helen Dayton. I have to say that Sen. Elton Prescott in particular, who has mastered the art of a short throat interruption, [*Clears his throat*] you will hear—has the way of keeping you on a track in the most subtle of undertones. I wish to thank him personally, and certainly on behalf of the Opposition, for bringing such measure at times, when one has the tendency to run off with emotion.

The batch of Senators, Independents, who sat prior to the change-out in Parliament were of an excellent calibre. I wish to say that I miss Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight, terribly. I wish to say that seeing her in her dying bed, as she was at the Vitas House, seeing the courage and strength in her eyes, and seeing all of her colleagues come and visit her, past and present, was a beautiful experience. She is truly a soul who will be well missed. I am grateful to have served in the Senate with her.

Madam President, I wish to express profound gratitude to Dr. Rowley for having the faith and confidence in us, in the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*] Of the many people that he could have chosen, and there were several of us: Penelope Beckles-Robinson; Fitzgerald Hinds; Ted Roopnarine; Dr. Lester Henry; Shamfa Cudjoe; certainly, Avinash Singh, Diane Baldeo-Chadeesingh and my Leader in the Senate, Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis. We are all, each of us, extremely grateful for the confidence reposed in us to do the job.

More particularly, for the licence and liberty given to us to exercise independence of thought, even when it means at times taking a position different from that given by our own PNM Opposition in the House of Representatives. Dr. Rowley's guidance to us has been very simple: Do the right thing and accept that the two Houses of Parliament are different, and pay attention to the debate and

what is right for the people as the argument changes. That takes a great deal of confidence and ability to allow your Senators that latitude. [*Desk thumping*] Dr. Rowley has our eternal gratitude.

Madam President, the most important position, before I come to expressing my gratitude to you and to the past President of the Senate, I wish to express deep heartfelt appreciation, for the members of the real Parliament. Starting with the Clerk of the House, Mrs. Jacqui Sampson [*Desk thumping*] going to all assistant clerks that assist her. [*Desk thumping*] The Clerk of the Senate, starting with Mr. Neil Jaggassar as he introduced us to the Senate, and now to Nataki Atiba-Dilchan; [*Desk thumping*] to the very excellent hands of Julien Ogilvie, [*Desk thumping*] Indar Sieunarine.

Going, Madam President, importantly, to the very, very hard-working ladies and two gentlemen who sit in the Hansard department. I spend a lot of time in the library and in Hansard. I am extremely indebted—and the entire Parliament is—to very many excellent persons that serve us in the Hansard, time and time again; those beautiful, wonderful ladies that are always efficient, and happy to do their job, but to do it with grace and dignity. May I express gratitude to the two editors of Hansard, both as they have served, Kathleen Mohammed and Lila—I forget her surname now, all of a sudden.

Hon. Senator: Rodriguez.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Rodriguez, Lila Rodriguez; both now excellent editors of Hansard.

May I express profound gratitude to the IT department of Parliament. We have the best IT system of all Parliaments. We are on time with every publication. When the Parliament starts at 1.30, it is 1.30 and cameras are ready to go. Speeches are updated instantaneously. As you have sat down, your name is already logged on as having spoken in this Parliament, and that takes a great deal of professionalism and ability. The many police officers, [*Desk thumping*] and the Marshal of the Parliament, Mr. Brian Caesar. [*Desk thumping*] We owe an eternal debt of gratitude. We do not take for granted the service and dedication of these ladies and gentlemen, who stand without ever tiring, and deliver of themselves for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I express a profound gratitude to them all.

To the staff of the hospitality end of the Parliament, some of whom have been here for far longer that I could ever imagine. I wish to express heartfelt gratitude and thanks to them all, [*Desk thumping*] because they are the real engines of our Parliament.

Lastly, Madam President, may I express deep gratitude to Mr. Timothy Hamel-Smith, Mrs. Lyndira Oudit, Mr. James Lambert, and to you. You have, four of you, [*Desk thumping*] been very excellent Presiding Officers. I have to say, Madam President, under the past President, Mr. Timothy Hamel-Smith, one always had a sense of equality and fairness.

