HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 26, 1993

The House met at 1.40 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence to the Member for San Fernando West (Hon. Ralph Maraj), the Member for Tobago East (Mr. A.N.R. Robinson), the Member for Port of Spain South (Hon. Jean Pierre) and the Member for San Fernando East (Hon. Patrick Manning) from today's sitting.

PAPERS LAID

1. The Value Added Tax Order, 1993. *[The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley)*]

2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Custodian of Enemy Property for the year ended December 31, 1991. *[Hon. W. Mottley]*

To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (Chaguanas):

National Service Programme

120. (a) Would the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs indicate the procedure for recruitment to the National Service Programme?

(b) Would the Minister provide the nature, cost, location and number of personnel of each project for 1992 and similar details on the planned programme for 1993?

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, my understanding is that there was communication between the Member for Chaguanas and the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs. They have agreed that this question would be deferred.

Madam Speaker: For what period? Was there any indication?

Miss Bhaggan: For one week.

Caroni River Basin Study

121. (a) Would the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources indicate whether the Caroni River Basin study is completed?

(b) If the answer is in the affirmative, when are the proposals expected to be implemented?

(c) If not, when is the study expected to be completed?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, my apologies to the Member. I did not have the chance to talk to the Member. I have a slight problem with the questions under my name, for which there are about four.

I seek your indulgence and the Members who posed the questions for a deferral of one week.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Battered Women's Homes

122. Miss Hulsie Bhaggan *(Chaguanas)* asked the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services:

Would the Minister state:

(a) The number, location and capacity of homes for battered women in Trinidad and Tobago?

(b) Whether her Government provides any assistance to these homes?

(c) If the answers are in the affirmative, would the Minister provide details?

The Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services (Dr. The Hon. Linda Baboolal): Madam Speaker, there are five established homes that cater for battered women in Trinidad and Tobago. They are:

Location	Number	Capacity
Port of Spain	3	78

South Trinidad	1	25
Tobago	1	25

Government provides assistance to these homes.

In 1992, subventions totalling $108,000.00 were granted to homes for battered women. Due to additional grants in 1993, the expenditure is expected to be in the vicinity of $125,000.00.

Municipal Corporations Act (Sec. 109)
(Proclamation of)

126. Mr. Sahid Hosein *(Siparia)* asked the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs:

Would the Attorney General indicate to this House how soon does Government intend to have section 109 of Act No. 21 of 1990 proclaimed?

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I am not the Attorney General, but this question was properly directed to the Minister of Local Government.

Section 109 of Act No. 21 of 1990 was proclaimed on October 1, 1991 by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Hosein: That being the case, would the Minister indicate to this House what is preventing the regional corporations from acting under the provisions of this section?

Mr. Valley: That question does not follow. Section 109 of the Act simply allows corporations to establish bank accounts.

It says:

"Every Corporation should establish a fund to be known by its corporate name to which all moneys received by the corporation, other than sums received by it as trustees or for the purposes of any fund established pursuant to section 110, shall be credited and all expenditure of the corporation, except in its capacity as the trustee or for the purposes of any fund established pursuant to section 110, shall be defrayed out of such fund."

1.50 p.m.

Local Government Bodies
(Co-ordinating Committees)

127. Mr. Sahid Hosein *(Siparia)* asked the Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance:

(a) Is the Minister aware that co-ordinating committees are not being convened in all of the local government bodies?

(b) Can he indicate why this is so?

(c) Can he say what steps his ministry is taking to ensure that the co-ordinating committees, as constituted under the Act, begin to function?

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mayors or Chairmen and the Chief Officers have been directed to ensure that co-ordinating committees are established and operated as envisaged in the Municipal Corporations Act No. 21 of 1990, and these committees have been convened in the majority of local government bodies. The Minister of Public Utilities has also been requested to ensure that agencies under his control appoint representatives to these committees in the various local government bodies.

Mr. Hosein: Can the Minister indicate to this House whether he has been informed by the Chairman and the Chief officers that while these co-ordinating committees might have been meeting, they are virtually non-functional in that the people who attend these co-ordinating committees are very junior persons who are themselves unable to take positions on various matters?

Mr. Valley: I do not know how to answer that.

Mr. Hosein: Before I move to question No. 128, it is very important that these co-ordinating committees, if they are to be of any use, be appropriately constituted. The person who is responsible is the Minister—

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the Member knows how he can raise this matter in the House. If he feels it that important, he can raise it in the appropriate manner.

Mr. Hosein: With all due respect, this is what I am seeking to do.

Association of Local Government (Removal of Secretary)

128. Mr. Sahid Hosein *(Siparia)* asked the Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance:

(a) Can the Minister indicate if the Secretary of the Association of Local Government has been removed?

(b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, can he say on what grounds was she removed?

(c) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, can the Minister also indicate if the position is being advertised and, if so, by what method?

(d) Can the Minister indicate if interviews are to be conducted, by whom will they be, or are being carried out?

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, the Secretary was not removed. No pay leave was granted to a public officer to take up the post. This leave expired on December 31, 1992 and the officer resumed duty in her substantive post at the Ministry of Education in January 1993.

Accordingly, parts (b) and (c) of the question do not apply.

Section 234 (4) of the Municipal Corporations Act No. 21 of 1990 states:

"The staff of the Association of Local Government Corporations shall consist of such public officers as may be assigned to it."

The Ministry of Local Government has taken steps to assign a Secretary to the Association as stipulated by that subsection.

Madam Speaker: The Member for Tabaquite is absent. Chief Whip, are you asking that questions 136 and 137 be deferred also? Answers to these questions would be deferred for a period of one week.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Mohammed Haniff (Tabaquite):

Environmental Pollution
(Lead)

134. Would the Minister of Planning and Development state to this honourable House what mechanism is in place to monitor and manage environmental pollution with respect to:

(a) Leaded water lines in the water distribution system of WASA;

(b) Lead in ceramics and paints;

(c) Lead in petrol;

(d) Discarded lubricating oil at service stations nationwide?

Guaracara Tabaquite Road

(Repairs)

136. Would the Minister of Works and Transport give an indication as to when his ministry will commence repairs and resurfacing of the Guaracara Tabaquite Road from the Sisters Road Junction to the Guaracara Composite School?

Agricultural Access Roads
(Repairs)

137. Would the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources state how many of the agricultural access roads in the Tabaquite constituency are slated to be repaired this year from the IADB loan?

Questions, by leave, deferred.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (Caroni Central):

Squatters
(Tenancy Regularization)

149. Would the Minister of Housing and Settlement state:

(a) Whether any progress has been made in regularizing the tenancy of squatters on state lands at Arena Road, Freeport and at Carlsen Field?

(b) If there has been no progress, would the Minister state why?

(c) If there has been progress, would the Minister state the extent of the progress and what actions have been taken?

(d) The expected completion date of the tenancy regularization exercise in the above-mentioned areas?

Squatters' Settlements
(Bhadase Lands)

150. Would the Minister of Housing and Settlements state:

(a) Whether he is aware of the large squatters settlements on Bhadase Lands Enterprise?

(b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:

(i) What plans he has for regularizing the tenancy of squatters on the said lands?

(ii) When would the plans be implemented?

(c) If he has no plans, would the Minister state why this matter is not being pursued by his Government?

Madam Speaker: Chief Whip are you asking for a deferral for this also?

Mr. Maharaj: For one week.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Krish Jurai (Nariva):

Unemployment
(Reduction of)

153. With respect to a recent statement made by the Prime Minister in Parliament that he would take steps to reduce unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago, would the Prime Minister state:

(a) What specific projects will come on stream to relieve the chronic unemployment plaguing the Sangre Grande, Biche and Rio Claro areas?

(b) What is the anticipated number of persons to benefit from such programmes?

(c) How soon will these programmes come on stream?

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, we have to ask for a deferral of question no. 153 for two weeks. This question should really be redirected. It really has not been acted upon and I would suggest it be redirected to the Minister of Labour and Co-operatives.

Madam Speaker: Would the Member take note?

Land Distribution
(Nariva Swamp)

154. With respect to the Government's stated "policy on land distribution", would the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources state:

(a) Whether this policy will include land distribution in the Nariva Swamp?

(b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:

(i) The acreage to be distributed?

(ii) The number of persons who would benefit from the distribution of the said lands?

Plants
(Price Increase)

155. Is the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources aware:

(a) That the recent hundred per cent increase in the price of plants from the Ministry of Agriculture Plant Propagating Station is having an adverse effect on farmers?

(b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state what he intends to do about this steep price increase?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, as I tried to point out a moment ago, some questions which I referred for deferral for one week were Nos. 154, 155 and 158.

Madam Speaker: For what period?

Dr. Rowley: One week.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche):

NUCOR Corporation
(Investment Contract)

156. Could the Minister of Energy and Energy-based Industries state:

(a) The duration of the contract for the delivery of natural gas to the NUCOR Corporation of the U.S.A.?

(b) The tax benefits which would accrue to this company by allowing it to operate in the Export Processing Zone?

(c) The number of permanent jobs that would be created by this investment?

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, we again ask for a deferral of that.

Madam Speaker: For what period?

Hon. K. Valley: One week, Madam Speaker.

Question, by leave, deferred.

Missing Diaries
(Narcotics and Firearms Control Bureau)

157. Mr. Trevor Sudama *(Oropouche)* asked the Minister of National Security:

Could the Minister state how many station diaries or other diaries used by police officers have been found to be missing in the Narcotics and Firearms Control Bureau, in the months of November and December, 1992 and January, 1993?

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Madam Speaker, in November 1992, the First Division Officers' Visit and Inspection Book, which is lodged at the Narcotics and Firearms Control Bureau was found to be missing.

There were no reports of missing diaries in December, 1992. However, in January, 1993, eight station diaries were discovered missing from the Bureau. Investigations are continuing into the disappearance of those diaries.

Mr. Sudama: Would the Minister state whether he would lay in this House a report on the investigation into the missing station diaries?

Hon. C. Huggins: I am not in a position to say so, Madam Speaker.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche):

Agricultural Development Bank
(Loans)

158. Could the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resource state:

(a) The total of loans made by the Agricultural Development Bank to farmers and fishermen in 1992?

(b) The total of loans made for each of the following classes of agricultural and fishing activity:

(i) Dairy farming;

(ii) Poultry rearing;

(iii) Pig rearing;

(iv) Vegetable cultivation;

(v) Sugar-cane cultivation;

(vi) Citrus cultivation;

(vii) Rice cultivation;

(viii) Floriculture;

(ix) Aquaculture; and

(x) Fishing?

(c) The total of loans made for farmers and fishing activities on a regional basis, i.e. northern, central and southern regions?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, as I pointed out earlier, I would like a deferral of that question.

Question, by leave, deferred.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I have spoken with the Leader of Government Business on question No. 136 which was deferred. The Government has agreed to answer it today. I wonder, Madam Speaker, if you would permit that?

Leave granted.

Guaracara/Tabaquite Road
(Repairs)

136. Dr. Carl Singh *(Tabaquite)* asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister give an indication as to when his Ministry will commence repairs and resurfacing of the Guaracara/Tabaquite Road from the Sisters Road Junction to the Guaracara Composite School?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Hon. Members are advised that available funding in 1993 does not allow the ministry to mount a permanent road-resurfacing programme. As a result, no major road-resurfacing work is scheduled for Guaracara/Tabaquite Road in 1993.

Routine maintenance programmes will continue, however, and concentrated efforts will be directed to critical areas.

The Ministry will continue to monitor its programmes with a view to identifying savings to broaden such programmes.

Mr. Haniff: Will the hon. Minister be kind enough to say whether the critical areas will include in front of the Williamsville Junior Secondary School which is in a terrible state at this time and which has been so for the past year as a result of a broken water line?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, that is a different question. If the Member would pose it, I would be quite happy to answer it in the normal way.

2.00 p.m.

MR. SUBHAS PANDAY
(END OF SUSPENSION)

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following motion:

Whereas by resolution passed by this honourable House on February 12, 1993 to the effect that Mr. Subhas Panday, Member for Naparima, be suspended from the service of the House; and

Whereas the said suspension was fixed for two weeks from the date of the passing of the said resolution;

Be it resolved, that the suspension from the service of the House of Mr. Subhas Panday, Member for Naparima, cease at the end of the sitting of the House today.

Question proposed.

Mr. B. Panday: Would the hon. Member state under what Standing Order he is coming?

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 43(7).

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr. B. Panday: That is not going to prevent a High Court Action.

Question put and agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, as agreed previously with the Opposition, I beg to move that "Private Business" be deferred to consider at this time the motion standing in my name, Motion No. 1, under "Government Business", on page 13 of the Order Paper:

"Be it resolved:

That this honourable House take note of the statement made by the Hon. Prime Minister at a sitting of the House of Representatives held on Monday, January 4, 1993" be taken at this stage of the proceedings rather than the motions under "Private Business".

Leave granted.

PRIME MINISTER'S ACTION PLAN

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following motion:

Be it resolved,

That this honourable House take note of the statement made by the Hon. Prime Minister at a sitting of the House of Representatives held on Monday, January 4, 1993.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Member for San Fernando East and Prime Minister, when he made his statement before this House, outlined to the House, clearly, the travail of Trinidad and Tobago as we move through very changing circumstances—political, economic and social. He stated clearly that for Trinidad and Tobago to realize its potential in the developing world that is so rapidly emerging, the society had to become more and more inter-dependent with the world trading community; and that, therefore, trade was going to become even more important to the sustenance of our standard of living.

In order to trade, Trinidad and Tobago had to develop more sharply all areas of competitive advantage that we had, and to do this, the society as a whole had to become more efficient since the leading edge or niche advantages would need the back–up of support services assembled in the rest of the society. So that a more efficient society had to emerge and this was necessarily going to cause far-flung changes in how we organize ourselves economically and socially in this country.

To this effect, the Government was charged with the leadership of instrumenting those changes and the Prime Minister signalled that we had begun that work in 1992 and, in 1993, we would be laying further foundations for that. Certainly on the macro-economic side, the Government, in the 1993 budget, had furthered the laying of that foundation. In the whole matter of organizing our macro-economic affairs, we had projected that we did not have any surplus or deficit in 1993. Subsequent to the hon. Prime Minister's statement, we see other societies having to do the same thing.

The mighty United States is, itself, having to grapple with huge budget deficits and the threat that that presents—even to the United States—to its success

in the economic world that has emerged in which the United States has found itself, not in the advantageous position that it was, certainly, at the end of World War II and leading through the 1950s and 1960s; there is the erosion of that competitive advantage and the tremendous damage that the deficit was doing to that country; and the new President beginning to deal with that situation.

We were no different in Trinidad and Tobago and we had, in advance of that, come to grips with our own economy and had clearly signalled that we were not trying to roll back deficits; but we were, in fact, already bringing our situation to projected zero deficit in 1993. Since the presentation of the budget, though, Madam Speaker, the hon. Members of this House would know that this economy is highly dependent on oil. Just to give you some indication of some of the economic circumstances we must manage, and why the Government has to be even more mindful of its expenditure and not make commitments in excess of that. We have oil prices and the best advice that we have had, both domestic and international, as regards oil prices was that we project a budget price of $21 per barrel. Now with a budget price of $21 there is zero deficit. But if you go to $20, Madam Speaker, the deficit balloons to $116 million; and if you go to $19, the budget deficit goes to $211 million.

2.10 p.m.

So that these are facts and we do not hide them. We tell the population, because we have been very open with our economic information in this session of Parliament, and it is important that the rest of the society understand these circumstances. The facts are that this Minister of Finance is no Sai Baba. I cannot materialize money. The facts are that at $21, zero deficit, at $20, it is $116 million, at $19, the budget deficit would go up to $211 million, all things else being the same. Therefore we have to watch our expenditures if we are to achieve the purposes that we set about.

In addition to that, we outlined that we had a very high debt service in l992, l993 and l994, and thereafter it falls off quite rapidly. So that in l995, our debt service in terms of exports of goods and services, falls from its present peak in excess of 30 per cent to under 23 per cent. So that gives the society some breathing room in l995 onwards to deal with other matters which are being urged on us now.

But at this time, we pointed out, and, indeed, the Prime Minister pointed out in his address to the Parliament in January, that we had very high debt service this year. In fact, just to give you an idea, in February alone, Trinidad and Tobago

paid out US $122 million in debt service. That is this month. So that it has an effect on the economy and we need, as a society, to understand that we are making those payments; that it is tough to make them, but it is not for all time; that this year and next year represents the peaks and it falls off very rapidly thereafter.

We are coming to Parliament, as the hon. Prime Minister indicated, with much legislation, starting next week and going thereafter for the next several months in an attempt to transform the economic environment in Trinidad and Tobago to conform with the rest of our plans for getting this economy ship-shape, lean and competitive. Central Bank and banking legislation is expected to be before this House next month, March; the Companies Act, certainly within a month of that; the Securities Exchange Act, or the SEC, our legislation to regulate the stock exchange, again, within a few weeks thereafter; Customs, hopefully, within the next two weeks. The changes to the Customs legislation will come to this Parliament in pieces rather than as one compendium bill, because it is an evolving process. As we go into different areas of Customs and change different administrative ways of doing things, then legislative changes are incumbent and we will be bringing different pieces of Customs legislation to this Parliament, beginning next month, and in a series of measures thereafter. Insurance Bill, we expect again to be before this Parliament next month.

Furthermore, there is another Bill that will be here early in the second quarter to set up venture capital companies in furtherance of the measure put out in the budget. This venture capital is absolutely required if our companies are to become modern and to meet the export challenge. It has been shown that even though we have got a business expansion and restructuring loan in place from the World Bank, it is, nevertheless, a loan, and what our businesses require in Trinidad and Tobago now is new equity support. So that when we fix the stock exchange, we are also, at the same time—which would support equity investments in the larger companies—trying to set up venture capital companies with tax concession support so that these companies will be able to plough capital into manufacturing and exports.

Parallel with that, the Business Information Centre is being set up to provide information support for the business community. Business incubation centres are also being set up, and the small business company is being re-capitalized and expanded, all in support of this new economy that we are attempting to build.

The Prime Minister also made reference to foreign currency accounts, all as part of a process of the gradual liberalization of exchange control. Since that statement of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Finance has had a first draft from the Central Bank on how these accounts will operate and very shortly, the banking community, who must become involved in this process because they would be very instrumental in how the system will be operating, will be involved with the Central Bank in terms of working out the details.

We had clearly indicated that in all of this process of reform it was the energy sector that had to first start the relay run, and the hon. Prime Minister indicated several things which were going to happen back in January. Since then, they have happened. Petrotrin has been formed. Exxon is proceeding with its investment and preparing to start drilling in the Southern Basin Consortium. Enron have considerably advanced their preparation for drilling. Their platform is assembled and a large team of Enron officials will arrive here in Trinidad next week.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, if the Minister would give way. I am at a bit of a loss to find out whether we are proceeding on matters included in the Prime Minister's statement, on which the Minister of Finance is elaborating, and therefore we are proceeding on a debate of this statement, or whether he is making a statement in his own right. I am really at a loss, because I presumed he would have made a statement on a particular issue. Now he seems to be ranging through the whole economy. I should like to find out, really, if this is not an abuse of parliamentary privilege in the making of a statement.

Hon. W. Mottley: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister's statement was very wide-ranging and I am going through a number of items that the Prime Minister raised in his statement: foreign currency accounts, Enron, Exxon, Unocal was the next one I had, because he did say that Unocal was going to come and sign an agreement on, I think it was, January 8—

Mr. Sudama: On a point of clarification. If you are speaking in a debate, then we could raise the issues. If you are making a statement, we cannot. I just want to get a clarification on that.

Hon. W. Mottley: Madam Speaker, the facts are that the Prime Minister raised these things.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member is asking whether you are leading off the debate on this matter. The answer is, yes, I imagine.

Hon. W. Mottley: Yes, I am leading off the debate.

Mr Sudama: I thought he was making a statement.

Hon. W. Mottley: The time for ministerial statements on the agenda is long past. I think, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member was giving sustenance outside of this room when the ministerial statements were being made.

2.20 p.m.

Madam Speaker, Unocal was another company that the hon. Prime Minister mentioned, and that exploration agreement has been signed as the Prime Minister predicted. Unocal has since set up offices in Trinidad and Tobago and are well on their way to beginning the exploration of the East Coast. The Prime Minister mentioned that Amoco had brought a particularly large rig to do drilling. Since this statement, Amoco has in fact used that rig to drill a particularly successful gas well which is now producing and which has sorted out the gas shortage which we were suffering late last year and early this year. In addition, that particular well is producing over 2,000 barrels of condensate per day. Since then, the rig has gone on to start drilling deep for oil in the Samaan field, which is the main purpose of its arriving in Trinidad.

An LNG plant for Trinidad has also recently been announced and this is a very important development. Quite apart from the importance in its own right, it is important that hon. Members understand that it could have far-reaching implications for the country, in that the volume of gas to be processed could have the capacity to transform Trinidad and Tobago's revenue position. Therefore, we in the Ministry of Finance are very eagerly promoting this LNG operation.

Quite apart from that, Madam Speaker, we anticipate that with an LNG plant and the volume of gas brought ashore, including associated gas, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago could benefit enormously because it could have the potential for T&TEC—when that moment comes when their present gas contracts expire—to realize a new gas contract at prices that would see electricity rates not shoot up drastically as in the absence of that LNG project. Therefore, it is a fundamental and important strategy of the Government that we succeed in getting that LNG plant promoted and realized in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* No, we have projected, in the statement, to start work, hopefully, towards the end of 1994.

In addition, the Prime Minister had mentioned the Nucor signing. That, in fact, took place, and since then, we have started discussions with other United States steel and ore companies who wish to follow in Nucor's footsteps, and,

therefore, we are discussing, right now, with other US major companies, similar investments in the same field in Trinidad and Tobago.

The methanol project is at an advanced stage of being put together with European and American interests. There will be more on that, very shortly.

Finally, Madam Speaker, in the same energy vein, I want to state that our whole divestment programme is proceeding satisfactorily. In the 1993 Budget, we had put a figure of US $100 million into the budget; the proceeds to be realized from divestment. The Urea, Fertrin divestment is at an extremely advanced stage and we are expecting that:

(i) we will not be disappointed in terms of what we had budgeted; and

(ii) that those sums would be realized in Trinidad and Tobago by the end of March.

I want to let the Trinidad and Tobago community, through this House, know that the sums will be realized. We shall not fall short, and that the time table is certainly, by the end of March for the latest.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister's statement is the direction in which we are carrying the economy and the society. It is a map in a sea of changes and we are confident that we have that plan. There are difficulties, but we as a nation are not incapable of surmounting these difficulties, and we will see Trinidad and Tobago successful.

Question proposed.

Mr. Basdeo Panday *(Couva North):* Madam Speaker, when on January 4, 1993, the Prime Minister came to this House and sought, under the item of "Statement by Ministers", to make this long comprehensive statement, the subject of which is being debated here today, one wondered why he was doing that. If one looks at the Standing Orders, one would see that there is nothing in our Standing Orders that defines the use to be made of this item on the agenda.

However, our own Standing Orders make reference to May's *Parliamentary Practice*, where we are silent. I raise this point, because we have often called for reform in this House—with no response from the other side—and have indicated how the Government intends to abuse the power of this House, and to violate its rules. It is an indication with which we must preface the Prime Minister's statement.

I refer to page 297 of Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, Twenty-first Edition, which says:

"(1) Ministerial statements

Explanations are made in the House by Ministers on behalf of the Government regarding their domestic and foreign policy; stating the advice they have tendered to the Sovereign regarding their retention of office or the dissolution of Parliament; announcing the legislative proposals they intend to submit to Parliament; or the course they intend to adopt in the transaction and arrangement of public business. These explanations are sometimes elicited by arrangement in reply to a question. But the older practice under which they were volunteered spontaneously is also often followed. Prior notice to the Speaker is necessary, but neither his permission nor the leave of the House is required. Since 1964 notice has whenever possible been given to Members of impending ministerial statements by means of notices placed in the Members' Lobby and displayed on the annunciator. As no question is before the House, debate on such statements is irregular . . .”

So, the first point I want to make is that the Member made that statement, knowing it would not be debated. It is only being debated today because of enormous pressure on this side.

". . . but questions arising from the statement are frequently raised and replies given by the Minister. It is not the normal practice for questions on more than one statement to be taken at the same time. Debate on a ministerial statement has been raised upon a motion for adjournment, moved for that purpose."

That is when the Minister's statement is debated, if at all; not three months later, when it has lost its sting and relevance.

"A statement relating to an adjourned debate, which was shortly to be resumed, has been allowed.

Exceptionally, statements, including statements on future business, have been permitted by the Speaker, in urgent circumstances and with the leave of the House, at other times . . ."

I thought I would draw that to the attention of this House, so that the country can become aware of the chaotic situation that exists in this House that is resulting in the deterioration of the proceedings of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I must take objection to the statements made by the Leader of the Opposition. One would remember that we had agreed to debate this motion the following week, but because we wanted to accommodate the Opposition when they brought that motion with respect to the perception of corruption, with agreement, we agreed to defer this motion.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. B. Panday: The Minister is missing the point as usual. The point I am making is not the fact that we are debating it, but the fact that the Prime Minister chose to make a ministerial statement. And clearly this is not a ministerial statement and it does not qualify under that rule. The first point is that it was not a ministerial statement, and the second point is that the Minister chose to be out of the country at this time. But that does not matter. We are debating a statement by the Prime Minister, and he is not here to hear what we have to say; neither is he here to reply; nor is he here to take part in the debate. No wonder the Minister of Finance gets up and begins to make his own statement. The Member for Oropouche was right when he said, "Are we going to debate your statement? Or are we going to debate the Prime Minister's statement?" What are we doing?

