

Papers Laid

Wednesday, December 01, 1993

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 01, 1993

The House met at 10.05 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER in the Chair]

PAPERS LAID

1. Medium-Term Policy Framework: 1994—1996. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley)*]
2. The Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 1993. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Institute of Marine Affairs for the year ended December 31, 1992. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Victoria County Council for the year ended December, 31, 1982. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Victoria County Council for the year ended December, 31, 1983. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
6. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Victoria County Council for the year ended December, 31, 1984. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]

Papers 3 to 6 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on motion [November 26, 1993]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question proposed.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the hon. Minister of Finance on what appears to be a new approach to the pre-budget antics of previous governments, a tragicomedy to which we have all grown so accustomed.

In times gone by, the date of the budget and the possible contents thereof, would be top secret, always shrouded in mystery, a kind of cloak and dagger exercise, which only served to heighten expectations and excite fears during the

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period leading up to Budget Day. For some unknown reason this has not been the case on this occasion. On the contrary, there seems to have been a deliberate attempt to downplay the importance of this budget. I do not know whether this novel approach signals a new attitude of openness on the part of the Government, or whether it is just pure political strategy on the part of the wily Minister of Finance. I suspect it is the latter.

Having regard to past experience, I must confess it came as a bit of a surprise to me when more than a month ago the hon. Prime Minister announced, almost casually at one of his party meetings, that the 1994 Budget would be presented at the end of November. As if this was not enough to shock our sensibilities, there followed several statements in the media, both by the Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance, which sought to give an indication of what to expect and what not to expect in the budget.

On more than one occasion the hon. Minister of Finance was heard to say in public, "Do not expect anything dramatic in this year's budget; it is going to be a balanced budget; things are going to be tough; do not expect any new taxes." There seems to have been a deliberate and orchestrated attempt to neutralize the importance of this budget, to remove all elements of surprise from whatever it may or may not contain, to dampen expectations and so make the presentation a non-event, almost. I could not help but wonder why.

Having heard the budget proposals of the hon. Minister of Finance on Friday last, I can now very well understand why. I can also understand why the ruling party took to much pains to hold pre-budget and post-budget meetings, complete with his cheering "rent-a-crowd." The hon. Minister was obviously taking "before", before, "before" take him. Seasoned politician that he is, he must have been reading the writing on the wall. He must have seen and sensed the heightening expectation of an impatient population. He must have known that the people who voted for the PNM were waiting with bated breath to see if, at long last, this caring Government would begin to deliver on its election promises, particularly those relating to unemployment, crime, economic growth, the deteriorating public utilities and the burning issue of alienation.

After all, the Government has been in office for well nigh two years. If, as all new governments claim, it takes about a year to settle in, then surely now is about the time when the people would expect that the new and caring PNM Government would start delivering on its manifesto promises. The lessons of the NAR must have taught the Minister something.

Even the most contemptuous of politicians cannot fail to realize that this is not the politics of the '60s and the '70s. Today, the masses of the people who vote parties into power are no longer prepared to sit back and be conned by governments that appeal to racial sentiment to win elections, only to sell out the masses for the next four years and then try to win elections again by throwing some crumbs to them in the fifth year, when elections are due, so that they can win elections once more.

10.15 a.m.

This Minister may be many things, but a fool he is not. He has witnessed the fate of two previous regimes who thought they could pull that age-old scam and get away with it. The population has shown that it has grown so politically sophisticated that it will not, as in the past, allow governments it has supported to squeeze its throat for four years and then in the election year, release some funds for endless "10-days", and hope to win elections on what may be termed "the bribe of crumbs".

If the PNM has not learnt that lesson from the fate of the Chamber's regime in 1986 and the devastation of the NAR in 1991, then it has learnt nothing. Both regimes thought they could fool the people with "10-days" and hand-outs in the year of election, and on that basis romp home to power for another five-year term. They were both wrong and they both paid dearly for their mistakes. It seems that this regime is destined to make the same mistake.