I had the pleasure of sitting opposite to you before you became President of the Senate, and you have political blood but, Madam President, that notwithstanding, you have been an excellent President of the Senate. You have handled your tenure with grace and with poise. I wish to offer my deep gratitude for the feeling of fairness, balance, your wit and your humour, and your measure in your tone. Thank you sincerely, for the manner in which you have presided over the Senate. We are extremely grateful that you have done so, in the manner that you have. I wish to offer my heartfelt thanks on behalf of the Opposition for that. I know it has been a long thanks, but it has been five years, [*Desk thumping*] 179 sittings, and it has been an incredible experience that I will always mark in my mind as a great privilege. Thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

2.05 a.m.

Madam President: The Leader of Government Business.

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Thank you kindly, Madam President. For a minute I thought there that Sen. Faris Al-Rawi was giving us an Emmanuel George. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: That was one of the best days in the Senate. That was one of the best.

Sen. G. Singh: At 2.05 a.m., Madam President, I wish to adopt the sentiments expressed by Sen. Elton Prescott and Sen. Faris Al-Rawi with respect to the staff. I came into the picture in June 2012, but I want to quickly crystallize what I have to say, given the time. I want to thank the coordinator of the Independent Bench and the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis, for making my job as Leader of Government Business in the Senate very easy. We had a full-disclosure approach to running the Senate, 99 per cent of the time, [*Laughter*] and we were able to maintain the decorum and dignity and the programming of the Senate over this period.

To the Clerk of the Senate, Nataki Atiba-Dilchan and her staff, I want to really say that, you know, I am always amazed with her ease, in the manner in which

she smiles easily, and her professionalism, [*Desk thumping*] and I really, really want to thank you and your team, Khisha, Julien and the others, really first-class professional staff.

To the Members of the Independent Bench, you lend a certain gravitas to the cut and thrust that you really make a difference. In fact, one of the things that you must recognize in the Senate is the need for conciliation, for negotiation, and for compromise; that is perhaps the hallmark here as against in the other place. To Members—and that, therefore, is the principle upon which I operated, whether it was Subhas Ramkhelawan as the coordinator of the bench, Mrs. Helen Drayton or with Sen. Camille Robinson-Regis, that is the principle upon which I anchored the approach we take here.

I want to say to Members of this team, coming in late in the day, so to speak, in 2012, you have such a stellar team on the Government side that I found it easy to captain the team. I put myself more like Shera, I took a more philosophical approach, but what you had was the real top-class players in the Government team. So, to all Members of our team, thank you very much for making my job easy. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, well, I had the—Sen. Timothy Hamel-Smith, who had the capacity to look very clinically at legislation and come up with solutions very quickly, and certainly I enjoyed serving with him, and certainly serving with you also. You both have your own style and I enjoyed both styles very effectively.

When shall we three meet again? [*Laughter*] When the hurly-burly is done, when the battle is lost and won, but we keep in mind, whilst I move the adjournment of this Senate to a date to be fixed, that you can be called out very quickly Monday or Tuesday. So everything we say here we keep that caveat in mind. So, Madam President, I know that you will have your say and then you will call upon me to move the adjournment of the Senate. I thank you all very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Hon. Senators, let me begin by thanking all of you, first of all, for electing me a short time ago. It has been a pleasant and a meaningful experience for me to serve in this capacity, and to serve all of our citizens of this beloved country equally, every creed and every race. I salute you all—Government, Opposition and Independent—for the industry that you have brought to the Senate, for your sense of humour which made my task a light one, sometimes, for your very frequent complimentary remarks, even this evening. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for the very warm sentiments you have expressed and the compliments that make me feel very good, and I thank you for

your love. I thank the parliamentary staff, the security detail, and, in particular, my Marshal and Deputy Marshal who have taken care of me in particular during my stay in this office.

I also wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and His Excellency the President, Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona SC, ORTT, for the opportunity to serve in this capacity and in the other capacity, that has been, and it continues to be a phenomenal experience. I wish all of you God's blessings. I wish I had organized a cocktail party for you, but, looking at the hour, [*Laughter*] I have had to call off the caterers, it is just too late. I thank you all for the opportunity to share this experience with you, and I thank, most of all, my Lord who knows my heart and my striving, and who gives me sustenance. May God bless you all and may God bless our nation. [*Desk thumping*]

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made and question proposed: That this Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [*Hon. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned at 2.11 a.m.