Be that as it may, when the Prime Minister made this comprehensive statement, at that time one wondered what was the purpose of it—when a budget had been delivered by the Minister of Finance one month before and one month later, the Prime Minister came and made another quasi-budget statement—a budget-like statement. Also we have had the Medium-Term Plan.

The first question arose and what one thought was that it was an ill-advised statement. Because insofar as it repeated what the Minister of Finance said in the budget it was irrelevant. Insofar as it repeated what was said in the *Medium-Term Development Programme*, it was irrelevant because that has been said before. But insofar as it contradicted what the Minister of Finance has said, it left us all in a quandary as to which statement we ought to accept and who is the real Minister of Finance, and whether we should accept the Prime Minister's statement where they differ, or the Minister of Finance's statement. So it was an ill-advised statement to begin with.

Having heard that mini-budget speech it became clear that the purpose was to buy time by allaying present fears and disappointment of the people with respect to the Government's failure to perform; and they have failed to perform. After one year in office, it was clear that the society was up in arms and as the Prime

Minister himself said, the honeymoon was over—I do not know what started, but the honeymoon was over.

The honeymoon was over for one reason: that they came to this country giving high hopes, telling the population that they had an answer to the unemployment problem, to crime, to the whole question of alienation. They had an answer to the economic problems of the country and that they are well equipped and aware. Having served five years in the Opposition, they had prepared everything and they only wanted an opportunity to go.

One year after they were in office they had done zilch—nothing. They had performed in not a single regard which applied to their fundamental promises. For example, they knew that the society was up in arms and they knew that the unemployed had seen no relief in their poverty, suffering and their destitution. Their standard of living had continued to fall. You had promised that you would raise their standard of living. For the unemployed and the destitute, their standard of living continued to fall as prices continue to rise, as they continue to have no hope of getting jobs.

With respect to the employed, instead of creating employment what the Government was doing, was making statements about retrenchment. Retrenchment in WASA and the Port. They knew that people were no longer going to be hoodwinked—that was the answer. The Prime Minister knew that. He knew the honeymoon was over and people were no longer prepared to be hoodwinked and wait to see when the PNM is going to perform. This statement was intended to buy time, to stave off pending demonstrations, marches and frustration in the society. The Government knew very well they were coming and they had to allay these fears and they had to stave off the build-up that was taking place.

When you want to stave off a build-up and to end alienation and hopelessness there are basically two ways of doing it. The first way is to deliver, and if you could succeed in delivering, then you will allay the fears in the society. People would see that you are delivering and the unemployed have hope of becoming employed, the poor and the destitute have hope of enjoying a decent standard of living; you deliver. The people who are employed you do not threaten with retrenchment and unemployment. You either deliver or you make more promises on top of the ones you have already made.

Since the Government, after having been in office for one year, have not delivered at all, the Prime Minister decided that despite a budget he had to come and make a quasi-budget—a budget-like speech—in which he was going to make

even more promises with the intention of giving them hope. That is absolutely clear from the Prime Minister's speech.

As a matter of fact, he began by saying he is cognizant of the Government's responsibility to keep the population informed, and tried to give us the impression that what he was doing was informing the population. I should like to know what he said new then. He realized that he had been in office for one year and he also realized that the country was sitting on a time bomb—a powder keg—waiting to explode because of the Government's inability to perform. At page 3, of his ' "budget" he speaks of developments. I read the paragraph:

> "As 1993 opens, amidst all the predictions of gloom and doom, it appeared appropriate for me, as Prime Minister, to address the national community on some of the positive developments that will take place in 1993; developments which give rise to tremendous optimism and hope."

And therein lies the key to this statement: to give a feeling of optimism and hope, to buy time to ward off the pending demonstrations that he knew were coming because of the Government's inability to perform. That was the purpose of this "budget." Everybody saw through it. He goes on and at page 31, as he started so he ended.

> "Madam Speaker, I leave you, hon. Members and the national community with hope.."

I want to tell you something. The other day I tried to take some hope and go to the grocery and nobody would sell me any goods. You do not take hope and go to the grocery and you do not take hope and buy food and you do not take hope and mind your children, and you do not take hope and send them to school. Therefore, that was an act of deceit on the part of the Prime Minister. If you had the intelligence such as I, you may be qualified for that.

2.40 p.m.

That is what this speech was intended to do. However, subsequent events have proved that he was not only misguided by making the speech, but he was totally misled into believing that that speech would buy time and give hope, for it did not give at all. In fact, subsequent events would show that neither the labour community nor the unemployed; nor the poor and the destitute; nor the vendors—except that he was going to clean up the city, and it meant them—nobody, believed a single word he said, and the demonstration started.

It was a futile statement, intending to hoodwink, deceive, buy time and create hope, where there was none. While people were outside demonstrating, we pointed out to the Prime Minister that this kind of silly statement which deals with the periphery and not with the real malaise that affects the society, is what is causing the trouble outside. If he wanted to give hope, buy time and if he wanted patience, then what he had to do was to dialogue with people.

It is only when the Prime Minister took the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, and began to dialogue with the labour movement and the people who are concerned, that the demonstrations outside were abated in any way. Even as I sit here today, they are dialoguing, because of advice we gave. Had he done that, there would have been no need to make that statement.

The reason why I am making this point is that this statement indicates that the Prime Minister does not know what to do. He does not have a clue of how the society operates; what really affects people of the society; and he really does not know how to deal with the problems which are facing us. He believes that by making a statement such as this, everything would have been all right. The demonstrations continued and stopped only when he took our advice to go and dialogue with the labour movement and the people concerned.

It is not as if the Prime Minister does not know what are the problems of the country. He knows what they are, but what he does not know is how to deal with them; how to tackle and solve them. Unfortunately, he does not have any assistance from his colleagues on the other side. The Prime Minister knew, for example, that unemployment and poverty were problems that were plaguing this society and which are creating so much disenchantment within this society, that it is likely to explode one of these days. There has only been an abatement of the problem.

The Prime Minister is also well aware of the fear of retrenchment of thousands of workers. The Government are very callous, when they say: "We can no longer stem retrenchment; 1000 must go here and 1000 must go there." Does he not know that the moment he makes a statement like that, he creates fear in the minds of all the workers who are employed at Port Authority, WASA, and T&TEC? It is only people who do not understand how the society works are foolish enough to make statements like that.

Instead, if he had introduced a programme or plan, VTEPP or retirement plan, or whatever it is, and merely made it known to workers. Those who wanted to go, fine. He would have created a situation where workers would have been able to look at that kind of plan without any fear that it was not being pushed down their

throats. If he had a voluntary retirement plan, he could have put it to people and said, "Here it is; look at it; see what you guys want to do with this." He should not have told them at first that 1000 must go; and that those who take the voluntary plan, fine, and those who do not take it would be retrenched. Those were statements that Ministers were making.

I want to know whether this Government has any sense at all and whether its ears are to the ground. It should not make that kind of statement. The Prime Minister knew that unemployment and retrenchment were problems. The Prime Minister also knew that crime was a problem, because, if you look at his statement, you would see that he began to talk about these things. He talks about them and every time that he talks about them, he indicates that he does not know what to do.

The Prime Minister also knew that not only was crime a problem in the society, but also the security of people. A calypsonian came to my office, today. He lives in New York now, but he came over for the carnival. I would not mention his name because they victimize people too much. He told me that he was living for the past year or two in the United States that and he was terrified for his own safety in this country. He had gone and they had robbed two or three members of his family since he was in the country, just prior to carnival.

Do you think that the Prime Minister does not know what the problem is in this country? Do you think the Prime Minister does not know that everybody in this country is living in fear, that people are afraid to go home, they are afraid to come out from their cars to open their gates? Do you think Members of the PNM do not know that? When you open your gate, someone can point a gun at your head and take off with your car.

Ministers in this Parliament are losing their cars. Those are the same ministers who are talking about keeping the window open. The PNM is so great and is doing such a good job, just now you can keep your window—she forgot her garage door open. She can keep the window open, but she must close the garage door. Next time she could keep the window open, but close the garage door tightly, otherwise they would take the car. That is the kind of misleading thing that people like that feel they can fool the country with. "PNM is doing such a great job; just now we would be dealing with crime; it would be like the old day, when people could keep their windows open and go to sleep." Next day, they stole her car.

The Prime Minister is well aware and he deals with it in his statement. He is well aware that crime is a problem that terrifies everybody in this country. Part of the problem of crime in this country is not Ramesh Maharaj. He is a lawyer. I

notice that every time they get into trouble they hire very big lawyers, even though the lawyers pay back some. Part of the problem of crime in the country is part of the problem of what is happening in the Police Service. The Prime Minister knows that, but does he have a clue as to what to do about the Police Service? He does not have a single clue.

In fact, I think what he talks about is giving the policeman a flexible motorcycle. Quite frankly, I have never seen a flexible motorcycle. I do not know if it is made from rubber. That is his solution to the problem. It is in his speech. *[Noise]*

Madam Speaker: Members in the public gallery, will you please observe the rules of this House! The hon. Member is making his contribution. Be quiet.

Mr. B. Panday: Although the Prime Minister tended to indicate that he recognized the problems in the society, there was one problem that he did not recognize and to which he made no allusion. That was the problem of corruption. That is one problem in this society that he avoided like the plague.

I have been saying, that when oil money was flowing in this country, and everybody had a little bit to put in their pockets, people did not care about O'Halloran and Prevatt. They said: He was stealing, so what? We could live. I warned them. I said that once that oil money stops, and they do not have money to splurge around, and there are unemployment, hardship and destitution, the people of this country will never tolerate corruption, or the perception of corruption.

If people feel this Government is corrupt, they would explode, because they would say, they are paying $6 million to buy a building from ALGICO. To house what? Ministries? They do not have money to pay us so that we could live. They would not take that. That is why I say that the Prime Minister does not understand the society and does not know what to do.

If the Prime Minister had any appreciation, or sympathy, or if he cared about the society, he would never have been so callous as to allow his statement to be made in the teeth of demonstration, to buy that building from ALGICO for $6 million, when the former government refused ALGICO for $3 million. The public refused to buy it for $3 million. Everybody knows the connection. They think people are stupid, but they are not. They put two and two together and recognize what is happening.

I said that you have to deal with the perception of corruption, because people are not going to stand up and tolerate corruption in this society when they are starving. That is one thing that the Prime Minister's speech does not say. It is

significant, in that it leaves out any reference at all to corruption. It means that either he does not understand the society, or having understood the society and knows that corruption is a problem, he intends to sweep that under the carpet. Why do you think we are having so many problems in this House, every time we raise the issue of corruption?

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, honestly, most of us on this side would have thought after the last debate on the perception of corruption, that Members on that side would keep their mouths shut on the issue for quite some time. But, if they want to debate that issue again, we are prepared to do that. We are prepared to debate any issue at any time if they want to.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, they have the power of the law. If anyone of us is corrupt, they could get us locked up. Let them do it. Why are they saying that we are afraid to debate corruption? If they are saying that we are corrupt, let them lock us up. We are saying that there is evidence showing that there is the perception of corruption.

Mr. Valley: There was a debate on corruption, where they got a good licking, and if they want another debate on corruption, they would have it again.

Mr. Maharaj: What licking is he talking about?

Mr. B. Panday: It is so tragic that the Minister believes that a debate in Parliament is determined by "who get licking and who did not get licking." That does not have anything to do with it. My dear Minister, debates in Parliament are not concluded on who wins and who loses. They always win. They are the majority. When you debate corruption in this House, nobody wins or nobody loses. It is if outside there is the perception that they are corrupt, win, lose or draw, they lose.

2.50 p.m.

It proves that they do not understand anything about the society. You said that you wanted to debate corruption. You debated corruption and "you get a good licking". Do you know what is the conclusion to be drawn from that? You are not corrupt and there is no perception of corruption and, therefore, everything is hunky-dory. That is your conclusion. If you continue to think like that and continue to live in an ivory tower, one of these days somebody is going to blow it up. You cannot ignore the point I am making about corruption and still behave the way you do.

In the Prime Minister's speech—specifically starting and ending by trying to raise hopes—he spoke about what was happening in the energy sector. He spoke about increased activity in the oil sector and guaranteed that that will generate income. I find that very difficult to equate with the statement of his Minister of Finance who during the budget speech, was very specific in mentioning that investment in the oil sector does not necessarily create the kind of jobs to deal with the unemployment problem, and the Prime Minister says that there could be increased activity in the oil sector and that this is going to deal with the unemployment problem. I do not know whom to believe when the Minister of Finance says that development in the oil sector is not necessarily going to affect appreciably the unemployment situation in the country.

In any case, I think, to say that investment in the oil sector is going to abate the unemployment problem significantly is to ignore the fact that only four per cent of the labour force is employed in the oil sector. It is a very minute part of the working population that is employed in the oil sector. As a matter of fact, right now 20 per cent of that four per cent is unemployed. It is equivalent to the national average. So, I do not know what the Minister means when he says that this development in oil is going to deal with this problem of unemployment.

We have to take with a pinch of salt what he says here, on page 17, about jobs, when he spoke, not only of the oil sector, but also of other programmes that will deal with the unemployed youth. I intend to touch on those later, but for the moment, let me say that right now there are approximately 41,000 people in the age group 16 to 25 unemployed, and every year about 20,000 of them come on the labour market.

3.00 p.m.

The investment of which you speak—is it where you said that of an investment of some $75 million about 60 people will be employed? With an investment of $75 million, 100 people will be employed. You have unemployment of 120,000 people—between 20 and 25 per cent of the working population are unemployed. Twenty thousand people are coming on the labour market every year, and the Prime Minister comes to deal with the issue of unemployment and all he has to say is that the development in the oil sector is going to create jobs. There are about 41,000 youths between the ages of 16 and 25 unemployed, the 20,000 coming on the labour market every year, but the Government speaks of dealing with unemployment by programmes such as YTEPP, YESS and others.

The question I should like to ask the Government is: How many people who have been trained by YTEPP are employed today? Do you have those figures? [*Interruption*] The Member for Tobago has them? I cannot understand—

Mr. Maharaj: The Member for Tobago in the Government?

Mr. B. Panday: The Member for Tobago in the Government. That is your argument today. I am not concerned about what is past, I am concerned with what is present. As I recall from the Prime Minister's speech, he was talking about these training programmes—Board of Industrial Training has been set up, and all these programmes about YTEPP and so on are continuing; and that is going to take on people. The Minister of Labour may be willing to help us. How many people have been trained?

First of all, when you are training young people to be employed, have you not, first of all, to carry out some kind of survey and get some kind of statistical base on which to work? For example, have you carried out a survey to look at the present and the potential demand for labour? That is to say, the Government has spoken of its own investment programme. Have you worked out how many people you are going to need and what kind of people you are going to need? Because if you are going to need plumbers and you train carpenters, you are going to end up with many unemployed trained carpenters.

This speech was intended to fool people, because, as far as I know, there is no statistical foundation upon which to base any kind of sensible training programme in the country. You have got to know, first of all, what are the labour needs, what are the potential labour needs, what is the labour supply at the moment. If you are training people to be electricians and, in fact, most of the trained electricians are unemployed at the moment, you are "spinning top in mud." So you have got to know what is the current labour force, what is the nature of the skills, what the demand is going to be, not only now, but in the future; and it is only then that you can embark upon any kind of training.

You see, you are really playing with fire. When people are unemployed and they have no skills, yes, they are frustrated, but they comfort themselves, if I may use that term, with the feeling, well I do not have any skills, so what do you expect? I am unemployed and I have no skills. So they are dissatisfied, but unwilling to revolt. But when you train people, you give them skills, and then you do not give them jobs, or do not find jobs for them, then I want to assure you that the skilled unemployed are more dangerous than the unskilled unemployed—much more dangerous—because they are much more frustrated! They have given

of their time and energy and you have broken their hope and courage. You have trained them to think and then nothing happens.

So I want to ask: How many people, from all the various training programmes that exist in the Government, are working today? Where are they working? I should like to know the names because I do not believe the statements you gave. So I may check it out for myself. I believe that one of the objectives of training people under these various training schemes and so on, is to equip them not only to become employed by potential employers, but to make them self-employed.

I want to ask another question: Can the Minister of Labour, can the Government, can anybody tell me how many people who have been trained have gone into small business? How many have been successful and how many have been unsuccessful? Unless you can do that kind of thing, what is the meaning of the Prime Minister's statement when it tries to tell the youth that the Government cares for them and that the Government is going to ensure that they are decently employed? To tell them that these foreign companies are coming in to work here is not to give them any hope at all. What you are going to have to do is to trigger the economy upwards, so that you create employment opportunities.

But a statement made by the Prime Minister bothers me a little, and that is, the statement on Government's industrialization policy. I think the impression that he seeks to give here is that the Government's industrialization policy will create jobs. I think that is an impression he tries to give, although he does not say what kind of jobs and whether people are being paid for the jobs. But is this not in contradiction of the statement of the Minister of Finance in his budget speech, when he said that the policy of the Government is to divest itself of its holdings and ownership? That is to say, to become less and less of an employer.

Did not the budget speech say that the thrust for economic development must now be put in the hands of the private sector? How are you going to convince the population that because of Government's industrialization policy people are going to get work? You say that on the one hand, but on the other hand you say that, in fact, you are divesting—you are becoming less and less of an employer—you will be going more and more out of commercial activity; more and more privatization; that the impact of trade liberalization means that we have to depend more and more upon the private sector in order to create jobs in the society.

But I want to warn you that while on the one hand you are telling people that trade liberalization is going to create jobs for them because the private sector is going to be the motivating factor in the economy, there was a study carried out by Mr. Dennis Pantin, and in that study he concludes that trade liberalization is likely

to result in a direct loss of some 14,000 jobs, 30 per cent of the employment in the manufacturing sector; that it is going to result in loss of investment of some $260 million; that it is going to result in the loss of local exports in the sum of $434 million and the loss of some $120 million in direct taxes. So that trade liberalization is not going to create jobs. I do not know how you are going to create employment for people, when you are going to divest yourself more and more of governmental activity.

3.10 p.m.

I note that the Prime Minister has spoken about the energy sector, and one of the things he had been saying is that, "Well, in order to get the energy sector going, there has got to be some kind of consensus on the energy policy." How can you get consensus on energy policy when you have not begun consultation yet; and before you begin consultation, you are going ahead and doing all kinds of things? You are going ahead and amalgamating companies; you are rationalizing the oil industry. You are doing all of this and you hope to get consensus. Consensus on what? It indicates to me that you do not know what consultation means; you do not know what consensus means. Consultation for you is telling people what you intend to do, what you want to do, instead of getting an input before the policy is made.

I am sorry the Minister of Energy is not here, but on this question of hoping to solve this problem by bringing in a lot of foreign international companies, the first thing I want to tell them is that most of these companies already have their people employed. That is the first point. But the most important thing is, these companies come here and literally rape the country. There is an incident right now where that consortium of which the Prime Minister spoke:

> "The Southern Basin Consortium, which comprises a joint venture of Trintoc and Trintopec together with the large oil companies of Exxon, Chevron and Total, has just completed a comprehensive seismic survey of the southern basin."

While they were doing that survey, do you know what resulted to people? They put explosives very near to people's houses and they damaged people's homes.

Madam Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made. That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. *[Mr. S. Mohammed]*

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. B. Panday: During the seismic survey referred to by the Prime Minister on page 6, they did blasting operations as part of the that exercise, and in so doing damaged the homes of scores of poor people, not fellows who live in Port-of-Spain in big houses, but simple homes. When the people sued Trintopec, Exxon decided that they were going to be joined because they have some contract between Exxon and Trintopec whereby they would carry the legal burden of what was taking place. When Exxon is joined, do you know what Exxon says? Exxon says that, "all that damage was not caused by me; that was caused by a firm called Halliburton Geophysical Services Inc., so if you want damages, you would have to join them as a defendant." All attempts to find that company have failed. It is not registered in Trinidad and Tobago. It is an American company that did the survey here, left and went back, and all those persons must suffer because of the policy of this Government. Some of the houses are no longer fit for human habitation.

They must be very careful when they decide to bring in all these multinational corporations. I said that before. You have got to be careful about the conditions under which they come. You cannot find Halliburton Geophysical Services Inc. in Trinidad at all. They do not exist. They have damaged people's properties and have gone back to the United States. Who is going to pay for that? Is that not a direct result of the Government's policy?

The Prime Minister also made reference to the agricultural sector. We on this side, have distinguished ourselves from the Government by saying that our own economic policy differs from theirs in that the Government sees development as being externally propelled, and we see it as being internally propelled. The only sure way that we are going to get out of the economic mess that we are in is to propel and get the driving force for our economy, internally. Their idea is that they could import solutions for unemployment and; let companies come down here. We have just shown that they come down here, they leave a trail of damage in their wake, they employ very few people, and they go back home.

We have argued that if you really want to deal with the unemployment problem, you have got to look at your own strengths and your own weaknesses first. I remember in the budget debate, speaking about developing agriculture so that we can go into exotic markets and create thousands of jobs. We talked of exotic fruits, and the Member for San Fernando West scoffed, and said: "You are talking about things like that when we have oil and gas". Where is your oil, and where is your gas today?

This is a philosophy which is similar to that introduced into this country by Dr. Eric Williams, the late Prime Minister of this country. I would never forget when he was turning the sod to open the Iscott steel plant—at that time we were arguing, why are you spending that kind of money on these prestige mega projects when what you ought to do is to develop agriculture so that the economy can be internally propelled?" Dr. Williams' statement at that opening ceremony was, "there are people in this country who have sugar in their brains; they do not realize that in order to maintain your high standard of living, what you have to do is to earn foreign exchange, not go into agriculture". He argued that anything you can produce in this country, America could produce it cheaper. They could dump it cheaper as well.

So that what you needed to do was not to grow food here, but to import food, and in order to import food you had to get foreign exchange. So that what happens is, while you have oil, you are okay, but you have to make sure that when oil is finished, you have steel, or something else to export to buy your food. That is what has this country in this mess today. That foolish economic foundation that was laid by the late Dr. Eric Williams is what has us in trouble today. At that time we used to import $900 million worth of food. Today, we are still importing about $700 million worth of food, when farmers in this country are hungry and cannot sell their produce.

That philosophy of the late Dr. Eric Williams was echoed by the Member for San Fernando East. He cannot conceive of anything other than that kind of exporting, earning foreign exchange and importing food. It is for this reason that in this statement when the Prime Minister came to deal with agriculture, that was one thing he could not deal with. He did not know how to approach the whole problem of agriculture because all he could talk about was access roads and Caroni, etc. All this talk about Caroni, up to this day, they have not implemented, fully, one single proposal made in that report. That is beside the point.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources boasts that he knows about agriculture. I do not know where he knows about agriculture. If he knew anything about agriculture, he would realize that the problems that face farmers—agricultural access roads happen to be one of them, but there are several other things that need to be addressed, for example, the question of land reform. He talks about the distribution of state lands. Do you know what I want to tell him?

There is a place called Plum Mitan. The Member asked a question about it today. I know about it because I am doing a high court matter in which it is

involved and that is how I began to get into the depths of it. Hundreds of thousands of acres capable of growing rice are lying there, and they allow a situation where people have to go and squat. Everybody on that land is squatting. There are small squatters and large squatters; the latter actually have harvesters and tractors to grow rice on these state lands.

3.20 p.m.

What a tragedy! We import rice into this country. We have people who are capable of growing it, who have the wherewithal to even get the infrastructure, like tractors and harvesters as well. The case I am dealing with is one big farmer pushing out a small farmer; he is occupying 230 acres of land. A farmer is squatting on 230 acres of land, growing rice and this Government would not regularize his occupation; would not give him any security or anything, and in the teeth of that, he buys harvesters, tractors and so on. The Government cannot be more criminal than that. That is a kind of corruption. That is corruption. I say it again, that is corruption.

I would tell you how it is corruption. It is corruption because the importers of rice are your friends. That is all.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Member would give way. Could he indicate when this farmer started farming on 1,000 acres of land at Plum Mitan when that criminal and corrupt action started?

Mr. B. Panday: My Lord, what shall I do with him? There is a problem now, what do you keep looking back for? Those who look back can never go forward; do you not know that? They will stumble and fall. Keep looking forward. Why do you keep looking back all the time? *[Interruption]* Do you know when it started? That started in the PNM era. That started in the era of the PNM when the farmers—*[Interruption]* I know about that. I went up there pre-1986 and saw people's lands being damaged by bison, etc. The pre-1986 period, in the PNM days, and the PNM failed to solved that; and they are failing to solve it now.

That is beside the point. The point is, I am telling you, that the Government is performing an agricultural criminal act. It does not matter when it started. The problem is there now, and the Government is performing an agricultural criminal act, or a criminal act to agriculture—which ever way you want to put it—by failing to resolve a problem where farmers can grow the rice this country needs. It will not do it. I am saying it is not going to do it. The Government is not going to resolve that problem, and it is not going to distribute the lands. Do you know why? Because the Government is in the pocket of the food import lobby. That is

the key. Those who import food gave them money for elections, in addition to those who built gyms, fixed up kitchens and built platforms.