If the strategy of this Government was to make this budget presentation a non-event, and so dampen the present expectation of the public for relief from their many problems; if the public relations campaign was intended to gloss over their failure to deliver, then the consensus, on this side, is that it has failed to do so.

In presenting its first budget for 1992, the new Government's stated objective was to stabilize the economy and consolidate the country's financial position. The population bought that line and waited for one year. At the end of the year the Minister of Finance confessed that the Government had failed to address the problems facing the people. This same Minister then said that: the theme of his 1993 Budget would be "the passage from stabilization to growth". The people again swallowed that one; hook, line and sinker.

The Government argued that if there was going to be growth, as the hon. Minister of Finance had promised, then it would only be a matter of time before the people would get jobs; so, the Government thought. Again, the people waited,

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and waited, and waited, but as the time passed, no jobs came. It became increasingly evident, even during the first year in office of this regime, that the population was slowly, but surely, coming to the realization that it had been conned for yet another time. Not unnaturally, the unemployed masses began showing signs of growing impatience and discontent.

In order to win the 1991 election, the PNM dishonestly, foolishly and recklessly made many campaign promises which its rank and file supporters gullibly swallowed—together with a lot of "bull" besides. The most dastardly of such promises, under the guise of being a caring government, was the promise to return to the system of handouts and the dependency syndrome. Such is the intoxicating power of the politics of racism. But victims of such propaganda soon wake up and realize that they cannot take rice to the grocery and buy food for their families, nor pay the rent with it, nor use it to provide clothes and school books for their children. But, in politics, as in all things else, how you make your bed so you lie.

Now, the theme of the 1994 Budget is "Our shared vision; an invitation to participate"—no longer "stabilization" and "growth." I am not sure exactly what that means, but one thing is clear: The hon. Minister is very conscious of the fact that the people whose backs he and his colleagues have ridden to power—the beasts of burden of the PNM, as I call them—are waking up, as if in shock, suddenly realizing what they have done to themselves by putting the PNM back in office.

Having conned them into believing that this was a new PNM, not the "real" PNM, it is not unnatural that they should hope, against hope, that this caring Government would be different from the old, and would live up to its promises. But, as the weeks went by—and all the new Prime Minister—not the "real" Prime Minister—kept doing was smiling sweetly at everybody and pretending that all was well, it began to dawn upon the people that the new PNM, like the old, had lied to them.

Even so, they were prepared to let the Government they had elected take the first year to settle in, but this is the 1994 Budget and even the most fanatical PNM supporter is asking: If they do not start delivering now, when will they? In 1996? That is why this budget is so important to this Government, and, that is why it would have preferred to downplay its importance. Having failed to do so, it has embarked on a futile public relations campaign to defend the indefensible.

This second budget of the "caring Government," now called the "scaring Government," is sure to convince, not only the poor, but also the unemployed and the homeless, the small and medium-sized businessmen and the professionals, that they have been conned for yet another time. No attempt is made to deal in any serious manner with the major problems facing our people and the country. In the absence of a Throne Speech—the equivalent under our republican Constitution being the President's address at the opening of the parliamentary session—the budget is the occasion on which the people expect to hear what the Government perceives as the critical problems in the society. How these problems have been prioritized, what are the plans of the Government for dealing with these problems. What is the time-frame within which the people can at least expect that some of their problems will be resolved.

The budget presentation is the time when one expects the Government would indicate how it intends to raise funds to deal with the problems as identified, and how it is going to spend those funds so as to improve the quality of life of the people.

This budget, as indeed all budgets, must be examined in the context, and against the background of not only what is taking place in the society at the present time, but also what is expected to happen in the future, both in the medium and the long term. One would expect, therefore, that the hon. Minister would have provided us not only with an analysis of past programmes, their successes and failures, so at least they would have avoided making the same mistakes thrice, but, also, that they would have made an assessment of the present problems facing the people and indicate, with some precision, the Government's plans for the future.

No one expects that the Government would solve all the problems in the first or even the second year in office. We accept that things take time to fructify, but the least we can hope for is that the budget would indicate the Government's proposals for tackling the problems in a manner that would result in the improvement of the quality of life of all our people.