Once the Government speaks about agriculture and does not speak about that, it is joking. The Prime Minister is a joker. He speaks about agriculture as a means of developing this country, and he does not make reference to that; he is joking. I am hoping that my colleagues will go into detail on this matter. The Prime Minister did not speak about praedial larceny. Do you know that there are many farmers in this country who refuse to grow anything, because the moment they grow it, somebody "tief" it? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Maharaj: You could blame Ramesh.

Mr. B. Panday: Blame Ramesh for that.

Mr. Maharaj: Blame Ramesh for that, but I blame Imbert for Pegasus. How Ministers close mark Pegasus deal.

Mr. B. Panday: The Government talks about allocating lands. No idea about what these lands are going to be used for. Is it going to be for short crops? Is it going to be for long crops? If it is for short crops, are you going to create a glut on the market? What are the marketing arrangements? What are the packaging arrangements? What resources are available for creating an export market? Do you think a little farmer who is planting five, six or seven acres of whatever he is planting can go and look for a market abroad? If one thinks that, one is making joke.

The Government has a responsibility to organize those farmers in production in such quantities that one is able to identify export markets for them, otherwise they can create a glut on the market and farmers would plant one year and when they lose all their investments, they would not plant the other year. The Government knows that, but the Prime Minister does not say a thing about that.

Nothing is said about the price of the farmer's product, the viability of his input and price and the risk he is taking and so on. Nothing about the food processing sector. One can never get agriculture going in this country until one establishes a viable food processing sector.

While talking about agriculture, the Prime Minister made reference to Caroni Limited. I want the country to know that, to date not a single proposal of the Caroni Report has been fully implemented. And the Government says it is interested in agriculture. I think my time is going to end, so I had better make a point I wanted to make.

I think the Prime Minister was very unwise, and ill-advised to launch an attack on the trade union movement. He may well have precipitated the movement that took place subsequent to that. Because, the Prime Minister, on page 11 of this '"budget speech", said:

> "Madam Speaker, permit me to remind hon. Members that two pre-requisites to investment are a stable political climate and a stable industrial relations atmosphere. I appeal to the trade union movement to do nothing that will adversely affect the propitious investment climate now existing, which can bring the jobs that the country so desperately requires. I wish to advise too, that too aggressive a trade union stance, while poisoning the investment climate, also adversely affects vital economic activity, the natural consequence of which could well be a forced return to the International Monetary Fund to impose tough discipline, a stand-by facility. . ."

Does that statement not contradict another statement when he boasts about Fincor, Nucor and several companies? The private investment corporation, OPIC mission, ready to invest here like mad and so on. If Nucor is investing here, Nucor knows about the labour movement. What makes the Government think that a docile labour movement is what businessmen are looking for. They may be looking for a stable political climate, and that is the one thing this Government cannot offer them. The one thing the Government cannot offer them is a stable political climate in this country.

We have made it absolutely clear that you are negotiating all kinds of deals with foreigners in this country without discussing with us, but we want to tell you that when we succeed this government, we are going to revise those agreements. We are not necessarily going to honour them at all. If you enter into questionable agreements like the Airports Authority agreement; in the same way that there were questionable agreements that you entered into with Sam P. Wallace—the racing complex. Twice the old government did it.

If people are coming here to invest, but looking for a politically stable climate, the one thing we do not have in this country is a politically stable climate because of the Government's refusal to dialogue with people and to have a society based upon consensus. But, more important than ever is the question of accountability, and as long as you keep resisting mechanisms to ensure accountability in this country, we are going to take the stand that the people of Trinidad and Tobago, whom we represent, are not necessarily going to honour contracts which are made by you under suspicious circumstances. We want to make that absolutely clear.

Madam Speaker, it is better that the Prime Minister had not made this statement at all. If he had not made it, we may not have had the confusion that has arisen.

The Member for Arouca North got up in this Parliament and boasted about $30 million having been voted for URP. Somebody told him he burped, because the Prime Minister said $40 million. Big argument going on between them until somebody told him, "Why do you not shut . . . you do not know what you are talking about!" He is supposed to be somebody in this Government. A total betrayal of the labour movement. He does not even know what is going on in his own Government. He is talking about $30 million while the Prime Minister is talking about $40 million. Whom are we to believe? It is better the Prime Minister had not made this statement at all.

Madam Speaker, my colleagues, no doubt will go through in greater detail some of the matters which I have raised, but let me raise one final matter. I refer to the industrial cottages. This is a good idea and was introduced by the last government. I want to ask the Government one thing today: Of the industrial cottages, how many have been turned into export centres? How may are viable? How many are functioning? The Prime Minister talks about changing the name of the industrial cottages to "Export Centres". He is very famous for changing names. He starts off with Special Works, he goes to DEWD, they went off to LIDP, now he goes to URP. He is very shallow. He believes that by changing names one undo things. But URP has not changed from being what it has always been—a place of enormous corruption, nepotism and political patronage. The Prime Minister comes and says that the only thing he is going to do about the industrial cottages is to change the name to "Export Centres" to produce a range of high quality craft items for the export market, page 24.

The Government has been in office for one year. Can the Government tell me, in that one year, how many of these cottages survived? How many are viable? What do they produce? Where do they sell these products? Does the Government assist in marketing? Has any effort been made to export the products of these various centres? What is going to matter is not the fact that one changed the name; what is going to matter is the fact that one can organize these small entrepreneurs into production which is capable of being exported.

The thing that has hurt most is the promise of the Prime Minister during the election, to have a shining city in Port-of-Spain. I recall very well in the political campaign, I told them that the Prime Minister speaks about a shining city; he would not talk about moving the vagrants you know—he will shine the vagrants, they will stay right there. I told them what he meant when he said a shining city,

was that he was going to kick all venders out of this city and hand it over to their pals. That is one statement I made, and one thing I see being repeated. I tell you, that one turned out to be absolutely right: the only shining city of Port-of-Spain that you are thinking of is a shining city without vendors. How they will live is nobody's business.

So, when the Prime Minister speaks about urban beautification—they have been in office for one year and not a single thing has been done to remove a single vagrant from the streets. That is the beautification. Instead of moving the vagrants, they want to move the vendors. The venders who are making a living, they are moving them. The poor people who do not know how to live honestly, trying to sell little goods and so on . . .

Mr. Maharaj: Blame Ramesh again. Ramesh is very powerful.

Mr. B. Panday: Ramesh is one of the most powerful fellows in this country or what?

Mr. Maharaj: I have more power than the Government or what?

Mr. B. Panday: If those poor venders did not have people like us, you would tread on them with steel hoofs. You would put steel on your boots like those German Gestapos and march all over them. That is what this caring Government would do. That is how caring this Government is. So, Madam Speaker, we ask: What have they done for the beautification, insofar as it applies to the vagrants in the city?

3.35 p.m.

Finally, having made the statement that you were going to retrench people, I think now is a good time for somebody to involve himself in this debate and say truly what you are going to do about retrenchment because we have heard talk about a voluntary retirement programme. Suppose people do not accept the voluntary retirement programme, what are you going to do? Is the Member for Laventille West going to sit down and preside over retrenchment at WASA and the other public utilities? I think the people ought to know and I hope that before this debate is completed the Government would be good enough to give us answers to some of the questions I have raised. Thank you.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam Speaker, I use as my point of departure, references by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Couva North; and certain parts of the statement by the hon. Prime Minister in which he referred to the programmes for youth, and in

particular, training programmes. The Member for Couva South raised a very pertinent point that you need to have statistical data—

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I know the hon. Members on the other side are fascinated, if I may use that expression, with the Member for Couva South but on a point of order, it is the Member for Couva North.

Hon. A. Ramrekersingh: Madam Speaker, I have no intention of interfering in the internal workings of the other side so I will return the Member for Couva North to his rightful place. I am sorry the promotion was so short-lived.

The Member for Couva North raised an important point that in organizing programmes of training nationally, one needs to have a certain kind of statistical data.

At present there does not exist a labour market information system in the formal and scientific sense. However, the Ministry of Labour has been recently mandated to see about establishing a scientific labour market information system. Nevertheless, the absence of a labour market information system does not preclude us from having access to a certain kind of statistical data. Indeed, the Board of Industrial Training and the National Training Board, in addition to the manpower section of the Ministry of Labour, have in their possession a certain amount of statistical data which can help to guide us when we are dealing with programmes of training nationally.

In my contribution I intend to deal largely with the National Apprenticeship System, the youth camps and vocational centres, the YTEPP programme and the Hotel School. As Hon. Members would be aware, in the statement by the Prime Minister on January 4, on page 29, the responsibility for such activities was handed over to the Ministry of Education. I start first of all with the National Apprenticeship System.

In the budget debate I made the point that there existed a paradox in which, on the one hand, there is high unemployment especially among the youth and, on theother there is a shortage of skilled craftsmen in the country. The statistical data are available. Some studies were done last year giving us some idea of what the exact position is.

In terms of national apprenticeship, or apprenticeship training, I perhaps need to take us back to the year 1906—a year in which, I think, most of us in this House were not around.

The Board of Industrial Training was established in 1906 by law, and up to about 1971, it had the responsibility for apprenticeship training in Trinidad and Tobago. In the early 1970s, the National Training Board (NTB) was established. The National Training Board is an advisory body of the Ministry of Education. For the last 20 years or so, apprenticeship training or on-the-job training in this country has been carried out jointly by the Board of Industrial Training and the National Training Board.

What we are seeking to do in organizing the national apprenticeship system is to merge the Board of Industrial Training and the National Training Board into a single institution called the National Training Authority to prevent duplication of effort. May I say to Hon. Members that at the Ministry of Education and at the National Training Board members and personnel are now analyzing draft legislation which seeks to establish the National Training Authority, and we hope that within a few months that National Training Authority Bill will be brought to this House.

In developing the national apprenticeship system we need not wait on the legislation to be enacted because both the NTB and the Board of Industrial Training have been involved in apprenticeship and training so that we are going ahead using these organizations until the proposed National Training Authority Act brings them together.

In dealing with the question of national apprenticeship, one of the first things I want to clear up is the fact that when we hear of apprenticeship, we tend to confine our thoughts to what is called craft training. The national apprenticeship system, as we envisage it in the Government, goes beyond training in the crafts. It takes in a wide variety of activities: the crafts, technicians, graduates, the services industry, agriculture, and many others.

In January of this year, the National Training Board was reconstituted, and it has been meeting regularly and putting into place the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of the National Apprenticeship Programme. Indeed, I have before me a draft action plan for 1993 where the Board expects to place at least 5,000 apprentices. At present the activities of the National Training Board, which has the responsibility together with the Board of Industrial Training for the national apprenticeship system, include discussions with employers, the state, state enterprises and the private sector organizing apprenticeship places in industry and commerce.

3.45 p.m.

They are also establishing regional offices because the National Apprenticeship System shall be administered on a regional basis. In fact, in a very short while, we will be announcing where those offices are. Perhaps, I could take the opportunity to mention at this time that the application forms for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who wish to be involved in the National Apprenticeship System will be available from March 5 at offices such as the labour exchanges throughout the country; the divisional offices of the Ministry of Education, as well as the regional offices of the National Training Board.

I should also mention, it was said to me yesterday, that sometimes when you are distributing forms, some persons collect a large number of them, and exchange them for a small consideration. I want to make it absolutely clear that there are enough forms to go around and there is no charge attached. So, I ask hon. Members, if you do come across anyone attempting to give out these forms for a consideration, please bring it to my attention. There is no charge. The form is free.

Mr. Sudama: It is what happens after the forms are filled.

Hon. A. Ramrekersingh: If the hon. Member for Oropouche will have a little patience.

Obviously, the National Training Board will analyze these forms and begin to categorize, depending on qualifications and what people wish to do. The criteria for the various apprenticeship programmes are going to be clearly set out. Of course, they will vary. You may have an apprenticeship programme for graduate engineers. Obviously, the qualifications for that would vary, or would be different from the qualifications for a person who wants to become an apprentice welder.

In addition, we shall be guided by a document, *A Dictionary of Occupations* which was completed in January by the National Training Board. It is a document which lists about 2,500 occupations and the various qualifications, skills and the psychological make-up that are necessary in these occupations.

Additionally, in the apprenticeship programme—and I should say that the apprenticeship programme will be a mixture of on-the-job training, or apprenticeship and institutional training—while a lot of the training will take place in industry, many of the trainees will also need to attend classes at institutions on a part-time basis, so that we can marry the theory and practice.

We have initiated discussions on the reactivation of company training schools. I am pleased to say that discussions with respect to the establishment of an advanced training school are almost concluded with the boards of the industries at

Point Lisas. That advanced training facility will become the nucleus for training and apprenticeship in that Point Lisas area and the neighbouring areas, catering for the needs of that particular sector and the industries related to it. Organizationally, as I said, the apprenticeship system will be run on a regional basis.

3.55 p.m.

We are also in the process of setting up what we call sectoral committees. What do these sectoral committees do? Basically, the sectoral committees handle trades or crafts of a similar nature, so that you may have a sectoral committee dealing with the building trades: carpentry, joinery, plumbing; or one with the mechanical trades: welding and machine shop, in which we will have people with expertise who will guide and monitor the training. I should make it clear that it is not simply a question of asking for applicants and placing them willy-nilly and leaving them there.

As I said, they have to do some institutional training—part-time classes—as well as at a particular point in the programme, trainees are going to have to leave the work site, come possibly into the schools during the vacation periods and do what we may call attitudinal training. It is not sufficient simply to impart the skills to people, one needs to prepare them mentally and psychologically for the world of work and with the best possible habits.

The programme of work that they will follow will be closely monitored, both by the master who will be in charge of the apprentices and by the National Training Board and, hopefully, they would be achieving during the course of their apprenticeship, certification of competencies as they acquire certain skills to the satisfaction of the authorities. So that, when a person has completed an apprenticeship programme, we have a good idea of what skills that person brings to the labour market as evidenced by the certificates of acquired competencies.

Obviously, in the apprenticeship system there will be varying periods, depending on the course of study. Our projection at this time is that the programmes will vary between six months and three years. During this time a stipend will be paid to the apprentices. The stipend is to keep them in pocket change for their travelling, meals and so on.

Madam Speaker, we are putting these things in place and, during the course of 1993, as the programmes come on stream, people will be placed in the various industries—and when I say that I include the state—the various state enterprises

and the private sector. Our projection is for a minimum of 5,000 persons during the course of this year.

These things are going to be based very closely on needs. One of the most obvious things—and, just to give you some examples, we are putting together a programme for office equipment repairs and maintenance, and people are going to be apprenticed under seasoned trainers starting in government offices. They are going to start at home where they are going to be acquiring the skills under the attention of a master, and over a period of time they would have acquired enough competence to be able to go off on their own.

We are hoping, Madam Speaker, that through the National Apprenticeship Programme, we shall be able to create the trained people that this country needs, not only for purposes of its industrial and agricultural development, but also necessary if Trinidad and Tobago is to enter the 21st century with confidence.

So much for the National Apprenticeship Programme. Of course, I should mention that many of them would find jobs in industry, but many also will be equipped with the skills to go off on their own.

I come now to the youth camps and vocational centres. We have several youth camps in this country. The youth camps, unlike the National Apprenticeship System, would have lower entry requirements. Many of our youth camps are situated in agricultural areas: in Chatham, Chaguaramas and so on. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth Affairs, in which the youth camps formerly resided, have just about completed the transfer of responsibility to the Ministry of Education. What we shall be doing in the youth camps, first of all, is managing them a little differently, where we are going to seek community involvement in the management of the youth centres as well as organizational involvement outside state involvement.

The youth camps, especially those in agricultural areas, will focus on agriculture, but not agriculture in the merely conventional definition. It is not enough simply to train people to plant and to prune. Side by side with that, you use equipment, and so very often persons involved in agriculture have difficulty in servicing, maintaining and repairing their equipment. That will be looked at, so that when a person comes out of the youth camps, he or she would have certain additional skills which are relevant to the successful pursuit of agriculture.

Moreover, the objective is that these youth camps, wherever they are in agricultural areas, must become self-sufficient in vegetables and certain kinds of meat, so that will reduce the amount one has to spend on them, and the savings

there will enable us to expand. It is an important part of training if you are doing these things that you should be able to produce. More than self-sufficiency, the eventual aim is that these youth camps should produce vegetables and some meat and eggs which could be sold on fairly easy terms to institutions such as the hospitals, so that while training is going on a certain amount of production is also going on. It is happening. Mount St. George in Tobago, to some extent, is at present self-sufficient in meat and vegetables. More needs to be done. This used to be so many years ago. Overall in the youth camps we need to restore that.

The youth camps will both be—as they are now—residential and non-residential. We are adding the non-residential dimension because we hope to maximize the use of the equipment there. Programmes can be scheduled and time-tabled in such a way that we can have both resident and non-resident students. That is another area, Madam Speaker.

The vocational centres, we will be renaming. I know that the Member for Couva North has talked a lot about the change of names. The vocational centres will be retitled "Skills and Production Centres", and one of the areas of concentration will be in the building trades. We hope to reach the point where in the vocational centres—properly equipped, proper instruction, proper guidance—one of their major activities could be the repair and the manufacture of school furniture. In doing that, we do not only want to produce the furniture. Very often you talk to persons who can produce beautiful furniture but they have problems of estimating the amount of materials to be used, the costing and so on. So that there is an important managerial dimension that must be in the training so that our craftsmen producing these things will be able to work in a most cost effective manner.

4.05 p.m.

I move now to YTEPP—the Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme. YTEPP is a programme which originated in 1989 through a World Bank loan. Note, Madam Speaker, it is a World Bank loan, not a grant. YTEPP, under the terms of agreement, is organized as a private company with a Board of Directors.

In response to the Member for Couva North, some tracer studies have been done about what happens to the YTEPP graduates after they leave. In examining the progress of YTEPP, as I myself did since it was assigned to me in January, I am not quite satisfied about several things: that, in spite of the limited information, enough persons have gained employment, or have been able to create

employment. There are difficulties about the tracer studies and I have some problems with the accuracy.

YTEPP, Madam Speaker, is not a programme that trains you and makes you into a complete craftsman ready for the world of work. YTEPP is, essentially, a pre-vocational programme because there are short courses with limited contact hours; and you can do so much and no more within that period. Our vision is that YTEPP as a pre-vocational programme will act as a feeder system for the National Apprenticeship System, and secondly, there are certain programmes of training which are relatively short in order to gain proficiency, and we can undertake those programmes under the YTEPP programme—if you want we may call it, shorter apprenticeship programmes.

I have also been concerned about our investment in YTEPP. Let me put it this way. Are we getting enough out of YTEPP when we consider the input? Quite clearly, it has to be re-focussed, reorganized. We are in the process of doing that and the emphasis must be on cost-effectiveness. We cannot afford to be putting out a lot of money—it is a loan, it has to be repaid—and not receiving in return some benefits. The benefits must be commensurate with the inputs. The programme is, essentially, a sound one. It needs some re-focussing which we are in the process of doing.

Finally, Madam Speaker, the Hotel School, which has also been assigned to me, was previously under the Industrial Development Corporation and we are now in the process of arranging the transfer. I want to give the assurance in this House, as I have given to the Public Services Association, that in the new dispensation with the Hotel School, when it comes under the Ministry of Education, no one employed at the Hotel School now would be disadvantaged in terms and conditions of service as a result of the change-over.

The direction in which we want to move with the Hotel School is as follows: It must, at one and the same time, be a place of training and a place of enterprise. While we are training people—and I do not want to use the word "hotel" so much—for the hospitality industry, the Hotel School must also be engaged in commercial activity. The engagement in commercial activity has two advantages: Firstly, the classroom training is transferred into the real world; and secondly, there will be the generation of revenue which can be used for expansion of the Hotel School.

In respect of the Hotel School, which is now situated at Chaguaramas, you will, of course, recognize when you hear the word "hotel", automatically the word "tourism" comes to mind. Our view of it is wider but, nevertheless, I have started

discussions with members of the Tobago House of Assembly and have asked them to see what model of the Hotel School would be needed for Tobago. Obviously, there would be need for variations from what we have here. I think, as it operates now, it is rather difficult and inconvenient for persons from Tobago to come over here. So we have been talking about particular kinds of arrangements in Tobago, so that people are not inconvenienced. In the same way, discussions on the Apprenticeship Programme have been initiated with the Secretary for Education of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I have taken the National Apprenticeship System which has certain objectives—the youth camps, the vocational centres, and the Hotel School, all of which have been assigned to me during the Prime Minister's statement on January 4, 1993—and showed you the vision we have for these things: How we are going about them; what changes we need to make; and equally important, it represents a rationalization and an integration of the training effort in Trinidad and Tobago.

For too long the training effort has been dispersed, here, there and everywhere, with consequences of duplication and waste, lack of cost-effectiveness. We are bringing the training effort together, and to a large extent that effort is geared to our young people between the ages of 16 and 25 years. But we are also cognizant of the fact that in the world of rapid change in which we live, especially technological change, with consequences for jobs, and for the way we perform jobs, it will become necessary to have programmes of retraining in Trinidad and Tobago.

I do not have the time, of course, Madam Speaker, to go into detail about the kind of changes that are taking place in the world of work as a result of the revolution in technology and information, but I am sure that most hon. Members would be familiar with Alvin Toffler's *Third Wave* in which the central discussion is the changing nature of work and the world of work. So that retraining is something we shall have to turn our efforts to in the near future. However, we propose to take this thing in a phased and consistent manner. We will start with our programmes for youth in all the facets I mentioned. Once we have got on top of that, we can then look towards the question of retraining.

4.15 p.m.

I think, in concluding, Madam Speaker, I should mention to Members of this honourable House, that as we have gone about laying the groundwork for the national apprenticeship system—and the Prime Minister, I think, in his statement,

suggested May 1, as the actual start. I want to say on that question of May 1, do not, on that day, expect everything just to fall on one big start. In fact, our projection is that during March and April, we shall see the beginning and a build up. It will begin to accelerate in May, and throughout the year we have our projections.

As I was saying, I an extremely heartened, when I speak to members of the National Training Board, the Board of Industrial Training and all those involved in the training effort, to hear of the response we are getting from employers, state enterprise and the private sector. There has been considerable excitement.

I mentioned at the beginning that there exists in this country a shortage of skilled craftsmen and skilled persons in certain areas. I simply want to give an example of something that happened at a training organization last year. Metal Industries produced, in their apprenticeship programme, 70 welders last year—one company. Those persons, no sooner had they completed their training, were absorbed by industries with a demand for more. So that the demand is there. We have a reasonably clear idea about the variety of skills. So that once we can get this correct, put the things in place and have the response of our young people, we shall be creating in this country, a pool of skilled persons whom we need to carry on the development in this country.

Madam Speaker, I hope I have been able to shed some light on the vision which we have for these organizations concerned with training. I took the opportunity to raise it, because it was mentioned in the Prime Minister's statement and it was raised during the course of this debate. I am particularly happy with the headway that we have been able to make during the months of January and February in order to put this programme together. I feel we are now nearing the point where we can accelerate, so that I would be able to come to this House later in the year and say, this is where we have reached. But it is important to lay the foundation, to put down the infrastructure, rather than simply to run forward, very fast, without proper planning. It is said in the management literature that it is easier to plan properly than to correct the mistakes that result from bad planning. This is the period of planning. We are now nearing the period of take-off. I want to assure hon. Members that the plan is being put in place. You do not run and start to "voop." You start by building, and you put the structures in place.

I think in terms of youth training and apprenticeship in Trinidad and Tobago, we are poised for an exciting future, and I invite all members of the national community to assist in whatever way they can in ensuring that our young people

have access to training and will benefit from the training which we are putting into place, and which, in the long run, can only benefit this country.

I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan *(Chaguanas)*: Madam Speaker, the motion before the House this afternoon reads as follows:

> "That this Honourable House take note of the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister at a sitting of the House of Representatives held on Monday, January 4, 1993."

Madam Speaker, before this statement was read by the Prime Minister, there was much fuss and excitement in the air. As a matter of fact, the nation almost held its breath with great expectation. At the end of the speech, it was very clear that much ado was made about nothing. As a matter of fact, I recalled Macbeth when he said:

> *"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by idiots, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."*

That particular statement reflected exactly the sentiments of Macbeth when he made that statement. Perhaps I am being too harsh on the hon. Prime Minister, so I will give him credit for one thing. When he finished reading that statement, at least he inspired one thing, and I believe that was the "donkey" dance, because it seems that the whole country is now doing the "donkey" dance.

This Prime Minister is really a bacchanal man. In fact, he loves bacchanal time. So he usually gets up and waves things. In fact, before he was elected as Prime Minister, he waved a plan to create jobs. He said he had the blueprint to create jobs, and he was waving that in the air. Before he presented this statement, he was waving a comprehensive action plan which turned out to be a rehash of the budget speech of the months before.

The point I want to make is that the hon. Prime Minister really attempted to capitalize on the dejection of our people. On the first page, he said:

> "l992 was the year when your Government, guided by the manifesto...firmly established our priorities..."

How did they establish their priorities? In fact, when I looked at this statement, I could not understand what their priorities were. Because I thought that the priority

of this Government, or it ought to be at least, is the creation of sustainable employment. I have not seen that in the statement.

Another priority I expected, to see was the question of the safety and well-being of our people. The third priority I would have hoped had to do with the question of relieving poverty. Should these not be priorities?