We really expected that the Government would have defined the context in which the budget proposals are to be effected as part of an overall plan to improve and sustain the quality of life of all—not just a few—in the short, medium and long term. Unfortunately, the Government has fallen short on that score. The main objective of the Government in presenting this budget seems to be to satisfy the international financial institutions and the international lending agencies that the

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regime has complied with all the conditionalities necessary to qualify it for more and more loans. The strategy of selling our national assets to improve our credit rating seems to be one that 'commits us forever to living from hand to mouth, on borrowed money.

10.25 a.m.

There is nothing in the budget to indicate that there will be any emergence from the debt syndrome. Clearly, the Government is preparing itself for a final splurge in order to win the next election, using borrowed money, if necessary. The only concern of this new PNM which, clearly, is firmly under the control of a ruling clique or parasitic oligarchy, if you wish, is to stay in office while the ruling elite continue to rip off the rest of the society, as they have done for decades. That is the one issue Mr. Marshall will not be able to avoid, not now and not in 1996.

The absence of any meaningful measures in this budget designed to relieve the poor and unemployed of their destitution on a continuing basis leads one to believe that the Government has lost the political will to tackle the real problems that confront an unhappy people from day to day. Its only concern is how to stay in office regardless of the consequences to the nation.

It is not that the Government does not know what the problems are. In fact, many times in his budget speech the hon. Minister actually glances at the problem, but knowing that he is going to say nothing about relief for them, he quickly shies away from it. The Minister is deeply concerned with balancing the budget with foreign exchange reserves, balance of payments and balance of trade, GDP and GNP.

As economic indicators, all these things are important, of course, but the real question is: How do they impact upon the lives of the people as a whole, not just one sector? The United National Congress holds fast to the view that all development is about people and nothing else. What is the use of a rising GDP and an overflowing GNP, when 25 per cent of the people are not sure of even one square meal per day?

The size of the foreign exchange account, the balance of payments and the balance of trade figures are meaningless if at the end of the day people are no better off. We must begin therefore, by unambiguously identifying the problems that the people face from day to day, and then looking at the measures proposed in the budget to see how far they go towards relieving those problems.

As far as the United National Congress is concerned, the critical issues in the society today are: unemployment and poverty, crime and the security of the

person and property; the deteriorating public utilities and the crumbling infrastructure; and last but not least, the burning question of alienation, frustration and anxiety in this society. I propose to deal with each of these in turn.

Unemployment is undoubtedly the most critical socio-economic problem in the country today, but the Government says little or nothing about it. True, unemployment has always been with us, but never before has it taken on such frightening social dimensions.

During the years of the oil boom, we were able to disguise and gloss over the problem of unemployment because the oil windfall enabled the PNM to engage in a most revolting form of handouts and patronage, corruption and waste, that it is possible to imagine. Every time this Government says that it has no money to provide for the basic needs of the people, I feel like weeping.

The country must never be allowed to forget that the Minister of Finance and the Member for San Fernando East, now Prime Minister, were participants in the dissipation of billions of dollars of this nation's patrimony between 1971 and 1986. As if to expiate his guilt, the Minister of Finance is reported to have told a meeting of party faithfuls a few weeks ago: "We are all guilty of dissipating the national patrimony." *[Interruption]* "Please, Mr. Minister, speak for yourself and your corrupt colleagues of the PNM; do not speak for me.

I submit that we on this side of the House are in no way responsible for the crimes you and your PNM have inflicted upon the society over the past 30 years. Do not forget that my colleagues and I have battled against your "O'Hallorans," your "Prevatts" since 1976, while you and your colleagues were doing all in your power to protect them even as they raped and plundered the Treasury.

If the people chose to put you back there to do the same thing again, that is their business. If today, the Minister bemoans the fact that we are too dependent upon oil, as he does in the budget, and that we ought to diversify, we must remind him that the time to diversify the economy was when they had the oil windfall. Instead, the PNM used to disguise the problem of unemployment by a system of handouts in the form of: Special Works, DEWD, LIDP, now URP.