So when I looked at the statement, it became very clear that this Government's only priority is to ensure that it meets our foreign debt obligations—that is its priority—at the risk and the expense of everything else, even if it means selling out the country. Today we have a situation where our capital stock is being liquidated to pay off over debt. That is the priority of this Government. So it seems to me, therefore, that its priority, in summary, is to pauperize the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

4.25 p.m.

Madam Speaker, when I looked at the statement, I saw, for instance, in paragraph six, where the Prime Minister very clearly implied that his Government, in fact, was going to reduce subventions, and as such, we are going to have more unemployment being created, and rates are going to increase for PTSC, water and the Port. He went on in the very next paragraph to speak about predictions of gloom and doom. He had just mentioned that thousands had to go—without saying it in those words—then he spoke about people speaking about gloom and doom.

The Member for Couva North spoke a while ago about the confusion that this statement has created. What we have here is a straight case of a Jekyll and Hyde government. They say one thing "we care" and they do something entirely different. They say there are predictions of gloom and doom, and the Prime Minister himself says that.

Madam Speaker, I believe this Government continues to contradict and confuse this population because of a single factor. It has to do with the fact that this Government has openly stated that it has no ideology. Whenever we speak about ideology in this Parliament, this Government says, "What ideology? Those are old hackneyed phrases". As a matter of fact, I get the clear impression that the Government speaks like that because for some reason the Members on the other side equate the word “ideology” with the word “communism”. They do not understand that ideology is a concept that has to do with one's value system, principles. It has to do with the basic foundation upon which any society ought to be built and, as such, it ought to inform one's policies.

In the minds of this Government, they are being logical; after all, they said they are pragmatic and realistic. This question of pragmatism and realism, Madam Speaker, is grounded in a philosophy which is dangerous to this country. It has much to do with what we on this side call the free market economy. What, in effect, is happening is that this Government is actually implementing and stating an ideological position without understanding that it has an ideological position. That is a most dangerous thing. At least, if one has assumed a certain position and posture, one ought to be conscious that that is a posture that one has assumed; but Member opposite do not know that.

Because of what is called "pragmatism", one finds that the Government is saying "We are realistic, so, today we can say one thing, and tomorrow we can do something different". This is why inherent in this administration is the basic contradiction where the Government say "We care", but every single action on their part demonstrates that they do not care for the people of this country. As a matter of fact, their ideological position is so dangerous; it has to do merely with the consolidation of power. It has nothing to do with managing and building a society.

Why, therefore, the question of their ideological position becomes so dangerous? Because the free market economy is one which says, very clearly, that the market becomes a dictator—the market is supreme—and the Government, or the state, is really a facilitator. If one were to go through the *Hansard* debates of last year, one would see where almost every single Member on the other side spoke about the reduction of the role of the state and its intervention in the economy and spoke of the state as a facilitator. Yet, the Government come to us and say that they have no ideology, they are pragmatic. They do not understand that pragmatism and realism, are really part of an ideological position which is a most dangerous one.

People, therefore, become less important. In fact, I heard the Member for St. Ann's East speaking about creating a lean and competitive environment and the society being interdependent. Merely words, Madam Speaker! If one believes that the society is interdependent, how then is one going to suggest to the country that one is going to invest and create an efficient economy, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, create unemployment? Are we not, therefore, creating and becoming part of that vicious circle?

Madam Speaker, hence the reason for the contradictions and the confusion in this Government.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Miss H. Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, there is a general tendency, whenever I speak of ideology in this House, for the Members on the other side to take it very lightly saying that those things are not relevant because, for some reason, they have no kind of importance with respect to the economy. The point we are making is that one's ideological position dictates one's policies. As such, if one is promoting an ideology based on pragmatism, it is very clear that one's policies are going to change almost like a leaf in the wind. As such, there is not going to be any kind of consistency with respect to the policies of the Government.

Based on an examination of the policies of this Government, it is very clear that the signals are showing that the Government is pursuing a free market economy. We are very concerned, with respect to that particular direction, especially when we study the various philosophies underlying the free market economy. It is very clear that that is very dangerous for a society like ours. As such, I felt it might be useful to share, very briefly, what are the components of such a system, especially as this Government have been saying, as I mentioned before, that they have no ideology.

The free market economy, is hinged on basically three principles. One has to do with the question of individualism. That is to say, the motto based on individualism, has to do with the survival of the fittest. It has to do with "only the strong will survive". It has to do with "to each his own". The question of social justice and solidarity no longer is relevant because it is a question of the survival of the fittest.

If one examines the present trend in this country, one would see where it is being said you have got to be efficient and competitive. Therefore, each company, institution, enterprise and public sector has to be so efficient; it must compete, almost, in an open environment. The point is, if one is preaching and practising a system that promotes individualism, it means, therefore, that one is fragmenting the very society.

This is why, for instance, the PNM had promoted the whole issue of Communities in Partnership, I believe it was, under its local government banner. The point is, Communities in Partnership will never survive if one is adhering to a philosophy that is based on individualism which talks about survival of the fittest. So, communities will no longer be able to co-operate at the level at which one would want them to do so.

For instance, I am very surprised at the Member for St. Joseph speaking about communities being involved in the youth camps. That is useful and interesting. But the point is, if one is into a free market economy where it is a question of "to each his own", community development with, as I said before, solidarity is no longer going to be there and as such, those initiatives are not going to work.

The second philosophy that has to do with this free market economy is the promotion of consumerism. Trade liberalization has to do with consumerism. One makes available everything possible on the shelves and in the market place, and the more money one has, the more one can buy. Therefore, the question of materialism takes precedence over everything else.

That is why today, many of the young people are saying, "Look, I do not want to go and work in a job for $1,000 or $1,500 per month, when I can push drugs". You see, the value system is being eroded by this whole concept of consumerism. It is now how much money one can earn to buy the best products. This is why it is dangerous, therefore, to promote this particular model of economic development in its entirety and without being, in any way, balanced.

This is why, for instance, our hon. Prime Minister could tell this nation that one has to sacrifice, but at the same time, he renovates his home, puts a gym and the fanciest kitchen. It is all linked to the concept of consumerism where one buys and utilizes as much as one can without the need for investment in terms of one's children's development, savings for future development and the like.

The third aspect of this particular model that this Government is promoting has to do with liberalism. When we speak of liberalism, it has to do with almost the total disintegration of the social and moral fabric of the very society in which we live. A person who has been involved in corruption, for instance, could be voted into office, and holds a very high position in the Government, because people's value system somehow becomes tarnished and so reworked that the pragmatism actually infiltrates the value system.

This is why today we have a situation where incest, domestic violence, murders and suicides are on the rise. I was looking at the crime situation and I have some statistics here. For the period January to November 30, 1991, there were 2,830 robberies, and for the same period in 1992, this has increased to 3,373—of course, the ones which have been reported. Rape, incest and other sexual offences have also been on the increase. In 1991, there were 6,716 break-ins, and in 1992, there were 7,243.

On the question of liberalism, therefore, where the value system is eroded, crime takes precedence and becomes a major problem in the society. There was some controversy about two months ago with respect to the censorship of films. Instead of censoring films, the new head of the board is now saying they are going to rate films according to the age limit. What basically is happening here is that this new board is expecting that the cinema owner will decide whether a teenager should go and see a film or not. The question of film censorship may seem like a very simple issue, but that borders on the whole question of the liberalism within the society, which is based also upon this particular economic system.

This is why, too, as I mentioned before, the drug culture is going to flourish under this system because it spells the question of individualism and survival of the fittest. This is why, for instance, maybe, Aldwyn King continues to evade the law, because he is the fittest right now; he can survive, he is the strongest. Secondly, with liberalism, it means the value system is eroded; this is why a drug addict could go and attempt to murder his parents, sell out everything in the house just to be able to get his "rock" and satisfy his habit.

The consumerism thing affects children in schools, where their parents may not have money to buy food and clothing, but the children want to wear L A Gear shoes and the most expensive watches and clothes. Because to them the value system "is who can have the most expensive things in our society".

This, therefore, brings me to the question of the preamble to the Constitution where it speaks about respecting the principles of social justice. It also speaks of the supremacy of God, but if we are going for the free market economy we, therefore, should really replace the words "supremacy of God" with "supremacy of the market" because the market becomes supreme. The market determines what one produces and whom it is produced for. It does not matter any more whether people would be retrenched in the process or whether people would have to live on the streets in the process. In fact, today I read in the newspapers where pretty soon—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Member saying that there is some contradiction between the voice of the people and the voice of God?

Miss H. Bhaggan: I am not saying that at all. I am saying that the particular model you are pursuing now has serious implications for the Preamble to the Constitution. I am saying that the particular model you are pursuing now, contradicts what is written in this Constitution. God is no longer supreme. One is no longer seeing God in the faces of the people. This is why you can remove

venders from the streets; this is why you can retrench people without batting an eyelid, all on the question of becoming efficient and to be able to compete. We are not saying we should not compete and be efficient, but it is the way you do it. We are saying that this Government is contradicting the very principles upon which our Constitution is founded.

Madam Speaker, I am therefore suggesting to this Government that when it is pursuing a particular economic model, it has to understand that it is not just the economic aspect that it is talking about. Whatever policies and programmes the Government puts in place, they impact upon all levels and spheres of the society. As the Member for St. Ann's East mentioned a while ago, the society is interdependent. As such, the policies must be cognizant of, and sensitive to that fact, that the society is interdependent.

That also brings me to the question of this pragmatism and the various statements being made by the Members on the other side. As a matter of fact, the Member for San Fernando East once told this country that equitable does not mean equal. Now, there are some phrases which usually stick in my mind, and that particular one, Madam Speaker, I believe, I will never forget as having been uttered by an elected Prime Minister of a country like ours. This Prime Minister went on to say that there are certain citizens in our society who can capitalize on a cultural background to be able to help themselves, but on the other side of the coin, what the Member is saying—

5.20 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am just trying to get some clarification from the Member for Chaguanas. Is she saying that in the English language, equitable means equal?

Miss H. Bhaggan: We are not here to split hairs. The point is the spirit of the particular statement; and that is that people of this country will not be treated equally. The spirit of that is that there are citizens in this country to whom they have got to give "a ten days" to keep them quiet.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, but at the same time the hon. Prime Minister was making the point that all citizens would be treated equitably.

Miss H. Bhaggan: It is the point I am making. The Government continues to make statements but their actions are different. The Government say they are caring but when you look at their actions, it is scaring. They said they are going to treat us equitably but when we look at the way policies and moneys are allocated

and the way programmes are being carried out, there is a straight case of discrimination against certain sections of our population. That is very clear. I hope somebody will carry out some studies soon. In fact, I know a Member of Oropouche has carried out some during the past PNM Government's tenure of office.

What this statement tells us is that as a government, they are going to promote the "ten days" mentality and the dependency syndrome in order to facilitate their political base. That is the essence of what is being said. That is holding the people of this country in contempt. That is telling some people of this country that somehow they do not have the resources and the strength within themselves to stand and fend on their own. That is a serious admission by the Prime Minister of a country. I want to suggest to the Government that in their haste to move into a new realm of pragmatism, they have to be very careful that they continue to subscribe to the founding principles of the Constitution. If one were to examine that particular statement in the context of the Constitution, it is very clear that the Prime Minister has breached the very founding principles of the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, the next point I should like to make has to do with the whole spirit of this particular model that is being promoted. I remember most vividly the Member for San Juan/Barataria speaking at a function. She spoke about the breakdown in family life. Something I agree with. You ask yourself, how does this breakdown in family life happen? Does it happen overnight? The point is that the breakdown in family life has different areas from which it begins. The first thing has to do with poverty.

When a family is poor and children are hungry, things like the value system—those of us who have studied some management would have heard about the Maslow hierarchy of needs. In the hierarchy of needs the very lowest has to do with the satisfaction of the physiological wants and needs. In the very highest it has to do with self-actualizing—where it has to do with your values. The point is, as long as you are hungry you cannot think of higher ideals. As long as you are hungry you want to satisfy that hunger.

So the breakdown in family life has much to do with the fact that people will forget certain values and probably steal. They will try to satisfy their lust. The breakdown in the needs of family life has much to do with the economic situation in which a family finds itself. Certain families have got to be separated, they all cannot live in one home together because of lack of meals, housing, clothing and schooling. So we cannot, therefore, separate our economic position from whether

or not we ought to have an ideological position with respect to how we manage and operate our governments.

This is why for instance, you have the contradictions in this Government. It is all grounded on that point. I do not mind at all stressing and repeating it because I believe this Government ought to understand very clearly, that it does have an ideology. But it is an ideology that is very dangerous for this country because it is a free market economy model or the neo-liberal model as it is called; one that is being promoted and being highly acclaimed as the end of history. In fact, the economists are saying that this model is so great that we no longer should look for something better than that.

I suggest to this Government, however, that it ought to look at the market economy, yes, if that is what you want to go for; but go for the social market economy.

I do not have the time today to lecture to you on what the social market economy is. I do know that the Member for St. Ann's East reads a great deal and I am sure he knows about it. But it takes the will to implement it.

This particular model combines the freedom of the market with the principles of social equity and justice. Maybe, at some other time I shall spend some time to discuss what exactly is a social market economy.

Madam Speaker, how is all of this relevant, to the particular statement at hand? It has much to do with the fact that the policies are really making the present situation of the people of our country worse.

There is a particular study which has been referred to time and time again in this House and in other places, a study which was sponsored by UNICEF, called the Situation Analysis of Women and Children in Trinidad and Tobago in 1990. I believe the Member for Barataria/San Juan also once mentioned it. That particular study demonstrated in 1988, that 18 per cent of our population was living below the poverty line. With regard to the various policies that have been implemented, it is quite clear that the situation has become worse. In fact, I will put it past 25 per cent at present.

About a month or so ago, I happened to be looking at the television and saw a Minister being interviewed on the question of poverty. This report was already existing. The figures were already there. The Minister said, well, look I cannot talk about poverty now—at least that was the spirit of the discussion because we have to wait. There is a study being done presently on poverty and for the

purposes of that study we have got to assume that there is no poverty. I was shocked to hear a Minister in this Government making a statement like that. Poor families with absolutely nothing to eat—about eight or 10 of them in one small room, only women and children were being shown on the same programme.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I think that the Member owes it to the House, if she is going that far, to call the name of the Minister.

Madam Speaker: The Member is just alluding to a statement. I do not think she is under any duty to name the Minister.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Since the Member asked, I am referring to a statement by the Member for Barataria/San Juan, in her capacity as Minister for Consumer Affairs and Social Services. I have since requested a copy of the tapes.

Dr. Baboolal: Madam Speaker, in that interview we did not say there was no poverty. We said that the poverty line has not yet been established and the study is being done to establish a poverty line. We need that to be able to get the statistics to put plans and programmes into action. We are dealing with poverty in the meantime. Not that there is no poverty, but that the poverty line—please get a copy of that tape.

Miss H. Bhaggan: The exact statement said: "for purposes of this study, let us assume that there is no poverty". In fact, I called the reporter and requested a copy of that tape.

Madam Speaker: Maybe the report can be checked.

5.30 p.m.

Miss H. Bhaggan: The point I want to make is that the Government's attitude towards the poor is reflective of its position of pragmatism.

The second point I should like to make has to do with the question of housing. The very study mentioned that in 1984 there was a deficit in housing of 120,000 units. According to the report, this meant that 540,000 persons could have been living in substandard housing in our country. Therefore, when one looks at the question of poverty, poor housing and overcrowded homes, the whole social problem becomes more important and dangerous, because with overcrowding in homes, there are several other social problems which exist. As was mentioned before, incest is becoming a very serious problem in our society.

Secondly, the poor sanitary conditions are leading to many health problems. Thirdly, research has shown that with overcrowding, mental health becomes affected.

The Government's policy with respect to handling the social problem therefore leaves much to be desired. This is why we are saying, if they talk about caring, their policies must reflect caring. What I am a bit surprised about, is that this Government continues to say that it is doing studies on poverty and homeless children, when this Government was there 35 years before. There should have been statistics available which should have been updated every year. What is the ministry doing with respect to updating the statistics?

I believe the whole—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, on a point of correction. This Government was elected on December 16, 1991.

Miss H. Bhaggan: You were there before. Was it from 1956?

The next point I should like to make has to do with the question of agriculture. The hon. Prime Minister in his statement made a big hullabaloo about agriculture. I have the clear and distinct impression that the PNM Government believes that agriculture is like Jack and the Beanstalk, that is to say, that you get some magic beans, throw them out of your window, and next morning, a big tall bean grows up into the sky with a pot of gold at the end of it. That is what this Government demonstrates.

It does not understand that to develop agriculture you have to ensure that the infrastructure is in place. What does the Prime Minister speak about? He speaks about land distribution. Land is important, but what about those parcels of land which are already under cultivation?

Let me talk about my own constituency. Flooding is a perennial problem in Central and South, but in Chaguanas in particular. Whenever you speak about flooding, the Member for Diego Martin East is doing a study on it. Salt water from the Caroni Swamp is destroying, and has been destroying, hundreds of acres of arable land in the constituency of Chaguanas. When we speak about salt water, a study is being done.

Two weeks ago I asked a question about this much touted IADB loan which was mentioned, and what roads in the constituency of Chaguanas were being upgraded. The roads the Minister mentioned, I have never heard about them before; and none fell in the constituency of Chaguanas. In fact, in phase one, $19

million would have been spent and in phase two $46 million, but not one single road in the constituency of Chaguanas was upgraded.

Apart from the physical infrastructure, what about the question about inputs in agriculture, the costs of machinery, inputs at the level of insecticide and other kinds of chemicals? At the same time, what about our policy as far as the environment is concerned, and the conduct of agriculture? What about the markets? When I say markets, I do not refer only to fresh produce markets; I am speaking about the infrastructure for the marketing of fresh produce and agro-industry.

There is another point I should like to make. It has to do with a statement made by the Member for San Fernando West. The hon. Prime Minister is talking about developing agriculture, but when the Member for Couva North, in his budget reply, mentioned tropical fruits and he spoke about *sici yea* figs, the Member for San Fernando West said, we have a *sici yea* fig mentality.

What is happening here? On the one hand, they say they are promoting agriculture, but on the other hand they accuse us of having a *sici yea* fig mentality. He went on to say that petrochemicals are the chemicals of the future. I heard he has a sapodilla mentality. I do not know about that.

The point I want to make therefore, is that PNM governments throughout their lives in this country have been speaking about diversifying this economy, but at the same time we continue to be dependent on oil. The Member for St. Ann's East also mentioned that this evening. We are still heavily dependent on oil. What is the next natural industry or sector we ought to develop? Is it not agriculture? We have everything for agriculture. In addition to that, we can save on our food import bill and develop and produce things for the Caribbean basin. What are we doing instead? We are paying lip-service to agriculture.

Apart from the development of agriculture as an alternative and part of the diversification of this economy, we want to propose another aspect which has to do with the development and promotion of our multicultural art forms. When you look at carnival and the various festivals in this country, one thing is very clear. In this country, we have an abundance of talent. We have people who can sing, compose music, dance and design. In fact, we have all the makings of a fantastic industry in culture. What has happened?

Culture, too, is also being placed on the back burner. So, whenever we have a big event, culture is reduced to where the Minister in charge, or the Prime Minister, or some other government Minister makes a fantastic speech to sound

good and impress people, but when they leave that particular environment, nothing is done about culture.

We have calypso, steelband, tassa, chutney, carnival, phagwa and hosay. As a matter of fact, we have festivals throughout the year. We also have dancers, singers, musicians, composers. We have the creative and performing arts. We have declared the steelpan a national instrument. What happens to the poor pan-player after carnival? All these things we have to look at. We do not have to spend millions of dollars to train all these people. They already have the indigenous and natural talent.

Why can we not put some more money into culture? Set up the infrastructure, so that they could be properly paid; they could earn an income and create an industry out of what we have. What is stopping us from doing that? Half of that $140 million that is being wasted on the Unemployment Relief Programme should have gone into the development of our culture, as part of an export item from our country. Apart from that, spin-off industries in recording, advertising and film making should have been encouraged in the development of our cultural art forms.

I want to suggest to this Government that in addition to agriculture we ought to look now at the development and promotion of our multicultural art forms as an alternative for our national development. This is why, I guess for instance, people are so unhappy at the decision of this Government to take away the old fire brigade station building from the Trinidad Theatre Company.

They are going to put a library there as part of the whole urban development of Port-of-Spain. That is what we call the Prime Minister's plan to shine up the city of Port-of-Spain. Why do we need one gigantic library in Port-of-Spain when there are other parts of the country in which there are no libraries? Could we not maintain and upgrade the existing one in Port-of-Spain; set up one in Central Trinidad and put one in South Trinidad? Why do they want to have one fantastic library in Port-of-Spain alone? Would people from La Brea come down to Port-of-Spain to use the library?

Mr. Bereaux: We have a library at La Brea.

Miss H. Bhaggan: The hon. Member says they have a library, but what kind of library?

The point is, when you look at the world as it is moving today—this Government speaks about libraries and the changing world—you see a whole

revolution in terms of information technology, where your library system has to be so designed to take account of and cater for that new age of information technology. People are not going to read books any more. The information that is there must be reflected in terms of the electronic media and other forms of attraction.

There will be books, but they have to get people interested in the libraries. I should like to know how many young people really go and sit in a library and read books. They are now into the electronic age, and so whatever you do in terms of the information system, ought to be so designed to take charge of the new development in information technology.

In conclusion, I want to say that this Government has been giving confusing signals to the country. When you examine it further, I believe in the minds of this Government it is quite logical, because they are operating from a realm of one which boasts of pragmatism and realism.

5.40 p.m.

A while ago, the Member for St. Joseph spoke about the whole concept of training in his Government. While I have seen there are definitely good attempts to rationalize the question of training, I am not satisfied that we are moving into areas that are supposed to prepare this nation for the 21st century. In relation to developments in the world, it has been said that there are seven industries of the future. Well, I want to ask this Government how close it is to any of these seven industries. The seven industries have to do with science, telecommunications, the manufacturing and design of machine tools, robots, computer hardware and software and civil aviation. Those are projected as the seven industries of the future.

When we look at our training system today, in all of the programmes that we have, how many of those are geared towards the 21st century to be part of that industrial revolution? It is quite clear that the industries of the future are based on brain power, not the making of school furniture. That is good for now, but if you want to take this country into the 21st century, they have to make sure that we project our skills so as to create the brain power industries.

I read recently where India, for instance, is selling its brain power. Large United States corporations are going into India and moving software offshore. That is to say they are actually tapping into the brain power of those who are living in India. Software designers, programmers and engineers are being

contracted to work in US firms. Through satellite link-up, programmes are being transmitted instantaneously to very large companies in the United States of America. In fact, it has been estimated that whereas today India actually does foreign business in this software trade to the tune of US $179 million, by the year 1995, US $1 billion is going to be done in business in software production through companies such as IBM, Texas Instruments and Hewlett Packard. That is just an example of what a Third World country can do.

Mr. Ramrekersingh: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I simply gave a few examples of what we were doing. I want to assure her that, for example, information technology is part of the programme. I said that it goes beyond the traditional craft people associate with apprenticeship. I also made reference to the changing world of work. Alvin Toffler III said that we need to consider all of these things so that obviously any training must take into account the technological revolution in the world.

Miss H. Bhaggan: I am glad the hon. Minister agrees with me. I am saying that we are now in the year 1992, eight years away from the 21st century. Skills in these areas cannot be developed overnight. If we are going to spend millions of dollars right now in an apprenticeship and different development programmes, we ought to gear ourselves from now; invest in the technology now, so that we can train our people for then. If we are going to train people in the skills we are talking about now, in eight or 10 years from now we are going to have to introduce retraining and retooling programmes. Why should we therefore have retooling programmes then, when we can start now to prepare our young people to take advantage of the changes in the world as we foresee them in the 21st century?

The other point that was made by the Member for St. Joseph—

Madam Speaker: The speaking time of the Member has expired.

Motion made, That the Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes *[Mr. T. Sudama]*

Question put and agreed to.

Miss H. Bhaggan: The Minister also made reference to masters who are supervising those apprentices in the various companies. I have had experience with this particular programme and I hope that those persons who are the masters, to oversee the various apprentices in the various companies and institutions are well trained in the area, because human resource development is a very specialist function. It is not something you can do because you happen to have a degree. It

is something you can do only if you have specialized training in addition to the normal academic qualifications. I am hoping that the Government, in recruiting those masters, wherever they are coming from, will ensure that they are people who are trained in human resource development.

The other point I would like to make has to do with the fact that in some companies, the apprentices are being taken unfair advantage of. I know of cases where apprentices have been assigned to companies and they may be there to understudy a secretary or to do something on computers and that particular apprentice ends up doing filing or dealing with a backlog of some work in that particular company. They act like extra help at very low cost. I have seen it and I know what I am talking about. I want to suggest to the Government that their monitoring system of apprentices ought to be so designed that the situation where employers in certain companies and institutions take advantage of apprentices and see them as a form of cheap labour will not exist.

I would also like to look at the question of retooling and retraining. The hon. Member mentioned that right now his Government is focussing on the youth apprenticeship. That is good. In fact, I think it is commendable that the government is focussing on the youth. As I said, I am not satisfied, in spite of what the Member said, that we are looking at the kind of programmes that are really relevant.

The Member is saying that the question of retooling and retraining right now is not on the agenda. My question is, as people are retrenched—adult persons beyond 25 years old—ought there not to be a retooling and retraining programme to assist them in certain occupations?

I know, for instance, a public statement was made recently to the effect. that with the severance benefits received from retrenchment, these people could become entrepreneurs overnight. I am saying that that cannot happen overnight. A person who has been a worker all his life, working with a manager in a department, doing some function on the line, cannot become an entrepreneur overnight. Some people will have the talent for it, that is great; but generally to move from the psychological position of a worker who is almost subservient in a particular industry or organization and suddenly to become a manager, employing people in turn, does not happen overnight. It has to do with a psychological shift that the person has to go through, so some form of counselling has to take place.

Managing a business is not just getting some money, buying some goods, putting it in a shop and opening it up. It has to do with much more than that. How

do they, for instance, decide what type of business to go into? How do they set up business in terms of the legal aspect, in terms of the accounting aspect, in terms of the obligation towards the state; towards the employees, managing people, and as the Member himself said, planning. The question of management becomes very important.

And after a person goes through a training programme, there has to be follow-up to ensure that the skills are properly transferred onto the workplace. This is why, for instance, so many small businesses start up and then close down. What happens is that they have the capital, but they do not have the skills. Capital is something you can borrow, but you cannot borrow skills. You have got to acquire skills, and this is why I am very surprised that the Government has not, to date, mentioned any really concerted effort towards retooling and retraining those persons in particular who would have been retrenched from their positions and who would have been beyond the age of 25.

In closing, therefore, I want to make the statement that this nation needs a vision for the future. It has to be a vision that we all must buy into so that if we are being told to make sacrifices today, we must see something in the future that will motivate us to make that sacrifice. After all, that is the purpose of Government. In our view, we live in the world of tomorrow. You might say that we are living here today, but no, it is the world of tomorrow. The Members on the other side often like to talk about globalization of the economy and changes; we understand that there are changes taking place but we are not happy. We have a vision of what those changes are going to be. We are unhappy because we do not feel that this Government has a clue as to what it ought to do to prepare this nation to move into the 21st century. This is something we feel very unhappy about.

5.50 p.m.

Madam Speaker, as someone from my own generation—and I do not think there are many of us in this House who represent my generation—I should like to speak for those people, because I know we have inherited from generations before. It is up to us to leave something for those coming after us. This is why, too, I am making a plea for the people of my generation who would be able to say "Okay, something was done; we can leave it now for the next generation". It is a question of the relay race, as the Member for Couva North mentioned, where one has to pass the baton onto the next generation, because this whole society—and life—is like a relay race. I am not sure whether we are going to get a baton when

we are ready, because it seems as though the baton is going to be turned into a fire-stick.

Madam Speaker, from all indications, therefore, this Government does not know how to care. It says it cares, but it does not know how to care. It says it puts country first, but I do not believe it really knows how to do that. I suggest to this Government that since it does not know how to care, and since it does not understand how to put the country first, it is only a matter of time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall): Madam Speaker, you would know for a fact that I seldom find it necessary to speak in this House, because I know that we have many persons on this side who are quite capable of dealing with those on that side. But, I believe that it is necessary, today, to intervene for a brief while to make a few points on this particular matter, the Prime Minister's statement of January 4, 1993.

In response to some of the points raised in this debate by my colleagues and friends on the other side, so far—they did not surprise us. We know what to expect from the Opposition. It is clear in our minds. We know we would not get much support in dealing with the problems of this country. We know that as we go through what is indeed a very difficult period for us in Trinidad and Tobago, we shall virtually have to carry this country on our backs and take the pressure that goes with it. We know that, and we are prepared for that. We know that it is not going to be an easy period for us and that some of the faint-hearted will fall by the wayside. We know that as well. But, we know in the final analysis, when the dust is cleared, and when all is said and done, that truth will emerge victorious over distortions and inaccuracies, and in the final analysis, as people look at what we would have done for this country—notwithstanding our weakness and our errors, because we are human—they will acknowledge that we would have done the best job that we could in the circumstances.

Madam Speaker, if we do that, then I do not think we can ask God for more. That is our mission. It is important for us to understand what I am saying. As we examine the international scenario—which I would talk a little about in a while—we see, there are problems of one kind or another. If one is going to survive now as human beings, what one needs—when speaking about the Caribbean region, Latin American countries, North America or wherever—are leaders with guts, strength and courage who will do what they think is right for the country they represent.

Madam Speaker, sometimes, I tell myself, I would wish to give the Opposition the role of the Government for one month, a week or a day, and see if they would stand up as men and women and take the kind of decisions that must be taken in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago. But then, I have to remind myself that one is talking about people and we cannot risk that, or if we do, we do so at our own peril. I know—and I say this with all sincerity—that there are some Members on that side who, in my humble view, have the interest of this country at heart.

As I listened to my colleague the Member Couva North, Madam Speaker, my mind returned to late 1986, early 1987, when I sat where the Member for Couva South is now sitting, and in that early period the Member for Couva North sat where my colleague for Diego Martin Central now sits. I remember looking at him almost every parliamentary day, and seeing his discomfort sitting in Government.

One can sit on that side and continue, as they have been doing, behaving as if the Government is the worst thing in the whole world; behaving, as they continue to behave, with their level of irresponsibility, putting their interests first, and the interest of the country after. I knew then that he was in a difficult position. That is the difference between men and boys. That is the difference between real leaders and masqueraders. It is not easy for us to be here as people, as leaders, who, fundamentally, have the interest of this country at heart, dealing with a very tight economic situation having to take some of the decisions we have to take. I make no apology, Madam Speaker.

6.00 p.m.

Some people on that side talk about the question of efficiency, for example, in the utilities. I make no apologies whatsoever about that because if one has to protect the interest of the poor people, and the working class in Trinidad and Tobago, one has to make those utilities efficient. There is no doubt about that.

When you have inefficient utilities those who, in fact, receive the worst end of it are those same persons who live in the hills of Laventille, on the Beetham, in Central Trinidad who are supposed to be disadvantaged, depressed and poor. So if we have to protect their interests, and put their interests first, we have to clean up those utilities.

I make no apologies about saying some of them have, in fact, held this country to ransom for many years and we have to deal with that. I am saying, Madam Speaker, that is the period that we are in.

It is important, Madam Speaker, that I talk today to you, but equally important to the people of Trinidad and Tobago; they have to understand that. Because, obviously, we shall pass away at some time, but if we do not come to terms with the period that we are in and take the kind of decisions that we must take to put this country on course, well then we can rest assured that over the next 20, 30, or 40 years, we are going to find ourselves in the same situation that we are in today.

Hon. Member: Who created it?

Hon. M. Marshall: It does not matter to me who created it. I am not here to cast blame on anyone, the previous government, or the government before them. The fact of the matter is that we are now in charge of a situation and we have to deal with it. That is the fact, that is the reality [*Interruptions*] So, Madam Speaker, we need to understand that, and the kind of period that we are in, as we debate this address by the hon. Prime Minister, who, unfortunately, cannot be here today.

Mr. Maharaj: That is the contempt.

Hon. M. Marshall: We have to place that presentation, as I said before, in the context of Trinidad and Tobago today, and equally important in the context of the global situation. We have to do that, as we read the newspapers, as we view the television, and as we talk to people from abroad and see what is happening around us. Whether you are talking about the position right now in the United States and President Clinton's position—

Mr. Maharaj: When Robinson was there, what did you do?

Hon. M. Marshall: Whether you are talking about the situation in Canada, or major conglomerates falling apart—and we have a situation like the IBM where 50,000 persons, I think it is, for the first time in history are losing their jobs. Whether we are talking about General Motors and thousands losing their jobs. Whether you are talking about the situation in African states—I think it was some time ago my colleague, the Minister of Finance, referred to the African state where the head of that particular state, in an attempt to meet the commitments of some of his workers, printed money and in a matter of weeks, the entire economy collapsed.

Whether you are talking about what is happening in the Latin American countries—and it was just a while ago, Madam Speaker, someone passed to me a release from the Caribbean Development Bank which, more or less, refers, to some extent, to the problems on the international front, and it talks about North American countries and the situation there; it talks about the question of Latin

American countries and the situation there. African countries, former socialist countries and others. It is not an easy period for those who are in charge of countries. The easy way out, the weak and cowardly way out, Madam Speaker, is to do as my friend did, possibly as my colleague reminded us, to get himself dismissed and get back on the other side and continue every Monday morning—

Mr. Maharaj: You supported him then, what happens now?

Hon. M. Marshall: Madam Speaker, that is not what leadership is all about.

Mr. Maharaj: *Hansard* shows you supported the man then.

Hon. M. Marshall: Madam Speaker, we have to understand that the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister is an attempt to deal with the problems facing the country, to put to the country some of the programmes that the Government has embarked upon, in treating with the concerns facing us here in Trinidad and Tobago.

So he referred to the whole question of the energy sector, which the hon. Member for St. Ann's East referred to in his presentation this afternoon, and the whole question of housing. Not a perfect plan, but a plan seeking to come to terms with the problems in housing, and we know them. Suggestions to deal with the question of agriculture, Madam Speaker—training as it relates to our young people. Again, not a perfect plan, but a plan that is a serious attempt to treat with the unemployment situation among our young people; the question of lack of proper skills among our young people. My colleague the Member for St. Joseph spoke at length about that and an attempt that between now and the end of the year we can put about 5,000 young people into certain programmes that will make them more employable, young people between the ages of 16 and 25 years.

The Prime Minister in his statement also talked about the question of national security, and the Member for Chaguanas referred to some of the problems of security. I say this with humility; I think it may be the first time in this country that there is a serious and concerted effort on the part of any administration to confront the problem in the police service. Win, lose or draw, Madam Speaker—

Mr. B. Panday: A stupid way—a most stupid approach.

Hon. M. Marshall: You cannot deal with criminal activity of the kind that we are experiencing now in Trinidad and Tobago...It does not matter whom you want to blame for that, that is the reality. You cannot deal with criminal activities at the levels at which they have reached, without confronting the problems in the police service. And the Government—not a perfect government, but an attempt, Madam Speaker—

Mr. B. Panday: Start with recruitment.

Hon. M. Marshall: —is saying look, "this is the situation and let us seriously make an effort to treat with what all of us in this country are aware of"—what is taking place in the police service. There is where it is, and let the chips fall where they may. So there is an attempt. The Prime Minister referred to that and spoke about some of the initiatives in this particular area.

He talked about the whole question of the utilities, and I want to talk briefly about that. I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that I would be the last person in this Cabinet in this country to support any programme of separation of workers from any particular agency. I remember years ago when I was a child my father worked at the *Trinidad Guardian* for about twenty odd years and then there was a problem, as I understood it at the time—

Mr. B. Panday: Tell us about retrenchment at WASA!

Hon. M. Marshall: You cannot throw me off, you know. I know what I am about.

Mr. B. Panday: Retrenchment at WASA.

Hon. M. Marshall: We will deal with that.

Mr. B. Panday: And PTSC.

Hon. M. Marshall: Madam Speaker, I was making the point that my father left the *Guardian* and went to work for what was *The Gazette* at the time. But in a matter of a year, or so, *The Gazette* closed down and he lost his job. I remember that. It is not easy, really, and I know the difficulties, the trauma, the problems and the pressure. But, as a Government of a country, there are times when you have to take painful decisions when you are talking about the total picture, in treating what you think is best for the country as a whole.

Mr. B. Panday: The poor are crying.

6.10 p.m.

Hon. M. Marshall: If it is that we are going to deal with the problems that all of us are aware of, as they relate to the Water and Sewerage Authority for many years, that the Members for Princes Town, Siparia, Oropouche, complained about, we have to take certain action. It is not just a question of separation. The major objective at this time, as its relates to the utilities, is to make those utilities efficient. That is the objective. In doing that, it requires taking certain kinds of action. One that is being talked about is the question of separation. The question of increased rates. We have to do it. More than that, we have to be able to treat

with the problems of attitudes. Part of the problem in this country over the years, as it relates to state enterprises, quasi-state enterprises, utilities and agencies of the state, is a certain viewpoint that this thing here is the Government's, it is the Ministers, it is not mine.

For example, some months ago we had a situation at PTSC—I am just sharing this with you so you would understand what I am talking about—where a worker was called by his colleague, another PTSC worker, to Morvant. He is liming somewhere there in Morvant. He calls his colleague who is supposed to be on the job at PTSC. His colleague leaves with a big, empty PTSC bus, travels to Morvant to meet his partner who is, in fact, drinking up in Morvant. He parks up the bus, leaves it on, some teenager picks it up and drives it away, while they are drinking.

I am saying that we have to deal with that type of situation. It is not only that. It is the attitude of consumers as well, some of them who, whenever they get their WASA bill believe that there is no need for them even to open the envelope and see what the amount is. We are not helping working class people, we are not helping poor people, if we allow inefficiency to continue in the way it did in the past as it relates to the utilities, be it WASA, PTSC, be it T&TEC. We are seeking to close the era of that, as far as we possibly and as humanely can. That is what we have to do.

I am certain that once we have the support of the major elements in this country and the understanding of the population, in the long run, we are convinced in our minds, the country will thank us for the kind of work that we are doing, laying the basis for the type of Trinidad and Tobago that all of us will be happy to be part of.

We have to see this statement in the context of the problems facing us here in Trinidad and Tobago. We have to see the suggestions, recommendations, programmes and projects outlined here by the Prime Minister on January 4, in the context of our limitations, financial and otherwise. We cannot continue to pretend, as some people will project at times that they simply do not understand how the state cannot have money. You see, there is no mystery, in my view, you do not have to have a Ph.D. in economics to understand the basic elements of our economic situation. If you have a budget of approximately $7 billion, there is so much you can do with it. As a Government, we have to be able to manage that budget in the context of what we think is best for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is our mandate. We have to do that.

If it is that you want to put additional funds into the utilities, you can do that, but it will mean that you will probably have to take it from Health, Housing, Education or from some other place. You have to be able to understand those things.

What you need at this period as we go through what, I repeat, is a very difficult experience for most of us, is to understand that whether we sit on that side or this side, this country is ours; that all of us, all things considered, wish to live here—I have no intention of leaving this country—and that we can only at this time, as we confront the critical problems facing us as a society, appeal to all concerned, whether we are talking about union leaders, spiritual leaders, community leaders, leaders of other political parties, to give the kind of co-operation and assistance that is necessary so that in the final analysis we would have set the stage for a society where, even if we continue to experience difficult times, our children, the future citizens of tomorrow, would appreciate the kind of foundation that we would have laid.

Madam Speaker, I felt it necessary to make these very brief comments on, what I think, is a very important statement by the hon. Prime Minister on Monday, January, 4. I thank you most kindly.

Miss Pamela Nicholson *(Tobago West)*: Madam Speaker, I do not know whether I am grieved or whether I should be sympathetic to the Member for Laventille, at hearing him this evening. I have risen here this evening to comment on the motion before the House.

"Be it resolved:

> That this honourable House take note of the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister at a sitting of the House of Representatives held on Monday, January 4, 1993."

When I decided that I should say a few words on this motion, I decided to do a little research with some copies of our *Hansard*. At the time when we had the opportunity to do some hard thinking and to take some very serious decisions for Trinidad and Tobago, one of the persons who struggled most vigorously and opposed those decisions to correct the problems that confronted Trinidad and Tobago, that was one of the individuals, as I said previously, who joined a guerilla group and was one of the most serious lieutenants in that group, opposing the serious economic—

Mr. Marshall: Madam Speaker, I do not normally get up to intervene when a Member is speaking, but I am raising this on a point of order at this time. This is the second time that the hon. Member, who is in fact, my very close colleague, is

making a very serious allegation in this Parliament. I want to make it abundantly clear—I said it before and I say it again—I took certain positions before l991. I make no apologies about that, but I never, ever, participated in anything that was illegal; I was never involved in any guerilla movement; I was never part of any group that attempted to overthrow the Government, and when that unfortunate incident took place in July of l990, in fact, I made it quite clear that while we opposed certain positions of the Government at the time, we would never, under any circumstances, support that type of action.

6.20 p.m.

I want to make it abundantly clear that I have no problem with the Member raising positions of the past. That is her right. But I take strong objection to her giving the impression to the country that this Member was involved in any sort of illegal action. That is a very serious charge, and I wish, unless she has the evidence to support that, that she would desist from proceeding on that course.

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I called nobody's name so I have nothing to withdraw. The point that I am making is, the representative for Laventille West—

Mr. Marshall: Madam Speaker, she has to correct it. She did not call any name. She said, this Member, and the records will show when she spoke on the last occasion, she specifically identified the Member for Laventille West, Madam Speaker. I am again repeating that I take strong, objection to that. That is a very serious allegation.

Madam Speaker: Would the Member please take note of the Minister's objection.

Miss P. Nicholson: He only said that he takes objection. He did not say anything else. I am noting what he said, but I am not withdrawing what I said. He just told me to take note, and I took note. I would just put my discourse in another style.

The representative for Laventille West will know, and the whole country knows, the newspapers have the evidence with regard to the behavioural pattern, the oratorial pattern, the walking on the streets pattern with certain elements in this country. The evidence is there—very clearly.

I am alarmed this evening to hear the same representative saying that what is happening today is a global scenario and the country does not have money and one has to be very brave, one has to be a man instead of a boy to be able to take decisions that one has to take in the country today.

I should like to quote certain statements from that representative who is the Minister of Public Utilities, and also from the Prime Minister. I meditated before deciding whether I would reply. I wondered whether these were the spurious and vacuous minds that were talking; whether we have had changes from what was happening during the period 1987 to 1991 and now.

In his statement on January 4, the Prime Minister said:

> "During 1992, we were able to recognize that to achieve true growth, given the unyielding financial position in which we found ourselves, 1993 would be a year which, although leading to growth, would also mean recognition of the fact that there would be a clear need for Government's subventions, especially to the public utilities, to be reduced significantly and for a process to be found to achieve optimum efficiency of these utilities.
>
> Additionally, it is also clear that there must be rate increases at the Port, at the Water and Sewerage Authority and at the Public Transport Service Corporation."

I happened to have had the harsh and hard opportunity of functioning in the Utilities as my colleague the Member for Laventille West is today. I remember when we were dealing with the amendment to the Telephone Bill on June 8, 1990, Mr. Manning, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, had this to say:" 'Mr. Speaker, let me read part of a letter for you from the Ministry of Settlements and Public Utilities.'"

He is reading the letter:

" 'Dear Sir,

Application for Rate Increase.

> I have to refer to previous correspondence on the above subject, ending with your letter AIK/220/sb dated 21st February, 1989 and to inform you' ..."

Let me correct something. It was the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Settlements and Public Utilities writing to the General Manager of T&TEC. It was a leaked document. Although I heard them criticizing documents being leaked the other day when the PRIDE document came into the House. We had the Minister of Information criticizing it. We even questioned whether it was from the Permanent Secretary or from T&TEC. It goes on to say:

> " ' that Cabinet noted the Commission's proposal for a review of the tariff structure (the enclosure to your letter of 5th December 1988) and agreed that Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission should approach the Public Utilities Commission for an adjustment of tariffs.' "

At the particular point in time was that the utility T&TEC, was seeking to go to the Public Utilities Commission for increased tariffs.

"It goes on:...

Cabinet also agreed that Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission should be requested to incorporate in its submission to the Public Utilities Commission the following considerations:

(1) Government's policy, that the public utilities should be self-financing'"

Note, this is the same struggle that they are trying to put up now. The Member for San Fernando East is using his own words now.

"In other words, this Government..."

He is criticizing the NAR Government.

"is committed in the shortest possible time to ensure that the public utilities are self-financing, even if it means a significant increase in public utility rates and increased pressure on an already pressured and beleaguered population as a consequence of the policies they have put in place."

We were addressing the whole question of self-financing of the utility. This was the Member for San Fernando East speaking.

He went on to say and the letter was dated: "It is dated April 6, 1981." Here him again:

The quotation ended with the following statement:

This is a quotation from the letter:
'"Government's policy that the public utilities should be self-financing'"

I quote him again:

"In other words, the Government is making it quite clear and is instructing T&TEC to tell the Public Utilities Commission that it is determined to ensure that these utilities are self-financing and making it clear to the national community that they will do so, because there are several other sources from which I can quote, in the shortest possible time, even at the expense of putting pressure on a population that has already been pressured, almost into the ground by a government that is heartless and by a government that is soulless."

The man who is now Prime Minister, in 1990, when the debate was taking place said that the NAR Government was putting increased pressure on an already pressured and beleaguered population. He went on to say that they were also putting pressure on a population that has already been pressured almost into the ground by a government that is heartless and by a government that is soulless.

6.30 p.m.

Today, I am asking this question: Do the PNM Government have a heart? Do they have a soul? They are saying that they want the people to understand that if the country has to go through the rough periods and overcome the economic climate that we are in, certain changes must take place: public utilities must become self-financing; the whole attitudinal structure of the people has to change. We told the people that. We spoke on the television and to the workers.

I visited WASA several times. I spoke to workers and visited their places of work all over Trinidad and Tobago. When we were to take certain decisions, for example, when we had to increase T&TEC rates; to improve WASA, we came to the House with our information. The members of the PNM Opposition were the greatest attackers of the NAR Government. They said that we were soulless and heartless; pressuring the people to the ground and that the people would deal with us. Prime Minister Manning also said that. What we had done was to impose a temporary liability on them.

I should also like to quote from Minister Marshall. For example, he came with a motion within four months of the NAR Government assuming office—not one year. Within four months, he was in here peppering on employment! Then, he came back in 1988 and he actually said what would be happening on the streets. He is the same person who does not want me to do my analysis. He said that we were irresponsible. I quote from him, the Member for Laventille:

> "Whereas the numerous irresponsible statements about the state of the national—treasury, in addition to the economic positions adopted and implemented by the present administration are not only helping to undermine confidence in the national economy…"

Today, they are saying that the population must believe and understand there is no money; the country is broke. The Member for St. Ann's East said that on the television. He said, "I am not stingy; I am broke." He does not have any money. When the NAR Government said the Treasury is empty, the Member for Laventille West said, that we are making numerous irresponsible statements about the state

of the national Treasury. That is where they started fooling the population. 'Do not worry with them. They have money. They are wicked! They are vindictive!'

Madam Speaker, it grieves me sometimes. From a personal level, I could function with the Member for Laventille, but sometimes when I reread his contributions and those of the Member for San Fernando East, and I listen to how they are begging, 'be patient with me today,' I sometimes feel that I must devastate, annihilate and clean them out. I say they are too dishonest and immoral. Today, what they are saying, they should not be saying. They should just resign and leave.

He said that we were undermining the economy and we were irresponsible when we said that the Treasury was empty. They are saying that the Treasury is empty and people must understand, that it is a global scenario; America and Africa have to deal with that. We said the same thing, but they went and told the people that we were vindictive and wicked. They told the multitudes, "Crucify them!" The multitudes came in July 1990 to crucify and blow away whom the PNM said were vindictive.

Madam Speaker, I get emotional when I am dealing with this issue, because although they are saying that they were not linking—I am neither a part of nor concerned with mob rule. They were in the mob rule. The Member for Laventille was in the mob rule and he marched with Abu Bakr. Let him get up here this evening and say that he did not. That is why I am making my statement. The Member for Laventille associated with SOPO. Let him get up here and say he did not.

Mr. Marshall: Madam Speaker, I said before and I say again, I marched with Abu Bakr, the trade union leaders and the religious leaders in the same way that her leader marched all over the country. It does not mean that one supports violence and criminal activity. There is a critical difference between the two.

Miss P. Nicholson: They marched with the church, Canon Clarke and they organized. I am holding my ground. They were a part of everything that took place in Trinidad and Tobago in July 1990. Therefore, I have no sympathy whatsoever for the People's National Movement Government today. [*Interruption*] Let me make my statement. I have no sympathy. [*Interruption*] You want sympathy. You cannot stand up.

Madam Speaker: Member for Tobago West, please continue. Please do not let the debate degenerate into a fight between Members.

Miss P. Nicholson: Who is doing that? They are doing that.

Madam Speaker: I am speaking to the Members of the House. Continue, please.

Miss P. Nicholson: I do not ever get into immoral and corrupt activities. There are many persons who are sitting in this House today who should not be sitting down here. If they were living in certain countries they could have never faced the polls. That is why certain people are bitter about Tobago. I hold my ground right there because I have another time.

This is the Member for Laventille. He went on with his motion:

> "Be it resolved that this honourable House take note of the critical level of unemployment and the attendant social, economic and psychological hardships being imposed on the people and the inherent dangers to the society which have resulted; and calls on the Government to take immediate and urgent steps to alleviate this grave, social and economic problem."

They are marching; re-read those problems today. I did not motivate them. They were motivated by the poor governmental approach of the People's National Movement. They cannot handle the situation. It is out of hand. Everybody in this country is afraid.

The points made by the Member for Chaguanas in respect of violence and the Member for Couva North about how people feel and the whole atmosphere in the country and those who were mobilized to march are on the streets again. Other people did not put them there. They were put there by people who said that they could resolve the unemployment situation in one year, and they waved their document. They were put there by statements which they made; statements about cutting unemployment by about 1000. I think it was made in the document also by the Prime Minister.

6.40 p.m.

Here on page 25 of the *Medium Term Policy Framework: From Stabilization to Growth 1993—1995*. It says, under Water and Sewerage:

> "The Authority has embarked upon a programme with a view to attaining financial self-sufficiency in 1993"

which, as I argued earlier, the person who is the present Minister of Public Utilities now fought against. He said, "Not a man must go"—

"One of the measures taken in this respect over the period 1990—1991, was a reduction in staff by 1200. The programme also includes elements such as rate increases, royalty, on extraction of water and further reduction..."

and they said they have to increase rates and that kind of thing.