The unemployment figures for the years 1973 to 1993 are very interesting. They are as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>
1980	10 per cent
1981	10 " "

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<i>Year</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>
1982	10 per cent
1983	11.1 “ “
1984	13 “ “
1985	5.6 “ “
1986	17 “ “
1987	22 “ “
1988	22 “ “
1989	22 “ “
1990	20 “ “
1991	18 “ “
1992	20.4 “ “
1993	30.4 “ “

In evaluating these figures, it is important to keep certain things in mind. For example, the definition of an unemployed person for the purposes of the statistics is a person who is unemployed and who has been looking for work for the past six months. So that all those unemployed persons who have not been able to find a job for the past several years and have given up the hopeless search are not counted as being unemployed. Those persons who are on “10-days” or any form of casual employment are not included in the unemployment figures.

Casual vendors whom the PNM controlled city and borough councils, are constantly chasing all over the place are not recorded as unemployed. No account is taken of the underemployed. When you take all these factors into account, it would be safe to say that at the present time the more realistic figure for our unemployed and underemployed is in the region of 30 per cent of the labour force. That is to say, some 150,000 persons in a labour force of approximately 500,000 are in need of permanent well-paid jobs.

Looking at the figures from another angle, you see that what this means is that 350,000 workers are supporting 850,000 dependents. They have been doing so on falling incomes. The result has been a steep fall in the standard of living in the society as a whole. But the reality for the middle and lower income earners, the unemployed and the poor is much worse. The available data indicate a widening

gap between the rich and the poor; some of those poor people who put the PNM in power year after year. Some find it hard to believe that the victims of the PNM's uncaring callousness would return them to power, election after election. But such is the power of their appeal to primordial instincts at election time.

The World Bank has estimated that between 1980 and 1989 in this beloved country of ours the number of people living below the poverty line has quadrupled. In the same period the per capita income fell by almost 50 per cent from US \$6,290 in 1980 to US \$3,300 in 1989. One hundred and five thousand persons in Trinidad and Tobago were poverty stricken at the end of the decade of the 1980s, that is, living on less than US \$60.00 per month as compared with 27,000 who were classified as poor in 1980—an increase of almost 300 per cent.

For those of you who believe that poverty is confined to the urban areas, let me tell you that the same report found that by 1989 poverty had skyrocketed in the country's rural neighbourhoods from 3.4 per cent in 1980 to 21.3 per cent in 1990. Furthermore, there was a 20 per cent disparity between urban and rural average incomes. The figures indicate that there is a definite correlation between poverty and unemployment. As people become unemployed they slip inevitably into poverty.

An invitation at this time to walk down the road together has got to mean, walk down the road to poverty and destitution. And you should be careful about going down the road with any conman that smiles sheepishly at you all the time. The chances are that as soon as you turn the corner and no one is looking, he is going to rape and plunder you before you could say “no more new taxes”.

10.35 a.m.

In the report of another team headed by Mr. Allister McIntyre, the investigators found that 22 per cent of households surveyed were below the poverty line. The McIntyre team also found that there was a significant deterioration in the distribution of income and expenditure between households. In other words, the rich got richer and the poor got poorer. While 23 per cent of the population cannot get food to eat when the day comes, one bank is able to boast that in 1993 it had a pre-tax profit of \$127 million, while another bank made an after-tax profit of \$53 million in 1993. If the PNM is, as it claims, a caring Government, now you should have no doubt in your mind for whom it really cares.

The masses of the East-West Corridor may have won the election, but the parasitic oligarchy has surely won the government. And Mr. Marshall is finding

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out much to his chagrin, it would take more than being absent from the reading of the budget speech, and an occasional crocodile tear, or a half-hearted outburst of self-righteous pique to convince the people of Laventille and John John that the Minister of Public Utilities is not part of the conspiracy to keep them in the dependency syndrome for the rest of their wretched lives.