The whole question of the separation of workers was hinted at by the Prime Minister in this statement. The representative for St. Ann's East also made a statement to the nation that there would be separation of workers in the utilities and they would like the people to understand and co-operate and that the executive bodies in the institutions would have to work with the unions to bring about this kind of agreement, to be able to implement that.

When I heard him on television, I remembered that one of the fundamental areas that I, as Minister, addressed regarding the Water and Sewage Authority, was voluntary retirement. I remember, after the management did its home lessons and brought the document showing that the Water and Sewerage Authority was over-supplied with workers, because of the economic problems confronting us at WASA, and which were very difficult to overcome, one of the positions that we took was that we must try to separate some of the workers but do it from a voluntary perspective; work out a plan which both unions would agree with and then implement.

The unions agreed with the document. I can remember very well that $50 million was borrowed from City Bank to address the whole situation, and when nearly 600 workers voluntarily retired, the same representative was on the road with the unions telling the people, "Not a man must go". That is why I am in a contradictory position today to appreciate what he is telling me. *[Interruption]* He cannot be so good. To be good, he must move.

After about 600 workers agreed quite nicely to go, he linked up with some of his union people who belonged to his party and they started to surround the Ministry and the Parliament. If I did not have a strong will and a big heart, I could not be standing here today. I had to face them. Six hundred people went voluntarily, finding that what we offered was good.

What we argued was that if we could get many of the senior people to go voluntarily, the more junior workers would then be able to remain in the institution permanently. If we were not interfered with, the Member for Laventille would not have had to face this particular area of his problem today. The Member for Laventille was one of the men linking up with Haynes and a number of

persons in the union and saying, "Not a man must go; they are too wicked! They are too vindictive! We are the multitudes, we are the people and we must blow them away."

It reminded me very much of when Jesus Christ went into Jerusalem. Alleluia! Alleluia! He is here! They put the palms and marched him in on the donkey and everybody was for the Lord.

Hon. Member: Whoa donkey!

Miss P. Nicholson: It was not 'whoa donkey'; I am a very spiritual person. I am not linking my business with carnival. Then the Pharisees and the Sadducees, which are the PNM, started to organize and they told Pontius Pilate, "We have to clean away this man. This man is interfering with how things are going". If we were allowed to function, this country would have been well on the road to improvement. You were seeing it. *[Interruption]* I am not concerned with steups. I do not have to steups because I always watch people who talk about responsibility and behave well in here. Sometimes when we stray a little over here, they say all kinds of miserable and worthless things and I always hear him with his long steups because he has no training.

They told Pontius Pilate that he had to crucify Him, and it was the same thing that A.N.R. Robinson, Prime Minister in NAR Government and the party faced. They danced around and said crucify. Well they actually almost crucified him because they blew away his foot, and everyone does not know that the people who danced and pranced were on the streets selling the wicked messages. Canon Clarke—I am not hearing him today. I am not hearing the economist, Carl Theodore, who lectures at the University of the West Indies; and the same Dennis Pantin, who is writing now—everybody.

We did not even sit in this Parliament for four months when the Member for Laventille West was in here dealing with unemployment. We did not even sit down to watch what was going on before and to appreciate what was taking place in the country, when the Member for Laventille West was in here with a motion on unemployment. I find this side very nice because up to now they have not brought any motion on unemployment. They are very nice because thousands are going home and no motion has been brought as yet. We know that they are young and inexperienced so we are giving them a chance. We are here for the welfare of the country and of the people, so we say let us give the youths a chance, let them try. We know that they will never learn and will never be able to handle it, but we know sometimes that a country must feel.

6.50 p.m.

Our country is very immature; I recognize that. Today I am listening. I listen all around. They are crying. Some are ashamed. Some are very silent. Some were my friends. I have many relatives in Trinidad and they belong, strange enough, to the other side, and when our side was in power, they would pound sister Pam whenever they met me saying that PNM is great and they must vote for that party.

Some even told me that they got letters from PSA and from the man on the Port, and that kind of thing. Yes! The same people who are crying today. They got letters, and they said vote nobody else but the People's National Movement. When I meet them today, as soon as I raise a little politics, they say "Pam, I am not chatting any politics; leave that alone. I do not want to hear anything about politics, all you politicians terrible!" That is how they reply to me. I have many relatives in Trinidad and this is what they say to me. They are ashamed to say, "Pam I am supporting you now."

Madam Speaker, then you have the Member for Laventille. He said:

> "I am sure you would have no trouble agreeing with me when I conclude that this Government has demonstrated beyond any doubt an inability to halt the economy's downward slide, which has resulted in the sharp rise in the unemployment rate."

He states again that:

> "Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding what yardsticks are employed, the evidence of the past 17 months..."

This is the document when he came back the second time with the same unemployment motion. He came in March or April of 1987; and then he came back 17 months after and stated:

> "...leads to these inescapable conclusions that the Government has not done the job it promised to do and many are now satisfied the Government will never be able to do the job."

Would the Member be able to do the job? The same people the Member for Laventille West was crying for and saying we must create jobs for, I notice he is sending them home in thousands—in thousands!

Mr. B. Panday: History will record him as having retrenched them.

Miss P. Nicholson: A figure of 1,000 to 1,200 from WASA; same number from the Port. You all are arguing in this House—I listen very closely—that Laventille must be flooded with the IADB money. It must be flooded with the Unemployment Relief Programme funds. What is the argument? They are inequitably served? Or they are not equitably served? I am asking the question: Is Tobago equitably served?

Miss Bhaggan: Good question!

Miss P. Nicholson: Laventille is no different from Tobago. Tobago does not have industries. They only have a small industry that is now developing and the PNM Government is destroying it—that is the tourism industry. Besides people with their own self-reliant business, it is the Government that employs all the people in Tobago—the teachers, the public servants, the people on the Port and so on. The Tobago port does not even have 150 workers. They are only leaving 69. That is their proposal—to send home all the other people and leave only 69, of these people and they are not sure whether the 69 would be able to do the job. When you send home those numbers—because I was looking at the Port documents here—you want to know what would happen in Tobago? Tobago's unemployment level is the highest in this country. It is the highest in this country!

Dr. Rowley: No, that is not true. Oropouche is the highest.

Miss P. Nicholson: But what is flooded into Laventille is not flooded into Tobago. I do not think that they even have—I think it is $6 million for the URP Programme.

Hon. Member: URP.

Miss P. Nicholson: Whatever it is, same thing. And there is a big cutback in what Works got, as against the last year. Madam Speaker, we do not have industries all over the place. So when they are talking about giving equitably, was Tobago considered in the equitable distribution?

Now they are saying over 100 workers from the Port must go. They have addressed the Government Shipping Service which is a special service for Tobago, which is being looked at integrally with the Port, when it is a separate institution. I have talked about it here already and nobody is sitting down to address that situation. I am referring to the Port because the Prime Minister said:

> "It is also clear that there must be rate increases at the Port, at the Water and Sewerage Authority and at the Public Transport Service Corporation."

He also said that people from those institutions would have to be severed. The Minister of Finance said that also. In one of the documents that Mr. Clive Spencer, the General Manager of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, sent to the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union, they pointed out, very clearly, that only 69 of roughly 150 or 160 workers will be remaining there.

They cannot even point out how they are going to function with those people. Up to yesterday no clear position was given. All that happens is that the General Manager of the Port calls a meeting. When the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Trade Union members attend, they speak for two minutes, lock up their mouths and no cordial response or discussion takes place at those meetings for them to come to an agreement. I am speaking here from information received from representatives of Tobago who attend those meetings. It has been pointed out to the institution—as a matter of fact, the Prime Minister has been written to by the International Transport Federation and by the Caribbean—I think it was—Sea and Air Organization—two Caribbean organizations plus the International Transport Federation—telling him very clearly that Management must sit and work out the solutions with the union. If it is not done in that way, the international body will act, in that the international body will bypass Trinidad and Tobago ports and will not handle material for Trinidad and Tobago. Those letters have been sent to the Prime Minister and copies went to the union. I am talking here on behalf of the people. This is what we are confronted with. Tobago has a unique situation, in that if the Government Shipping Service does not function, the people would not get food to eat!

Madam Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Dr. R. Griffith*]

Question put and agreed to.

7.00 p.m.

Miss P. Nicholson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now the letters which were sent to the Prime Minister were from the International Transport Federation, Caribbean Maritime and Aviation Committee and the Caribbean Congress of Labour. These organizations wrote to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, advising him that if action is taken in relation to the port, that is the Port of Spain Port, without agreement with the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union,

they would act very firmly with the ports of Trinidad and Tobago; they would bypass and not handle any cargo coming into Trinidad and Tobago.

Whereas in Trinidad there are large storerooms and that kind of thing—because that is how our goods come to Tobago—agents from Trinidad bring in all their stuff; they would bring in for example, shiploads of potatoes to Trinidad and a small quantity of that will then come to Tobago through the ferry system we have. When you have a situation like this emerging, the problems go even further, with ferries which are in very bad shape. Right now, January 25 has passed; and the MF *Panorama* cannot go on dry dock. They have been working on it in the sea, and right now it costs $250,000 every ten days to run it. They are now struggling to see if they could put in a gearbox in the other boat and that kind of thing—a boat that is 25 years old. There are problems all around.

I have raised the question of the ferries already, and we are continuing, and we are going to mobilize, and I am sure the people of Tobago will have to take to the streets. I have raised the issue in here and up to now, no courtesies were extended to inform the representative for Tobago West. As a matter of fact, I have never been able to debate it in here. It is not urgent to the Members opposite.

Then we have the other additional problem about more unemployment in Tobago. How can the port handle the Government Shipping Service in the way they are handling it, without linkages with the Tobago House of Assembly and the Central Government? This document says that the Government Shipping Service means the service supplied by vessels owned by the state and engaged in the carriage of passengers and goods between Trinidad and Tobago. The Authority shall operate the Government Shipping Service as the agent of the state, and if changes are to be made in respect of the Government Shipping Service, it is very clear that the Tobago House of Assembly should be in the discourse. The Tobago House of Assembly is a government; it is a hybrid government.

It is very clear that these people are going back to square one, to l980/l981. When I listened to many arguments made by the Member for Diego Martin West, I get that impression very clearly. Perhaps he is in the habit of going back in that direction, because the present Prime Minister was the first Minister that came to Tobago giving worries, and he had to be handled.

The people struggled and they said, "we want internal self-government", and the Tobago House of Assembly was set up to run the business of Tobago. So they have some of Central Government's powers and they have, what you had before as the county council areas. That is what the people struggled for. Are the two

representatives, the Member for Diego Martin West and the Prime Minister saying. We do not care about what happens?

A number of things happened from l980 to l993. You had the Chambers government and you had other improvements that took place when he sent the Mahabir committee. There were improvements, because they recognized that the Act was poorly structured. After that, you had the NAR government, and again, more improvements took place. Then when Prime Minister Manning came in, he said, "olive branch". Up to now, no olive branch. He has "pikka" in here and the "pikka" is from Tobago—a disgrace to the people of Tobago. When the Representative for Diego Martin West should be struggling in the Central Government to improve Tobago's situation, he is coming in here to try to embarrass and dishevel people. The business of Tobago must be run by the Tobago House of Assembly, and you would want co-operation between—

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, on a point of clarification. I was not aware that I had taken part in this debate and I do not know to what the Member is referring. Just for clarification, is she saying that as the Member for Diego Martin West, or whatever, I should not raise any matters with respect to the breaking of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago?

I am saying that all I can recall is making reference to the breaking of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago in Tobago. Is the Member saying that is an offence?

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I will clarify that when we are debating that, because I have a legal position that was given to the Tobago House of Assembly from l981, and I am very prepared to reply.

What I am trying to say is that the struggle with Tobago and Trinidad should be for the resolution of problems. It should not be to open fights that will cause a widening of the gap. I want to inform the Member for Diego Martin West, that he is not dealing legally. He is dealing with a bitterness in his heart. I do not know what is his problem. I feel that if he meditates and prays about it, he could get over it, because whether Tobagonians vote or do not vote for him, I do not see that as a problem. He went to the polls and they said they did not want him. He came and he led the PNM in the polls, they again said they do not want him. Why is he worried? Let not his heart be worried or troubled. If he has problems, all he has to do is raise them when they have their constitutional meetings, or whatever they are and clear the issues. For example, when they raise issue about—

Madam Speaker: Are we on the Prime Minister's statement? I think the Member has strayed quite a while now. Could you get back to the debate, please? I allowed you to stray long and very, very wide, but I think you ought to get back to the debate at this point.

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I do not support that argument, because page two of this document talks about the public utilities and I was dealing with the whole question of the port in Tobago, which is interlocked with what—

Madam Speaker: The port, but not the question of representation in Tobago at this point. Just get back to the substance of the debate, the utilities point that you were on. I think that is the point that you were on when you strayed.

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, the point that I am making is that even to resolve the whole question of the port, there is need for discussion and there is urgent need for action. When you look at this document, which, is also linked with what I am saying, *Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Medium Term Policy Framework*, where they are talking about the port, not a single word is said about the Scarborough port. If you look at air transport, you are not hearing anything being said in any of their statements about Crown Point and the role Crown Point should be playing.

7.10 p.m.

At present, the workers at Crown Point are confronted with a situation with this Government. They were told that they would have to resign by the end of April and then be re-employed. They do not know whether they would be re-employed. It is just a state of uncertainty. Nobody knows what is happening. Up to this morning, they complained to me. By Monday the bigger planes would not be coming to Tobago. The airline that should take up is not ready. You also have a situation, where, for example, the two days after carnival, hundreds of people were due to travel to Tobago and there was no plane to transport them. The same little industry that is now in the embryonic stage, is now threatened by poor air communication.

When they remove those planes flying people from London to Tobago, the whole tourism structure of Tobago is destroyed. Ninety per cent of the foreign tourists who go to Tobago are from Europe. Most people come from the Scandinavian countries England and Italy. Tourism in Tobago is built on that. Any government that is serious cannot have a disengagement of the flights that are coming from Europe to Tobago at this particular point. The Government is not

serious. Clearly, one does not want to resolve or help to resolve the economic situation.

If you have a good service entering Tobago, you would have the tourism industry developing and improving, and you would have more and more persons getting jobs. You would have the Tobago House of Assembly being able to carry out a very serious programme because you are sure about what you are doing. When you are able to help Tobago in that way, it helps the Government. You are not fighting anybody. It helps the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Today, you have a situation where everybody believes that BWIA is collapsing. When I went home last week, the workers at the airport said, "'You hear our bossman resign?" The workers are of the belief that the airline is collapsing and nobody is really telling anybody anything serious. This is the problem that you have. People are just afraid that each day they go out to work, they might be told, "it is home time". I only hope I have made that point seriously enough today.

If the Government knows how to handle the economic situation, clearly the approach to BWIA is one that must be handled in a very sound way. Or, if it cannot handle BWIA, it would have to open up the line to British Airways or American Airlines. You cannot wait until something collapses then to run to do something else. I am appealing to the Government on behalf of the people of Tobago to address that situation.

In this document you have the Prime Minister speaking on housing. He said:

"The people agreed and we stand by our commitment"

He was talking about the approach to housing. He said:

> "To this end, therefore, the Minister of Housing initiated discussions with the IADB, the funding agency, to secure agreement for a revised policy on housing which would make land more affordable to persons in the low income bracket. As a result of the successful initiative, the range of payment now required to obtain title deeds has been reduced from $15,000 to $30,000 to between $5,000 and $12,000."

I thought that was all when I heard it. But when I probed, I recognized that half of the story was left out, in that what the Government did, was try to get the price of the land reduced. Let us say the price was $15,000 and you only paid $5,000, it means that you have $10,000 more for the land. When you are going for the

money for the house which has a range of, I think, about $70,000 or $80,000—I cannot remember the exact price—that $10,000 will be taken away from the $80,000. You would not be getting the level of the house you were supposed to get. After I did my home lessons—

Dr. Lasse: On a point of clarification, Madam Speaker. I believe the Member for Tobago West is misleading the House or probably, she does not understand clearly the policy as enunciated.

When I made my statement I made it very clear. What the policy intends to do is to reduce the cost of the land in such a way that the beneficiary would be able to hold title to the land by paying a smaller sum. The infrastructure cost would be spread over the life of the lease, which is 25 years. That is exactly what is intended.

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, when I did my home lessons that was made very clear to me. When the Prime Minister made his statement everything should have been said so that the population would have been clear. The policy was that the people must pay for the land development because as is known—that is what they are struggling to correct in all the areas—the government does not have money. The Sou Sou Land concept was used so that if you paid $1,000 you would pay that until you reach whatever is the final sum. If a new approach is used and it affects the amount of money that the persons will get to build their homes, that should be stated here.

He went on to say during 1993, construction work would commence on apartments—complexes at Ramdial/Mahabir lands.

These people must speak the truth. The houses at the Ramdial/Mahabir lands began under the NAR Government. The contractor was Construction Services Limited and the sub-structure, first floor and retaining walls were completed. Tender documents were prepared for four of the situations and tender documents were also prepared for another 48 apartments. With respect to Almond Drive, we reached the stage where the consultants received their documents and they were at the design stage.

An argument is being made that the NAR Government never built a house. It is just a different approach. Something like 1800 houses—people got their moneys to build their houses. They have the land to build them. We started these buildings and we also did the Mahabir lands—28 flats. I think it was $23 million we spent to complete the houses at Powder Magazine and at Embacadere *[Interruption]* The Member says those are PNM houses. Give me back! Those are mine. I left it

completed. Do not interfere. The Member must not be dishonest. Madam Speaker, I am trying to tell them not to be dishonest.

I do not believe the Government has to build a house for anyone. I do not believe in that policy. I know that we have developed the whole land situation and this would have been the level we would have been at now, for people to begin their homes. I believe that the people must be given an opportunity to build their homes in their own styles. For those who cannot afford, it was the policy—and I am sure it is still the policy—that you have designs similar to the National Housing Authority, where people can go and choose and build their homes.

7.20 p.m.

Besides getting the IADB fund which was also under the NAR Government—the people would have had the opportunity to build their homes by getting $80,000. All the lands were developed under the IADB loan structure. People who were under the NHA, by the Act that was brought to the House, could have gone to them and obtained loans up to $250,000 at eight to nine per cent interest rate, which was lower than what we were confronted with. Then, when we found that the people were very poor and their incomes were low, and saw what was happening, we went to the Co-operative Bank and a loan system was organized, so that the people could receive loans. I do not know if that programme was ever implemented because that took place must some months before we left office.

All I am saying is that one must be fair in one's statements. Everything that is happening today, concerning land settlement, squatter regularization is because of the hard work that was put down by the National Alliance for Reconstruction, and the hon. Member knows that. The documents are there to prove that. I left them in his library for him to read.

What we are saying is that they must speak the truth. The government does not have to build a house for anybody. When people are able to do those things for themselves, government will bring back the values that are needed in the country. I am asking myself: Why are they sending people home? That is a fundamental question. If Government has to subsidize the price of the development of the lands, why is government sending home people from their jobs? As a matter of fact, how will those same people get money now to do what you want them to do, when you are sending them home in their thousands?

I am not any big economist, but my reasoning tells me that. I believe that this statement is one that is loaded with flaws. The people who are now talking today should be ashamed to open their mouths, after what I have quoted, They said that

we were soulless and heartless; we were pressuring a beleaguered and already pressured grouping; not a man must go; crucify them because they are saying that the Treasury does not have money, and the Treasury has money.

Madam Speaker: I think the Member is repeating herself. I think that is one of the—

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I am finalizing my business. Is it not my right to do that? Do I not have my rights now?

Madam Speaker: I am not concerned with whether it is right. I am just indicating to you that you have said that before. Proceed, please.

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, when you are right and you are doing things, there are times when you repeat; you stress certain things for a particular point. I am stressing those things. I am going to stress them. I represent the people of Trinidad and Tobago and I am going to stress the dishonesty of the People's National Movement. I have that right.

The point I am making is that this document is loaded with a number of flaws. The approach which they say they are going to take was the same approach which we took. They said we should not have done that; that we were wicked to do that. I am stressing that. When we said that public servants must lose 10 per cent, because 15,000 people would have to go home, they said nothing like that would happen, and the letters went up and down. They should not vote for the NAR.

Today, after they have paid $500 million, this Government is considering cutting again.

Dr. Rowley: You are spreading rumours.

Miss P. Nicholson: Am I spreading rumours? I quoted. I have just quoted the words of the Prime Minister and the Member for Laventille West. I do not carry rumours. I quote facts. I am saying that because of the quality and the values of this grouping, nobody should entertain them.

This evening I listened to the Minister of Education when he spoke about the apprenticeship programme. I agree with him because I think that was one of the things that were left to be done to unify the whole programme of the apprenticeship system; the youth camps and the vocational schools. I thought that a body was left out when we were doing that work, if I remember rightly. I also know that hundreds of young persons went to industrial institutions while we were there for the same apprenticeship training. I must say it is important to really

unify the programme in order to prevent the wastage of funds. I am almost sure that area was just being addressed.

I just want to tell the Minister of Education that I hope the whole question of Tobago would be taken into consideration in a very serious form. One of the points that were always argued is that the Hotel School should really have been in Tobago, because that is one area that should have really been developed seriously to meet the demands of tourism.

What he said this evening recognized what transportation means. I hope that next year he will add the other wing to Signal Hill School. I do not know if Mr. Gift has reached the stage of drawing the plans as yet. He took over five years to do so. I only hope that they would be ready. They should consider discussion with the Tobago House of Assembly to build a wing at the Signal Hill School having the facilities to deal with tourism, so that the practical and theoretical sides could be addressed.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member has only two more minutes. Could you wind up please.

Miss P. Nicholson: I also want the Minister to look at Signal Hill. Today, that school needs about 10 teachers, and no approval is being given from the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Finance. Children cannot get to study certain subjects because of that. There is need for urgent attention.

I therefore, do not subscribe to this plan on tourism that was brought to us on January 4. I know that it will be a failure because people believe that only energy could run Trinidad and Tobago. When they recognize that, they would seriously have to diversify the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, tourism would have to play a very important role.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I want to make a small intervention at this time to correct some misconceptions. Truly it has been said—Why is the Member going? Madam Speaker, if the Member is leaving, I would have to give way. Madam Speaker, I was about to make the point that there is a saying: "Hell has no fury like a woman scorned." We can see that the Member for Tobago West is a very bitter lady. I want to let her know that it is of her own making.

The more I listen to the Members of the former government, the more I am convinced that they do not understand the people of Trinidad. Perhaps, they understand the people of Tobago. I do not know. The Member started her contribution by claiming that the present Government is simply following the policies of the last government; and that when they were doing their thing, we were criticizing them. She asked the question: What is different now from 1989 when they were doing their thing?

7.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker, everyone knows what happened in that period. Everyone knows that when Mr. Manning, the present Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, made the point that they were putting more pressure on the backs of an overburdened population, he was speaking about the fact that the first thing they did as they came into government was to put their hands in the people's pockets and take away their salaries. So that the pressure started from day one and continued. That is the first thing that is different.

More than that, very quickly, that Government lost any legitimacy that they had. Their friends opposite, by February 8, 1988, no longer—so that they had no legitimacy to do anything, to ask the people of Trinidad and Tobago to bear any burden whatsoever. That was the fact.

Up to 1986 this country could have boasted that though it had joined the International Monetary Fund since January 1, 1963, at no time did we have to use the resources of the Fund, but that Government took us into the IMF with two stand-by credits and created an environment such that when we came into government in 1991—

Mr. Maharaj: Can the hon. Member tell this country whether there are now plans and negotiations to go back to the IMF?

Hon. K. Valley: I would answer that categorically, no. I am on record as saying that there are no plans of this Government, right now, to go to the IMF.

When the Government came in, in 1991, it was faced with certain conditionalities. Those are the facts. The fact today is that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago owes public servants some $2 billion that the last government took, in effect, and threw into the sea. There is nowhere we can see what they did with it. It is gone but the debt is owing. The irony of that situation is that the current president of the Teachers' Union, in 1987 when they took away the public servants' salaries, praised the Government—it was a good budget. That same gentleman is today wanting to march up and down the street talking about,

"Give us our back pay". I do not know why he does not ask Mr. Robinson and that bunch for his back pay.

We made a manifesto commitment. We said quite clearly in the manifesto on which we won the election what we would do. On page 53 of the manifesto we told this population that if they elected us, with respect to the public sector pay issue, the first thing we would do was pay public servants their correct salaries and stop the accumulation. And we did that. We did that in March of last year. Then we said that we would enter into negotiations with the representative unions with a view to arriving at an amicable arrangement for the payment of the arrears, bearing in mind the general acceptance that the arrears cannot all be paid in cash at this time. We said that. That is our manifesto position. We said that this is our covenant with the people.

So that the situation in 1992/1993 is quite different from what they met. They met foreign reserves of $1.2 billion. They met a foreign debt of some $7 billion; when they left it was approximately $16 billion. That was the situation. I do not like to go back, but I want to deal with that misconception that we are simply following the last government's policy.

We had the Member for Tobago East arguing differently. He wanted to know why it is we are not following his plan. If something were wrong with the plan, we were supposed to come here and tell him what was wrong with the plan that the people of Trinidad and Tobago rejected. He wanted us to say why we were not following his plan, but from time to time we hear the apologists say that we are simply following the NAR plan. I will take your question now.

Mr. Sudama: With respect to the Minister's comment on the foreign exchange reserves, is he aware that at the end of 1986 the PNM left us with a two-tiered foreign exchange rate—$2.40 and $3.60—which was manipulated to filter out millions of dollars from our foreign exchange reserves and that continued into 1987?

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, the fact situation is that at December 31, 1986 there was $1.2 billion in foreign reserves. The Government were then in power. And if there was a mechanism that they felt was not in the best interest of the country, it was their obligation to change it and change it quickly.

The second issue that the Member raised—quoting from Prime Minister Manning again—about self-financing of public utilities in the shortest possible time was the letter that their Permanent Secretary wrote to the Public Utilities and the fact that the Leader of the Opposition, as he then was, opposed that. They are

talking about 100 per cent self-financing in the shortest possible time. Nobody here can argue against the necessity to have our utilities self-financing, but every person who cares would say that there must be a policy of gradualism. How much did Water and Sewerage Authority receive from the purse? The sum of $15 million. Public Transport Service Corporation received money. The Port received money—all in an environment of reduced allocation. My own Ministry of Local Government, which is a central part of the Government, received $46 million less than it got the year before and this is in spite of an increase in wages. The key thing is that one has to have gradualism.

One cannot talk about self-financing in the shortest possible time in an environment in which the Government had already taken certain action against the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That was the climate in which the PNM opposed those moves. There was a lack of legitimacy and by that time the then Government had an image of uncaring, doing anything, simply looking to get their hands in the people's pockets, and that, quite simply, is the issue. *[Interruption]*

I agree with you and that is a very interesting point because one has to understand the Government's plan. The Government is rearranging the economy—setting the economy on a path of sustainable growth to put it in a position where we can have sustainable jobs. To do that, however, one knows that, in the short term, there would be fall out at the margin. If that is so, obviously Government must have a programme, and that is the caring. This Government claims that it is caring without being carefree. As people fall out on the margin there must be somewhere to pick up these people.

We have to understand that there are two types of unemployed. There are those persons who might be separated from WASA, but within a very short period would find work somewhere else in the private sector. There are others who may take longer and who would have to be accommodated in an unemployment relief programme. *[Interruption]* They ask where. I would just draw reference once more to the fact that *The Review of the Economy* shows that whereas in 1991 the number of persons employed was some 401,000, for 1992 the statistics estimate that there were 400,300 persons employed, meaning that the net decrease in employment year upon year was merely 700. The fact is, quite simply, that there are a number of private firms coming. One hears, Madam Speaker, about the separation at WASA. One does not hear about the small firm that is employing ten or 15 persons—

Mr. Sudama: They cannot pay their water bill and therefore they are going out of business.

7.40 p.m.

Hon. K. Valley: One has to look at the economy as a whole and the dynamics of the economy. The central point I was making, however, is that one must realize that there must be an enlarged unemployment relief programme in the short-term, bearing in mind what the Government is doing. If we are looking for efficiency in the central system, or in WASA, or in PTSC, or local government, then we must have some place where those who are displaced can find some employment. That is the argument.

We have to use this period, over the next two years, to ensure that we can get, as the Minister of Finance has said "lean and mean." Get ready to fight, because we have to position our economy to compete in a world economy. No longer can we talk about simple Trinidad and Tobago. We have to position ourselves and understand our competitive advantages and look to compete in the international world. So that the plan is clear: while we target the energy sector to leap-frog as it were, we have to, at the same time, ensure that we have an unemployment relief programme to take care of those who are marginalized. We have to have a construction sector because we know that such a sector can create jobs quickly and the spin-off is quite large. So that the emphasis is on the construction sector, as you will see, Madam Speaker.

You will see, also, that there is emphasis on savings. The Leader of the Opposition was making the point that we are looking at externally-generated, rather than internally-generated growth neglecting the fact that for most of last year, and up to now, emphasis has been placed on savings among the common man. Putting things in place—

Mr. B. Panday: Interest on savings?

Mr. Sudama: The poor man cannot buy food!

Hon. K. Valley:—to encourage the individual to save from whatever he has and to save first, Madam Speaker, before spending. We have made the point that, really, this land is strong, we know that. In fact, although the "now" seems dark, there is light in sight, and that is the reality of the situation.

I have said that my own view is that by the third quarter of 1993 we would start seeing, clearly, the gradual upward trend. Some time ago in this House I had the privilege of making a statement with respect to the Amoco find, where Amoco

found a small amount of crude. But the fact is that given their drilling activities for 1993, one expects that by the third quarter, one would start seeing results. One is hopeful of the LNG plant—one has to be hopeful. There is hope out there on the horizon. The fact that persons are using the incentives with respect to the construction sector—all of these things—the fact that we are laying emphasis on access roads for agriculture.

Mr. Sudama: Where?

Hon. K. Valley: There is a $40 million—is it $40 million, Dr. Rowley? [*Interruption*] How much is it? US $65 million for access roads. In addition to creating short-term employment, we are preparing for the agricultural sector: the land distribution policy.

Miss Bhaggan: Not one in Chaguanas!

Hon. K. Valley: Supporting all of that is the Apprenticeship Programme where my colleague, Minister Ramrekersingh, is gearing our young people for the new areas of employment, creating employment for them, providing a small stipend. But, really, the bottom line is to prepare them for the world of work in the 21st century. The Conservation Corps is picking up some of our young people to provide them with short-term employment, to teach them discipline and all of these things. The key: The committee is looking at making Trinidad and Tobago the business and financial centre of the Caribbean and the gateway to Latin America. Earlier today I approved a document where we were applying for part of the technical assistance loan under the IRL, the Industrial Restructuring Loan, to get a consultant to assist us in gearing Trinidad and Tobago for that quantum leap, as it were—getting ready to make Trinidad and Tobago the business and financial centre of the Caribbean and the gateway to Latin America. [*Interruption*] These are some of the things we are doing, and we have had early successes: We have had Unocal early in the year; we have had Nucor. But you know what happens, Madam Speaker? You consider Nucor. Here we have a research oriented project and Government, seeing the opportunity, have a certain structuring on natural gas pricing. The Opposition, rather than seeing the opportunity that is available to the country, started talking about giveaways. They fail to see opportunities when it stares them in the face. We continue to see that our land is strong and that light is in sight.

7.50 p.m.

SITTING OF THE HOUSE

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, at this stage I have to move the procedural motion. I beg to move, that the House continue to sit until the completion of this debate.

Question put and agreed to.

PRIME MINISTER'S ACTION PLAN

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. K. Valley): On the point made by my very good friend, the Member for Chaguanas—I think the whole House knows that I have a warm heart for her. She was making the point that it appears that the Government's sole objective at this time was the paying off of the foreign debt, that it was not sustainable jobs, it was not the safety of our citizens or the relief of poverty.

I must admit that that is high in our priority. It is a major objective. One has to remember, however, that the Minister of National Security is out there dealing with the crime situation, as a fact. We have outlined in our Medium Term Plan the policy position with respect to sustainable growth and sustainable jobs. But we have to understand that we have this short-term goal. We are saying that as long as we continue, by June/July of l994, we shall be over the hump; that our foreign debt service peaks in mid-l994, and that, yes, we have to keep it tight until then, but after that we can breathe a sigh of relief.

That, to us, is a preferred position to what some will have us do. They talk of rescheduling. Even if we could, given the nature of the indebtedness, what that would mean is further IMF. One cannot do it without the blessings of the IMF. We have to remember that there are some of our neighbours who are in the clutches of the IMF since l977. Quite simply, we want to avoid that situation like the plague.

So that we have our sight clearly on June/July l994, to get over that hump, when we would be in a better position to start the servicing of the public servants' indebtedness, because we want to do that. It is part of our commitment. We say "we owe you; we want to pay you; we cannot pay you now; we owe the foreigners." As somebody put it some time ago, it is like owing your children as against owing the bank on your house. That is what it is. So that we have that objective in sight.

Simply, I wanted to put those things on the record. Before I conclude, let me make the point also that up to today I saw—coming back to this misconception—there is the view that this nice little book that my colleague, and I had the pleasure

of writing while we were in Opposition, that somehow we are deviating from it. Some time ago there was an article by Harry Partap. That did me a world of good. He selected the choicest quotations from the book. After that, I got no fewer than about five calls, asking me where they could get copies of the book, so I was very pleased with that. Very surprisingly, I saw a little article in the *Express* this morning, stating that my colleague and I should resign after saying what we said here and what we are doing now. Obviously, that person did not understand Mr. Partap's article.

Simply, I want to say if anybody can take this book and show me anything here that I said that I am doing differently now, I would resign, and I am saying that on record, because we have been consistent with respect to our view on TSTT, on privatization, on the market position with the structural adjustment loan. We said it then and we still hold the view now. That goes out to Members of the House and to the population at large.

Madam Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr. Trevor Sudama *(Oropouche):* Madam Speaker, my voice is not all that good, I have the cold, but if they think they are getting anything less, they are so wrong. My duty here is to punish the PNM for what they are doing to the people outside. I do that as a duty on behalf of the population of this country.

I want to make a statement before I commence, and that is, I want to respond to the Member for Laventille West, because most of them, when they speak, they suggest the Opposition is being irresponsible, as merely opposing them, as not saying anything constructive, as being the demons, really, of this Parliament. I want to tell him that I belong to Trinidad and Tobago; I have nowhere else to go and that I would have to suffer together with everybody else for what the PNM is doing to this country. I, too, would like to see them change their ways and take some advice, so that there could be some alleviation of the oppression of the average person of Trinidad and Tobago, in the Government's headlong rush to destitution, there will be some alleviation of that problem. Because, as I say, I myself, have to live here, and when you increase water rates and all the other charges, I face them as well as everybody else.

8.00 p.m.

Madam Speaker, I want to quote from an article in the *Quarterly Economic Bulletin* of September, 1992. This is not a Member of the Opposition saying so, and I hope the person does not get into trouble by my quoting him. This country is in very serious trouble. It is, as he says in this article, on the brink—we are in a

state of crisis as this country has never been in its whole history. We are in a state of deep crisis in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not just an economic crisis; it is a crisis that has enveloped all sectors of the society and all our institutions are in crisis. We have had this statement from the Prime Minister which seeks to give the impression that there is hope that things will happen in 1993; which is an admission that things have deteriorated in 1992. It states:

> "It is difficult not to embrace the thought that the events of the last few weeks are more than conjunctural that they, in fact, evince underlying structural disorders in our society which would need to be addressed if we are to pull ourselves back from the brink."

"Underlying structural disorders". It is clear to me that the PNM really do not understand the nature of the problem.

> "It would appear that many of our institutions in the society are in crisis. The judiciary and the systems for the provision of justice, the Police Service and the systems for the provision of law and order, and all around we are witness to the continuing deterioration of our infrastructure which seems to mirror and measure a deterioration in the society itself. The problems we face in Trinidad and Tobago are multi-faceted and the answers will not be forthcoming from any one profession or discipline...nor from any one institution..."

The Member for Laventille West says that we must forget the past—the past is the past, we are in the present now. I want to tell him that if he does not learn from the errors of history, he is bound to repeat them. The article went on to describe what really happened in Trinidad and Tobago and to talk about the lost opportunity. It says:

> "Yet, I think that we cannot but face the inescapable truth that we have failed to perform to our potential, and that with better application and effort, with more clearly defined objectives and a greater sense of discipline, this country could have been enjoying a standard of living one and a half to two times better than what we are currently enjoying. In saying this we may note that in the late 1950's/early 1960's Singapore enjoyed a standard of living lower than that of most Caribbean countries. Today, Singapore has a per capita income three times that of Trinidad and Tobago..."

That tells us that a lot went wrong in the history of this country, especially in the post-independent period and for six years before that. They had us believe that there was democracy running in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, that democracy

entitled them to fritter away the resources of this country, to engage in corruption, to do whatever they thought they had a mandate to do. This is why today we are in this position.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member would give way. Is he aware that in Singapore the Opposition was in jail?

Mr. Sudama: If the Opposition in Singapore was corrupt, I think they should be in no place else; as indeed, where some Members of the PNM Government should have been. I merely quote that for the record, just to say that we lost our opportunity.

Let us go back to the statement of the Prime Minister. On the first page there is a misconception that they are taking actions on behalf of the population and in their interest.

There is grave scepticism in this country that the actions they are taking are in the interest of the population of Trinidad and Tobago. We are further told in this document that in 1991 the PNM laid foundations to get the country on the path of stability and prepared it for growth. Madam Speaker, we were told that in 1991. In 1991, there may have been some claim to that statement because, in 1991, we did achieve a three per cent real rate of growth.

Let us see what happened in 1992. I quote from the quarterly Economic Bulletin:

> "Provisional estimates indicate that the economy of Trinidad and Tobago declined by a seasonally adjusted 3.1 per cent in the third quarter of 1992 following declines of 0.1 per cent and 1.4 per cent in the first and second quarters, respectively. The petroleum sector declined by 6.7 per cent during the quarter while non-petroleum activity decreased by 1.6 per cent. Output within distribution, i.e. wholesale and retail trade fell by 13.2 per cent and in Finance, Insurance and Real Estate by 4.0 per cent."

This is the stability they provided for us in 1992. Then, there was a decline in exports. There was a decline in the major petro-chemical exports, in petroleum and in lubricants. What is also clear was that the unemployment rate increased in 1992.

When they speak of foundations, how many times are we going to lay foundations? They laid it in 1991 and came back to lay it in 1992 but when we look at the foundations, they were very wobbly indeed. You had a rate of decline in all the quarters of 1992 and the unemployment rose. It says:

"In the second quarter of 1992 the rate of unemployment rose to 20.6 per cent from 19.8 per cent in the previous quarter. In 1991 the unemployment rate averaged 18.5 per cent. The rise in the unemployment rate reflected an increase in the number of persons without jobs to 105.6 thousand from 86.2 thousand in the second quarter while the labour force grew by 31.4 thousand persons."

8.10 p.m.

This is their idea of stability and growth. They come with all this boldfacedness to talk about how they have laid the foundation for this economy, and how things will be hunky-dory in the years ahead. When you look at the facts and statistics, you see that these things are not materializing. While they are laying the foundation, the economy of the country is deteriorating. There is greater unemployment, there is greater poverty; more destitution to come and they continue to lay foundations.

The statement claims that 1992 established priorities and determined directions in which to take the country forward. The question is: What are the priorities and the direction? I merely want to deal with one issue. That is the question of efficiency.

On the second page, since that seems to be uppermost in the mind of the Prime Minister, there is the statement that there will be a clear need for government subventions, especially to public utilities, to be reduced significantly and for a process to be found to achieve optimum efficiency of these utilities.

We have the question of efficiency thrown into the picture. I tell them that efficiency is an ideological term. Efficiency in what respect? Efficiency in terms of financial position, that your income must increase over your expenditure? Is that their concept of efficiency? If that is their concept of efficiency, and they are going to apply it to a utility, and one of the basic needs of man, such as water, then, it was the same Member for Laventille West, and more vociferously, the Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East who were spouting from the Opposition, 'that is a dollars and cents government.' That the NAR was looking at things only in terms of dollars and cents. That they had no other concept of how to care for people; run the society and the economy and to provide services. It was merely dollars and cents, they had to balance their books.

I am wondering what the Minister is doing today. Is he looking for dollars and cents? Efficiency need not be merely in terms of financial returns because there could be efficiency based on productivity per worker. There was a criterion laid

down of 21 per 1,000 as a standard for a public utility such as WASA. Is he applying that standard? He has not indicated the level of subvention he wants to give to WASA in this document.

If WASA is going to be financially self-sufficient, in order that its expenditure be equal to, or less than its income, there are only two ways he can do it; that is by retrenching workers or raising the water rate. I pointed out to him already, in private conversation, that he may achieve financial self-sufficiency, but what he would do is, exclude a substantial section of this population from the ability to pay for water.

Where would the unemployed, the people on the URP programme, the people on very low incomes and the people among the poor find the money to meet the increased water rates? If a man works for 10 days in the year, that is $600. If he has to pay $200 or $300 of that for water rates, and he is going to have a hard time living for the rest of the year in any case, how is he going "to make"?

I went to WASA and I saw the mission statement. Does he know the Mission Statement? Let me remind him of the mission statement:

> To provide an adequate and potable supply of water to all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. To manage the disposal of waste water; to conserve and manage the water resources of the country, all this to be done at reasonable cost. What is his concept of reasonable cost that will encompass all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Reasonable cost, cannot but take into account the question of income.

There are thousands of people in this country who are on very low incomes and who will be unable to afford the basic minimal level of rates that he is going to set. What is he going to do? Do not forget, there are thousands in Trinidad and Tobago who do not have any water at all; those who have an inadequate supply, they do not get water for two weeks, or two months as the case may be. I want to let the Minister know, that on the question of the inadequacy of water supply, in Trinidad and Tobago and the suffering of thousands of people, I have the Archbishop of Port of Spain on my side.

In the same context that WASA, PTSC, T&TEC, the Port and elsewhere are laying off workers—there is a whole plan—I want to know what that will do with people's disposable incomes. Some of them may get some money while others may get a little more. In a matter of a few months, all that will be gone. He is laying them off. Some of them with little service will get very little.

[MR. SUDAMA]

I was a bit amazed and I really did not want to speak in the absence of the Prime Minister, because much of what I have to say is really directed to him. I want to give an idea of the fiscal philosophy of the Prime Minister. I want to know if the Member for St. Ann's East subscribes to that. In the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order debate which occurred on February 7, 1992, he said they had to pay back the public servants the increase; emoluments of public servants had to be implemented, and he said very significantly:

> "It has the effect of increasing the disposable income in terms of a significant section of the population and it is on that basis, together with other measures that we have included in the budget, that this government is able to predict economic expansion in 1992."

If they are giving back people money to predicate economic expansion, why are they laying off people? It is totally illogical; where they are laying off people, on the one hand and they want to increase the disposable income on the other hand—I am not arguing against the payment of the increase to public servants, mind you, but I am arguing the fiscal philosophy of the Government from 1992 to 1993. On the basis of increased demand, presumably that they would be giving people more money, they are predicating economic expansion in 1992.

8.20 p.m.

I should like to ask the Member for Diego Martin Central: what happened to that economic expansion in 1992, predicated on the payment of $500 million excess to public servants? I see no answer from him and really he cannot answer for the Member for St. Ann's East because it was that Member who said so. It is one of those things I should have liked him to clarify here today in the context of the priority which he has put in his statement. His first priority is to lay off people in the public utilities.

He goes on to say, first of all, that we must achieve efficiency. I say, efficiency with respect to a basic need in this country is an ideological concept, but it is also part of this free trade liberalization, neo-liberal philosophy, that my colleague the Member for Chaguanas spoke about. It is a turnaround from the position they took when they were in Opposition and berating the NAR Government for its dollars and cents mentality and approach.

This statement goes on to talk about "this country must find its true niche in the global economy and maximize its potential for growth". How do you maximize the potential of the economy for growth by increasing the level of idle

resources in the country, whether it is human resources or the inability to utilize our other physical and material resources?

There was one great admission on the part of the Prime Minister in the Income Tax (Amdt.) Bill debate. I was amused. For someone who was a government minister for 15 years, prior to 1986—here is what he said:

"We had resources. We had primary resources."

They did not even get into the question of going downstream from primary resources. They talked about a balanced economic development of any state. "The state itself has a role to play to ensure that". How does it play that role in the context where it has withdrawn and is allowing the private sector to run with the economy? We have not had a clarification. I should have liked him to be here to clarify.

We have had primary products in this country for a long time. The primary products are ammonia, methanol, urea, iron and steel, sugar and petroleum. As of now, no major downstream industries have developed in the country as a consequence of the availability domestically of these primary products. I wonder who was in charge since 1956 when there were these primary products. You talk about maximizing the potential of the economy and for 30 long years, before 1986, you could not find it possible to have, from our basic primary products, any downstream activities.

I am quoting him again:

> "Major downstream industries have not developed to any degree as a consequence of it. We have now concluded that to ensure that this takes place, the state has a role to play, not necessarily as an investor, but we must now actively promote the advantages of Trinidad and Tobago and the availability of these products to ensure that the significant investment that the country made in these products in the years when we had some financial resources are now translated into downstream activities and the jobs that the country requires".

How do you do it? By the wave of a hand? By the wave of a wand? How do you translate this, Madam Speaker? I should like him to be here to answer that question.

What is more frightening is that they are giving the National Gas Company and its management a mandate to do whatever is necessary—to make deals and negotiations and approve concessions and so on. It is frightening because the Chairman of the National Gas Company is none other than Prof. Ken Julien. It

was Prof. Ken Julien who presided over the Point Lisas investment. Billions of dollars went into those investments; and corruption surrounded those investments from 1975 to almost 1985, for a whole 10-year period until 1986. Yet we are entrusting the future development of this economy into the very same Ken Julien, a man who has had a paper company called Estane in the Bahamas, to build houses at Point Lisas but who was taking the material and building a private house at Toco. I quoted that in this Parliament from *Hansard*.

There are other activities in which he got involved, and now he has re-emerged as the key player in their investment schedule to improve the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. So that, when we talk about the continuity of corruption in Trinidad and Tobago and look at the history of people like Ken Julien, and they bring them back into the very centre of things, without any control or accountability, monitoring and overview by this Parliament, this side has reason to be concerned with the government's intentions. I should have liked the Prime Minister to be here to answer that question.

As far as I am concerned, all this talk about maximizing potential is a lot of — I do not know if 'hogwash' is parliamentary language—hogwash on the part of the PNM. When we look at their history, we do not believe that. Whatever plans they have will actually maximize the potential of Trinidad and Tobago in terms of its human, material and physical resources. I just want to tell them that they cannot maximise potential by putting most of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who are of employable age out of employment. There is no such thing as full employment, and even in the best economies of the world there is a two or five per cent unemployment rate. The only way they can realize the full potential is if most of the people participate in the economy of the country in a meaningful way by being employed in permanent jobs.

I do not want to get into the question of the mega projects. That will take up a little time.

8.30 p.m.

The strategy the Government has had over the years, and it has been a flawed strategy—and I have said it time and time again—is to concentrate only on the energy sector virtually to the exclusion of every other sector in Trinidad and Tobago. The understanding was that when you get the returns, to the extent that there are returns, foreign exchange earnings, then you will utilize those foreign exchange earnings to buy the things you need from overseas, like basic goods and food supplies; buy them and neglect the agricultural sector, or other sectors which could have contributed to the economy and made it a more balanced one.

Secondly, that the revenue you get from the energy sector, utilize it to create temporary employment. That is their whole idea. They did not have a clue as to what to do in order to create a diversified economy where you would have gone downstream, utilized your resources internally; you would have had, so to speak, a balanced approach to growth which was both internally and externally propelled.

The reason I raise this, Madam Speaker, is that we see this heavy concentration on the energy sector. As we look through this statement we see most of it is about the energy sector. The undue concentration on the energy sector—not that we ought not to have investment in the energy sector—but if you can get foreigners to come here and invest and you can influence them into another sector, fine; if you cannot and they are bringing in their money to invest, that is another question. Then you go through that investment. When you take this country's money and invest it, either wholly or in partnership with another foreign investor in the energy sector, then you have a little discretion; but that discretion in the past and, it seems to me, in the present situation is being employed wholly and fully on the propagation of the energy sector. We have our concerns about that and in this document reference is made to creating employment in the service sector in South Trinidad when Petrotrin starts to drill—I do not know how many wells they want to drill—106 wells or so. This is all being done with borrowed money. We have to ask ourselves: What is the cost of this activity and what could have been the alternative use of funds so acquired?

Today in the service sector in South Trinidad, very little is happening. The unemployment situation is very bad there. If you drill a few wells, let us assume that these wells are not productive, what would happen to the unemployment situation in the service sector, Madam Speaker? So that, when you look through this document, all you see is some promises—pie in the sky. We have had this before. We cannot see emerging from this document before us anything substantial to deal with the critical unemployment situation in this country. They have admitted in the past that the energy sector and investment in the energy sector cannot solve the unemployment problem. Yet, they say that is the focus of attention, that is the engine of growth.

Before I leave the energy sector, I want to raise one question, and, first of all, to talk about the prospects for ammonia, methanol, urea, sugar and petroleum. These are our major exports. The prospects for these in the world market may not

be too happy in the future. These are all volatile prices. We have seen that prices for methanol and ammonia have gone down substantially.

I also want to refer the Government to a Paper, which appeared in this same *Quarterly Economic Review*. This Paper talks about the implications—Europe 1992 and recent international developments and implications for Trinidad and Tobago's petrochemical exports. The Paper has come to certain conclusions, that if we increase the methanol capacity here and we become a major player in the market, then what would happen is that we would be subjected to a withdrawal of duty-free status in the European market. If and when that happens and we reach to the position where we are producing a substantial amount of methanol, and that duty-free status is withdrawn, then we would have difficulties with our methanol exports. We may have a similar position with respect to our ammonia exports and possibly urea and others. What I am arguing is that, given the volatility of the prices of these petrochemical products, you cannot place undue reliance on increasing our capacity for these products indiscriminately.

We had a statement from the Prime Minister some time ago, in the debate on the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 1992. It says here that in 1986 there was a condemnation by the NAR Government of the mega-project approach that preceded the 1986 assumption to office of the new government and that there was a promise in that manifesto that the Government would replace the mega-project approach with the development of new sub-sectors in the energy sector.