The combined effect of poverty on the one hand, and the deterioration of the levels of income on the other, has been the root cause of some of the most serious, social consequences this country has ever experienced, particularly in the area of crimes—robberies associated with the most abominable display of violence; the rape of innocent women and children, suicides, murders, attacks on businessmen and businesses—and an escalating sense of fear and insecurity in the population at large. These tragedies have become commonplace in our once lovely Trinidad and Tobago.

We shall never know how many local and foreign businessmen changed their minds about investing here because they did not feel safe in this land of ours. Shall we ever know how many millions of dollars we have lost in job-creating investments because of the Government's failure to deal with the problem of escalating crime in the country?

In the budget proposals for 1993, the Minister of Finance said then that the Government was in no position to create jobs, and that job creation had to be left to the private sector. The Government would be merely a facilitator; he said that again in this budget. Only a few weeks ago, a spokesman for the private sector said that the private sector was in no position to provide the jobs necessary to make even a dent in the unemployment problem. Now I ask: If the Government says the private sector must create the jobs, and the private sector says it cannot create the jobs, then who is minding the store? How is the unemployment problem going to be solved? Are the jobless to be forever condemned to unemployment? The answer is, yes, as long as the PNM is in power.

Let us see what the Minister says about unemployment in the 1994 Budget. Firstly, he admits that the cost of the Government's policy has been borne by the poor and the unemployed in the form of a high level of unemployment which averaged 20.4 per cent in 1993 and which remains concentrated among our young people. He promises that when it becomes possible for the Government to relax its tight monetary and fiscal policies, the growth process would accelerate in the short term and unemployment would decline. He does not say how this will come about, but in the mean time it is going to be more pressure for the poor; the unemployed and the lower and middle income groups.

It is no wonder \$1.4 million has been allocated for soup kitchens. The Minister is telling the country that the investments in the energy sector will not produce jobs in any significant number. The LNG facility to be built in the La Brea/Brighton area will cost about \$1 billion, but will produce only 300 permanent jobs. He could not be referring to investments in the non-oil manufacturing sector as the means of creating the much needed jobs, since the statistics show that while the manufacturing sector registered a slight improvement in the book value of its production, the labour force in those industries declined.

Words of encouragement to those businesses that failed came from the Minister who said, "Well, some win and some lose." It seems to me that those manufacturing firms that have succeeded in the battle for survival are those that are successful in reducing their labour input. The nearest the Minister comes to a direct statement on the Government's plan for relieving unemployment is when he makes reference to the tourist industry on investments made in the energy sector. Page 17 states:

"These investments are strategically important in terms of enhancing our exports and tax revenues, but do not help much in terms of reducing our high levels of unemployment. It is for this reason, Madam Speaker, that Government is encouraging the development of the tourism industry in both Tobago and in Trinidad."

It is to be noted that the Government will not invest directly in the tourist industry. It will provide infrastructure: roads, water and sewerage, electricity and ports.

Those who do not know the PNM could be forgiven for believing on hearing that kind of statement that jobs would begin to flow next year. If they did, they would have been conned again, because of the statement the hon. Minister made, without so much as batting an eyelid. On page 18 he states:

"We are still at the stage of developing the overall plans and the strategy for Trinidad, though it seems that development will centre on resort-type projects on the north and north-east coasts, as well as convention and event-type tourism which showcase the cultural and sporting life of the country. In addition, Government is currently reviewing proposals from consultants on the development of the IDB funded Tourism Master Plan."

It is not even a master plan. According to the Minister, the real tourist jobs are going to be in Tobago. There would be so many jobs in the Tobago tourist

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industry that there is likely to be a shortage of labour says the Minister, and they would have to import labour from Trinidad and Tobago. *[Laughter]* Do not laugh! Do not laugh! The hon. Minister actually said that. He might as well have added that when that happens, they are going to find it difficult to find people to work on the URP projects in Trinidad.

It is statements like these that make people disrespect politicians. The Government places almost total reliance on the private sector for the creation of jobs. The thrust, therefore, is on attracting investments, the Minister says. So far, the Government has failed to do so. This time the local private sector is the scapegoat.

The hon. Prime Minister is reported to have said and the hon. Minister of Finance has repeated it in his 1994 Budget Speech that foreign investment has become an imperative because the local private sector is unwilling and unable to take up the investment opportunities available. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister and/or the Minister of Finance, why are our local businessmen so reluctant to invest in this country and why should foreign investors want to invest here when our local investors are reluctant so to do? Is it that the Government proposes to offer incentives to the foreign business community that it is not prepared to offer to the local business community? The country awaits an answer.

10.45 a.m.

If the Government had the courage to take off its political blinkers—and maybe its PNM ties—and examine the problem seriously, it would see that the real constraint to investment, whether from local or foreign sources, is the question of confidence—confidence in the present regime and its ability, or inability, to solve the country's economic problems and maintain stability. As far as confidence is concerned, the Government is probably at its lowest ebb. No one can trust a Government which says one thing today and does something else tomorrow.

No one can have confidence in a Cabinet when Ministers make contradictory statements one after another. No one can have confidence in a Government which is afraid to uphold and implement the law against well-known drug barons. No one can have confidence in a Government that knows of corruption and refuses to take corrective action. No foreign or local investor can have confidence in any government that refuses to set up the mechanisms to ensure accountability of the Executive in its day-to-day operations. Unless these fundamental constraints are dealt with, the half-hearted measures offered in this budget would not induce investors, foreign or local, to invest in the economy.

Then, of course, there is the repeated problem of the dead hand of an unresponsive bureaucracy. This Government has, over the years, not only bloated the bureaucracy, but also emasculated it to the point where it became incapable of taking the kind of rapid and impartial decisions that successful business requires. The same method used by Dr. Eric Williams to frustrate the public servants is the same method being used by the present regime. All this talk of public service reform is nothing but just talk. There will be no reform. In fact, what the Government has done is to ignore the public service and hire its own private team of advisers and consultants from outside, on a contract basis.

In other words, the Government is privatizing the public service. We understand that there are several divisions, including the Organization and Management Division of the public service, listed to be dismantled by the end of the year. The Minister will then bring in his friends and advisers and consultants on a contract basis. I fear that this will only exacerbate the general perception among some of our businessmen that there are persons in the bureaucracy who deliberately frustrate certain businessmen from investing on purely ethnic grounds. If that is so, then it would appear that this Government is really afraid of success. It says it wants investment, but behaves as if it is afraid to succeed in obtaining those investments unless it came from a particular quarter.

We have had complaints of potential investors being given the run-around, of obstacles being placed in their way by certain top officials of the bureaucracy, the object being, it seems, to frustrate and chase them away. I make the statement on the basis of several reports that have been made to me by potential investors who claim that they were forced to change their minds about investing here and are now looking to countries like Guyana and other Caribbean countries where they are made to feel more welcome. There is no mechanism in the present political system that allows us to verify these allegations, hence the persistence of the Opposition to set up parliamentary committees to look into such allegations. But that is another matter.

The Government's programme to attract investors to Trinidad and Tobago fails to address one of the most important concerns of manufacturers, and that is the question of markets. Assuming that there were investors who were willing to put down their factories here, where will they sell their products? Economies of scale is an important determinant of the cost factor. The local market is too small. Even the Caricom market is inadequate to sustain the level of investment and production that is required to make a significant impact upon the unemployment problem. The state has a duty to facilitate exporters by opening up new and

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lucrative markets for investors by conducting market surveys, gathering and disseminating information on non-tariff intelligence and other such services.

Even before the emergence of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), we on this side had been advocating a closer economic relationship with our wealthiest neighbour, the United States. The Government ignored us. When NAFTA began to emerge, we advocated the commencement of negotiations with that group, with or without our Caricom partners. We said that to avoid the risk of putting all our eggs in one basket, the Government should at the same time seek closer economic ties with Latin America. Our option was, NAFTA or LAFTA (Latin American Free Trade Area). This was years ago. We are now pleased to hear that the Government has suddenly discovered that there is something called NAFTA on its doorstep and has begun to be concerned that the investments that it had hoped to attract from that region may now go to Mexico. What a shame!