They go on to say that it was that change in the policy, at a critical time in the economic life of the country, that led to the delay. There was almost a cancellation of two years on two energy projects, one of which was the development of the Pelican gas field; and the other was the construction of a natural gas liquid recovery plant. Both projects had the potential of earning substantial amounts of foreign exchange.

The first point, Madam Speaker, is that we on this side are still of the view that it is an error to concentrate on mega-projects in the energy sector at this point in our history, because of our experience of what has happened; and secondly, that the Prime Minister was merely involved in 'ole talk' when he made this statement about the Pelican field. In 1989, the then NAR Government decided that they would go through with the Pelican project. There was a delay of two years. In 1990 it was discovered that the Pelican project was a disaster because the gas was not there. When they projected that there would have been enough gas and they saw that as an alternative to entering into an agreement with Amoco, the gas was not there. So I wanted to ask him: Since the gas was not there in 1990, would

it have been there in 1987 when they said if the NAR Government had gone into the project then, they would have got enough foreign exchange and we would not have had to go to the IMF?

Subsequently, we have had the natural gas recovery plant project on-stream. What has that done to our foreign reserves? Where are we today? Are we out of the crisis of our indebtedness today? One project went through—the gas was not there. They claimed that if they were in office they would have done that and we would not have had to go to the IMF. The second project which is on-stream now has not made any dent in our foreign exchange position, or in alleviating our debt situation. So that statement was only made to try to fool the unwary about the situation with the Pelican platform, and with the heavy liquid project.

I do not want to go into the foreign debt situation. I just want to ask two questions: why was it necessary to accumulate all this debt in the period 1973 to 1986? At the end of 1986 our foreign debt was just about the figure of US $2 billion. This is what we inherited from the PNM Government. Today that indebtedness is about US $2.5 billion, but at the end of 1986—I want to record it—it was US $2.1 billion, at a time when we had money flowing from the increase in oil prices from 1973 up to about 1984/1985. In 1986 we all know that oil prices went down. So that to come here and give the country the false impression that somehow it is the NAR Government which caused the rise in the foreign exchange debt is totally—

8.40 p.m.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member would allow, I wonder if he could inform the House how much of that $2 billion—assuming that is the correct figure—related to indebtedness of state sector companies. In other words, assets, some of which we are now divesting, they are complaining why we are divesting to pay the same foreign debt now. But that is a separate issue. Bearing in mind that $2 billion was raised between l973 and l986, how come $500 million was raised between 1987 and l991?

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, he went on to make a statement. Maybe he should put it in writing and I may be able to answer it, because his statement was so long, I could not get the gist of what he was saying.

Who incurred that basic indebtedness? Whether it was state sector debt or Central Government debt, it is neither here nor there. It is the people of Trinidad and Tobago who have to repay that debt.

On the question of making Trinidad and Tobago a regional manufacturing centre and financial transport hub of the Caribbean, one wonders what these people were doing for 30 years. Did the location of Trinidad and Tobago change, and now it can become a regional manufacturing centre and a transport and financial hub? What were they doing all this time, in the 30 years of their existence? I want to add that the Member for San Fernando East, for that 30 years, 15 years of which he was a Minister of Government. And today, they come here to disclaim responsibility for what he was responsible, for those 15 years.

As I said, I did not want to go on at any great length. There is a lot more I have to say here, but I will say that when the Member for San Fernando East is here. There is a lot more we have to say about what he said in the past and up to last year, and what he is spouting today, in l993. So I would reserve that. But I cannot leave this subject without going back to what some of these people were saying in the past. On April 29, l991, there were statements in the *Express* which are very interesting:

> "A People's National Movement Government would set up an unemployment relief programme, slash taxes on businesses and sell off shares in certain state companies to the public.
>
> These were some of the economic plans outlined yesterday by PNM leader Patrick Manning and Kenneth Valley..."

Now they are setting up unemployment relief, but at the same time they are increasing the unemployment level in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker: The speaking time of the Member has expired.

Motion made, That the Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. *[Mr. K. Jurai]*

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. T. Sudama: As I say, Madam Speaker, my job here is to punish them. I continue to quote from the article:

> "Responding to a question from the floor on how a PNM government would handle unemployment, Manning said: 'We have put something together on unemployment relief. This is something that must be done when you have an unemployment rate as high as ours.' Manning also spoke of creating jobs in the short term."

He said in a previous statement, in the *Express* of November 4, l991, at page 10, before they got into Government:

> "The PNM has done detailed work and is now in a position to say to the national community that the moment we are elected to office we will be in a position to immediately put into place the strategies developed for economic recovery and for the creation of jobs on a scale that would make a significant impact on the high unemployment rate."

They got into office on December 16, l991, and we would have expected, after one year and change in office, we would have seen some fruit from that immediate promise of November, l991. So when you go back and you look at the promises that were made and you look at the statements they are now making, what credibility does the Member for Diego Martin Central have as well as his colleague, the Member for San Fernando East?

Let me also tell this House what the Member for Diego Martin Central said on April 28, l991 as reported in the *Express*:

> "In making his presentation, Diego Martin Central representative Valley said the PNM would reduce the corporation tax in the non-oil sector from 40 per cent to 25 per cent 'to allow these firms to finance their growth through retained earnings.'"

Did he make that statement?

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, that is a manifesto position and the corporate sector can look forward to that over the five-year life of this Government. That is the reality. At no time did we say we were going to do it in year one. I would go further. If one looks at our manifesto, one would see clearly that there is a short-term recovery plan, but you would not see that in our short-term recovery plan, because we knew we could not do it in year one and year two.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, this is a promise made to implement this, immediately they got into office—

Mr Valley: That is not true, Madam Speaker. The manifesto position—

Mr. T. Sudama: Look at the context in which this was made, to slash corporation tax in the non-oil sector from 40 per cent to 25 per cent, and you see how they went and fooled the population of Trinidad and Tobago, coming here to talk about manifesto—

Mr. Valley: We stand by our manifesto. There is a short-term economic recovery plan which starts on page 13 and one would not see, under that short-term economic recovery plan which is, in effect, our plan for the first two years, anything about reduction of corporate tax.

Hon. Member: In what year would it be implemented?

Mr. Valley: Within the five-year period. Not in year one and year two, because that is our policy position.

Mr. T. Sudama: I do not want to go through all these inconsistencies. On the ideological question, I wanted to deal with the Minister of Finance. He, as well as the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism, the Prime Minister and the Member for Diego Martin Central, spout this ideology in this House time and time again. I do not have the time tonight to go into it to show them the flawed position they are taking and they are all behaving as puppets of the International Monetary institution. They do not know what they are talking about. They are talking about liberalization, and they are talking about freeing up the market forces and finding their niche. They are talking about all sorts of things, and but then when you look at the countries which have really succeeded, you see that they have put in place something before they could have got on to the free market.

But I do not want to go into that.

"Crashing Impact of Liberalization on Developing Countries."

This is by Prof. Kari Levitt, in the *Trinidad Guardian*, Tuesday 16, June, l992. But they have a plan to protect Trinidad and Tobago from that crashing impact. In fact, not only to protect it, but to make liberalization work for Trinidad and Tobago, when it has worked for very few countries in the world.

8.50 p.m.

They told the country there was no other option. Four of them went on television at one time to say the very same thing. I do not know why the most articulate of them, the Member for St. Ann's East, could not have gone there and said what they had to say, but at the same time, open themselves up to questioning by the population. I want to tell them if they have so much belief in the issue of liberalization, in structural adjustment, in the benefits of unbridled free-market forces in Trinidad and Tobago, transferring of the economy trickle-down measures etc., why do they not participate in a seminar with us in an open national symposium, to discuss this issue, where they are leading the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, for the record, this Government does not believe in unbridled free-market.

Mr. T. Sudama: What exactly do you believe in? Two other issues I want to talk about, and one is the question of unemployment. They agree that their programme of retrenchment in the utilities and elsewhere, their programme with respect to opening up this society to greater competition with its effects on the manufacturing sector will create unemployment. They agree with that. Therefore, what they are telling this House is that they have put in place a programme called Unemployment Relief and that programme is to deal with unemployment relief throughout the country.

If you have displacement in the South, let us say, in the constituency of Oropouche or Siparia, and with this programme you are increasing it from $40 million to $140 million, then everybody should have an entitlement, once he is displaced and unemployed, to participate in this programme.

In fact, I make the point because the Prime Minister is an expert in the English language. He distinguishes between equal and equitable. Equitable is according to need. What have you done to say that there is no need in Oropouche and Siparia for URP projects? You have done no survey. You are doing it on the basis of political expediency. This $140 million is a political election fund. It is nothing more, nothing less, than an election fund. In that statement the Prime Minister made certain remarks that:

> "It is very important for those of us who have the responsibility at a political level to know and to understand the country in which we operate. Even though the problem of unemployment is widespread in the entire country, people who live in the rural parts of the country have the singular advantage of being able to capitalize...in such a way that at least you could ensure that even if the individuals may not be gainfully employed, individuals still have an opportunity to eat and feed their family. "

Is he saying that everybody in rural parts of the country have access to land? Or that the young people today in the rural part of the country do, in fact, go on to the land? Is this what he is saying. This is an open statement of discrimination—regional, racial and political. Furthermore, he is inviting people—if you want LIDP projects, you will have to disrupt the social peace. As the country goes through difficult economic circumstances today, and as unemployment is rampant all over the country, the Government has to sit and ask itself, if there is to be

social disorder in Trinidad and Tobago, where is it likely to start? Therefore, if you want URP projects and you are not prepared to disturb the social order in Trinidad and Tobago, then "crapaud smoke yuh pipe." This is the Member who comes to Parliament week after week to accuse the Opposition of irresponsibility. This is the man who comes week after week to accuse us of irresponsibility but makes a national statement of this sort.

Madam Speaker, I wonder if he were in this House—I should have liked to get his answer because this statement alone requires a whole debate. The implications involved in this—in another country had he lied to the Parliament and said there is only one Pegasus Report, he would have been forced to resign.

Nucor. Madam Speaker, he tried to justify the benefits and the concessions given to the Nucor investment. We are all saying that we are for foreign investment, but do not come and try to hoodwink the country as to the terms on which you are getting this foreign investment, and whether you are in fact serving the national interest in trying to get this investment. This company we are told in the Prime Minister's statement—and whether this is true or not, we cannot say but you have to be sceptical—is the leading and most successful steel company in the United States and that this is only its first overseas investment. It does not seem to be credible. Leading and most successful, but it is only the first foreign investment. And where it chose? Trinidad and Tobago. Of all the other potential sites in the hemisphere, for Nucor's first overseas investment, they chose Trinidad and Tobago. What is the deal? There must be something behind this.

The initial investment will be $75 million, but once the technology has been proven—the technology has not been proven—once the technology has been proven, up to three other plants are likely to follow. On what basis has he made this pronouncement? Firstly, that the technology will prove successful and, secondly, that three other plants...? For all this investment, we have been told there is going to be 100 permanent employees on this. The newspaper reported 60 permanent employees.

My information is that only 30 persons will be permanently employed at this Nucor plant. Then he said in his final paragraph that they in the Government are very excited by this development and look forward to signing the relevant agreement. How desperate can you get when you get so excited about a potential investment which may not be actually commercially viable, which may bring in $75 million and which will employ 30 or 40 persons!

Look at the whole issue of the price at which they are giving Nucor the gas, 20 cents below what National Gas is paying; they are putting them into the export-free zone where they have to pay low prices and get infrastructure utilities at a subsidized rate. Yet, they come to tell us about all this excitement that they are having with Nucor. This is the Prime Minister's statement we are discussing in which Nucor appeared, in which the Member for Diego Martin Central raised this great disadvantage.

9.00 p.m.

The silent, somnolent Member for Arima, I have never heard him make a contribution in this House. Do people at Arima ask him if he comes to the House or not? He is a representative of the people. I think we should have some qualifying standard that when you spend some time in the House you should pass an exam. I do not know if the Member for Arima—

Finally, the investment missions are just to build up people's hopes. The idea of investment missions coming to Trinidad and Tobago is not a new thing, but apparently, the Prime Minister has very little to tell the country and he is making a big deal out of this investment mission to the country. He went to the United States. He stated:

> "During my visit to the United States last year, we sought and now welcome a major investment mission by at least 15 US businesses to Trinidad and Tobago, commencing January 10, 1993. Sponsored by the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the mission will comprise potential investors in agri-business, tourism, energy, banking, light manufacturing and will meet local business counterparts over a three-day period."

If we get one in each sector, we would have done very well. If we get an investment of $1 million coming out of this mission, we would have done well. We know about investment missions. When I was in the government in 1987, we went to Japan and while there we spoke to investors. We went to the United Kingdom, New York and Toronto where we spoke to investors, but investors do not come to Trinidad and Tobago like that. They do not come to Third World countries, in the situation of a shattered economy in which this country found itself. We went all over looking for investors.

Prior to 1986, they too went on investment missions. They went to the Far East, the Prime Minister, George Chambers, Hon. Errol Mahabir and even the Member for St. Ann's East. In fact, he went to Korea. He was the Minister of Housing then. He went as Mottley, and according to the calypsonian, he came

back as 'Limping'. During the period 1981-86, they all went on investment missions. What has happened to those investment missions that they went on?

Why should we think that these missions which are coming here will be any different, and yield any more results than the missions which came in the past, left and we did not get any significant results in this country? The point I am trying to make is why should we believe this statement and the promises made in it? This is an attempt merely to give the population something to hold on to, because the Government has nothing else to offer for its one year in office.

It is a pity that the Prime Minister is not here today to defend this statement in this House, because that is what we thought we would come to do; to ask him to defend it and to give this country some kind of assurance that there is light at the end of the tunnel. As far as I can see—I have no PNM glasses—there is no light at the end of the tunnel. We are going headlong into 1993, in a situation of further economic decline; further deterioration in our export and further deterioration in our foreign exchange reserves. In 1993, we would be lucky if we do not have a devaluation of the Trinidad and Tobago currency. When that comes, that will be the end of the PNM Government.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, I rise to support the statement made in Parliament, by the hon. Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on Monday January 4, 1993.

Before I go further, it is necessary at this point that I debunk some of the nonsense spoken by the Member for Oropouche in particular. Whenever he gets up to speak, I notice the look of pain on the faces of his colleagues. I know why. I shall also need some pain killers when I go home tonight. He has been in this House, I do not know for how long, but every time he gets up to speak in this House, he regurgitates the same trivial, the same nonsense over and over again. It is the same speech, week after week.

The Member for Oropouche spoke about an increase in the unemployment rate in the second quarter of 1992. It would appear that—I understand why he did not last very long in the Ministry of Finance. I have in my possession the latest bulletin from the Central Statistical Office which indicates that in the third quarter of 1992 the unemployment rate declined from 20.6 per cent to 18.7.

He does not seem to understand that the Central Bank uses information compiled by the Central Statistical Office. [*Interruption*] What is it? Do you have a point of order?

Mr. Sudama: The Minister is misleading the House. I am quoting figures from the Central Bank. If he wants to dispute these figures, then he is disputing the authority of the Central Bank. I have no problem with that, but he should go outside and tell people that he does not have any confidence in the Central Bank. This is the figure for unemployment which I quoted. It is on page 5.

> "In the second quarter of 1992 the rate of unemployment rose to 20.6 per cent from 19.8 per cent in the previous quarter."

Hon. C. Imbert: I am referring to the third quarter. Sit down. You do not know what you are talking about. Sit down!

The Central Statistical Office *Labour Force Bulletin, Third Quarter, 1992* indicates that the unemployment rate decreased from the second quarter figure of 20.6 per cent to 18.7 per cent.

Madam Speaker: You are just reading from different publications, so I think you should just sit down and see which publication. I do not think we are going to argue over which publication the Member is reading from. The Member is making his points.

9.10 p.m.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, as I was pointing out, the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago uses information compiled by the Central Statistical Office. I will read from the Central Statistical Office, *Third Quarter Bulletin*, which indicated that there was an increase of 11,600 persons with jobs, in absolute terms, in the third quarter of 1990, so that the Member for Oropouche has no idea of what he is talking about, as usual.

I am an engineer. In my present portfolio as Minister of Works and Transport, I look at the production and utilization of cement and iron and steel which are indicators of the stability of the construction sector, which is a leading indicator of economic stability and growth—as my colleague the Member for Diego Martin Central has advised me. One will see that the production of cement in 1992 was equal to that of 1991 and exceeded by over 100,000 tonnes the production in 1990.

Similarly, for the production of iron and steel—and I shall go to local sales since the Member over there keeps rambling and muttering about something.

Production in 1991:	
First quarter	19,000 tonnes
Second quarter	14,000 tonnes
Third quarter	20,000 tonnes
Production in 1992:	
First quarter	19,000 tonnes
Second quarter	21,000 (an increase over the 1991 figure)
Third quarter	22,000 (an increase again over the third quarter figure).

So, the statistics show me that the construction industry has stabilized and is growing.

In his address to this House, the hon. Prime Minister sought to give some indication of the Government's plans and programmes for 1993 and beyond. In particular, he spoke about the very positive development in the energy sector and indicated that several positive arrangements would be coming on stream early in 1993. And these have actually happened.

He spoke about an agreement with the Unocal Corporation which was to be signed, I believe, on January 8, 1993. (Member for St. Ann's East, this was signed, was it not?) Yes, this was signed. An agreement with Nucor was also signed. He spoke also about drilling, the deepest well being drilled by the Amoco Corporation and that 30 wells will be completed by year end, with a remaining 76 wells to be drilled in 1994. This drilling programme together with other oil exploration and development projects, particularly on land, will constitute a significant increase in activity with concomitant improvement in employment levels especially in the service sector in South Trinidad.

Madam Speaker, the energy sector has now been placed on a sound footing after being virtually destroyed, over the last five years, by a misguided policy that delved into *sucrier* figs and other non-traditional exports. But this country has returned to a solid base in the oil and gas sector.

Members on the other side quite often make contradictory statements. It is their modus operandi. They contradict themselves and even each other. I heard one talk about nothing being done in agriculture and then another—I believe the Member for Chaguanas—complaining that the Government was negotiating an access road programme for agricultural holdings and no roads were being upgraded in Chaguanas. How can one Opposition Member be saying that nothing

is being done to upgrade agricultural infrastructure and another complaining that something is being done, but nothing is being done in her area?

I have in my possession the first package of roads to be rehabilitated under the Rural Agricultural Access Roads and Bridges Reconstruction Programme—IDB loan No. 700 OC Trinidad and Tobago. Out of a total of 22 kilometres of agricultural access roads which are to be rehabilitated in the first package in 1993—I see some strange roads here; La Fortune Trace. Has the Member ever heard of that? That is down by her. Kernanhan Trace. Where is that? That is in Couva North. Puzzle Island Road. Where is that? Is it in Diego Martin East? It is not. That is down by them. Puzzle Island Road is down by them. Since it appears that many of the roads to be upgraded are in their areas, we will have to do something about that imbalance in the second phase.

They talk so much nonsense. Looking here at roads and bridges—B No.1(1), Piparo Road, Piparo. Piparo is an area with which the Member for Couva South is very familiar. *[Laughter]* Much activity takes place in that area. People get shot.

The Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East also referred to our Unemployment Relief Programme for 1993, and now the Member for Diego Martin Central has put it in its proper perspective. We know that in 1993 there will be some adjustment and we are mindful of the critical unemployment situation. Therefore he sees the need to increase the allocation for unemployment relief in 1993. I always wonder exactly what they are complaining about. Are they saying that we should not put money into unemployment relief? I do not understand them, Madam Speaker.

Let me move now to another aspect of the Prime Minister's statement where he spoke about plans that are in place for the realization of the new city centre—an idea that they like to pour scorn on all the time. I can report to this House that the prequalification exercise for consultants for the new city centre has been completed. The next stage will be to invite bids for designs. We expect these bids to come in by the second half of 1993 and by the end of 1993, we expect that some designs will be completed, so that we can see work starting on the city centre early in the following year.

9.20 p.m.

The beautification of Independence Square is well on stream; the designs for that are being processed at this moment and we expect actual construction work to begin by the third quarter, middle of 1993. These are measures, which are part of an overall programme to boost activity in the construction sector. The

Agricultural Access Road Programme I referred to will involve expenditure of some TT $200 million over the next three to four years, all in the construction sector.

In the Budget Speech, the hon. Member for St. Ann's East gave incentives for building construction, and I am happy to report that as indicated by the hon. Prime Minister, these incentives, which involve the deferral of tax on rental of commercial properties, are bearing fruit. I am happy to report that, and very shortly there will be a surge in construction in the Port of Spain area, primarily in the commercial sector. A number of applications have been approved and we expect several large building projects to take shape very shortly in the private sector.

Hon. Member: You had better bring back the dragon.

Mr. Bereaux: They will need insurance.

Hon. C. Imbert: Let me just deal with a few other points, in particular with some points raised by the Member for Tobago West, who was complaining about certain actions being taken by the Government with regard to making the utilities more efficient. It is necessary for me to inform this honourable House—the Member spoke about the ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago. The ferry service costs the Port Authority approximately $300 for each passenger that it transports. When one considers that the fare is $50, and that the airfare is $200, one can understand the reason why we have to do something about this. Because, if it is costing $300 per passenger to transport them by sea, and the airfare is $200 and it is being operated at a loss, then—

Mr. B. Panday: Transport them by air.

Hon. C. Imbert: Obviously! Give them a free air-ticket. So it is necessary to do something about this. The ferry service is the most inefficient aspect of the Port Authority's operations. It loses approximately $30 million every year. When one looks at the Port's income and expenditure, I am sorry the Member for Tobago West is not here. In her usual fashion, she hit and run away, because she knew that she was misleading this House and that she would be put in her place at the appropriate time.

When one looks at the Port on a monthly basis one sees that the income from its operations is $6 million; the wages, $8 million; the debt, $4 million; the pension, $2 million; goods and services, $4 million—total expenditure every month, minimum inescapable expenditure, $18 million, just to keep it ticking. This means that you are not doing the kind of improvements that are necessary in

a port of this nature. The difference between income and expenditure, $12 million every month; and they expect this Government to sit idly by and find $12 million every month for the next 10, 20 years. I am afraid not, because $12 million every month for 12 months is $144 million, which exceeds the allocation for the Unemployment Relief Programme for the entire country. As the Minister of Finance has pointed out, we just do not have that kind of money [*Interruption*]

I heard a query from the other side, whose fault it was. Well, in typical fashion the Member for Tobago West was part of a government that took out bonds to the tune of $75 million for the Port Authority between 1988 and 1989, with absolutely no idea of how these bonds would be repaid. None whatsoever! Well, the chickens have come home to roost, because, as I pointed out, debt servicing on a monthly basis is $4 million. This is the typical style of the former administration: postpone the problem. They have a problem in the Port. Do not deal with it, borrow $75 million. You have no idea how you are going to deal with it. Leave that for who come after to 'ketch'.

I do not think I need to say anything more on the utilities. We do not have $12 million every month to deal with problems. We just do not have it. Therefore, all I can say is that I commend the statement of the Prime Minister to this honourable House. The Prime Minister has shown the country the way forward, he has shown that we have stabilized the energy sector and that there are many positive developments coming there, he has shown in his address the programme of apprenticeship and training and what we intend to do with the youth of this country—and let me just say I am not sure what generation the Member for Chaguanas is talking about—

Miss Bhaggan: Not yours, anyway.

Hon. C. Imbert:—but I think we are about the same age. I am glad that you are speaking on my behalf. Thank you very much.

Finally, Madam Speaker, our country is going through a difficult period. I am quoting the Prime Minister:

> "While there may be those who view this state as permanent and irreversible, the Government charged with the responsibility to bring about an improvement in our national fortunes, is optimistic and confident that there is substance in the old maxim that says, 'Tough times do not last, but tough people do'."

We on this side, Madam Speaker, believe that we can do what is necessary to bring this country out of the doldrums that it presently finds itself in. We believe

that our plans and programmes have already laid the foundation for stability in Trinidad and Tobago into the 21st century. We believe so. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I ask this House to take note of the statement made to Parliament by the hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Member for San Fernando East, on Monday, January 04, 1993. I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, March 05, 1993 at 1.30 pm. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Motions on Adjournment (Enquiry of)

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, we have motions on the adjournment to be heard.

Mr. Valley: The time has lapsed.

Madam Speaker: No, no, the Member for Oropouche is right. Those matters were reinstated today. They were properly re-filed and they were supposed to be on for today, but since time does not permit, and the Member is willing to give way—

Mr. Valley: No, Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Madam Speaker: I have before me letters sent to the hon. Ministers on these matters.

Mr. Valley: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am saying—

Madam Speaker: "The Hon. Kenneth Valley"—this is the matter for the motion on the adjournment of the House.—"I have been directed by the Speaker..." Three of these matters are on for today.

Mr. Valley: All I am saying, Madam Speaker, please, and for my own guidance, I know that they were supposed to be debated today. They could not—given the time. What I am saying, Madam Speaker, to my knowledge, given the Standing Orders, they have now lapsed and if they are to be debated next week—

Madam Speaker: Oh, I thought you meant from the last occasion.

Mr. Valley: No, no, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I misinterpreted it.

Mr. Sudama: The matter is to be debated on the adjournment, whatever time that is.

Madam Speaker: Let us look at it; it falls under Order 11. It will not take us very long to have a look at it:

"11(1) Any such debate shall cease at 8 p.m..."

So I think the hon. Member knows that we can set it for next week and hopefully—All right, this House is adjourned then, to Friday, March 5, at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.30 p.m.