This Government talks about facilitating businessmen, but that is all it is. Just talk. For several years, there were market openings under the several Lomé Agreements; under the CBI; under Caribcan, one way free trade with Venezuela; and if the Government was really serious about promoting exports, it would have investigated and found out long ago what were the factors which inhibited our manufacturers from taking advantage of those openings in those areas. Had it done its homework, it would have been in a position now to know exactly what has to be done to facilitate our businessmen and our manufacturers to become export oriented. It failed to do so and we are now paying the price.

There is yet another consideration. Assuming that there were investors willing to invest and that there were markets for our goods, can we, given our present productive conditions, produce goods of the required quality, volume and price that would enable our manufacturers to penetrate the highly competitive international markets? Do we really have the appropriate productive base in the non-oil manufacturing sector to sustain an export-oriented economy?

The Government's strategy in the 1960s and the 1970s was one of production in aid of import substitution. Under the Aid to Pioneer Industries Act, firms were encouraged to set up screwdriver type industries that would assemble unfinished goods from, completely knocked down (CKD) parts to replace the goods which were hitherto imported. These assembled goods, produced in a low technology environment, ranging from motorcars to toilet paper would then be sold on a protected market in which the manufacturers had a virtual monopoly. The result was huge profits from shoddy goods at high prices. That is the nature of our

non-oil industrial base. It is not a base from which you can produce goods of high quality at competitive prices in such volumes as would be competitive on the international market. All this talk about exports as the basis of our economic recovery failed to take into account the reality of our productive base.

What are we going to export, and to whom? Are we going to export assembled motor cars or computers to the Japanese, or fridges radios and television sets to the very people from whom we imported the CKDs? How can such an assembler/manufacturer ever hope to compete with the super technology of the Americans, the British, the Germans and the Koreans? If we are going to build this economy by exports, then it has to be from a differently structured manufacturing base, as well as from another sector of the economy, the agricultural sector.

A government that is serious about facilitating our businessmen and manufacturers in exports would take steps to assist them in retooling their factories and machinery, while giving them the time and protection that are required for them to survive while doing so. It takes on the average about 10 years to establish a new productive base before it can be exposed to the fierce competition of the international market.

10.55 a.m.

Every other industrial country in the world has done it—countries larger and stronger than we are. What makes this Government think that our manufactures do not need that kind of protection. Many of our manufacturing establishments have been forced to close down in recent times and the many more that will be closed in the future are really crumbling under the influx of cheap imported goods. They need not have suffered that fate if the Government had the guts to deal with them.

The second problem that I had alluded to was the problem of crime, second only to employment. Crime is probably the most vexing and debilitating problem facing the country. One does not have to refer to the published official statistics to know that in Trinidad and Tobago crime is on the rapid increase. It is sufficient that the overwhelming feeling of the population is that they are under siege by the criminal elements in the society. Whether it be crimes of corruption in the public sector, crimes resulting from the enormous frustrations in the country, crimes due to poverty, destitution or drug-related crimes, innocent citizens are reeling under the criminals who roam and rob with impunity.

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The frightening dimension with the upsurge in crime is that it is accompanied by a viciousness and brutality that is hitherto unknown. The bandit and the robber is not content to break into your home, steal your money, your VCR and your TV; before he leaves he has to rape your wife and daughter, beat you, chop you and then shoot you.

The phenomenon is demonstrative of more than a desire to commit crime. It is really a fight back against society that has alienated large sections of our young people. In some countries that alienation expresses itself in some form of guerilla and urban warfare. In Trinidad and Tobago, protest seems to be coming in the form of vicious crimes.

In a population of 1.2 million people, living on less than 2,000 square miles of land space during the period 1993, January 1 to 1993 October 1, a mere nine months, there were 88 murders, and at the present rate there will be more than 120 murders in 1993 alone. That is to say an average of 10 murders per month or three murders per week or a murder every other day.

In 1993 more people will die as a result of murder than from fatal motor vehicular accidents on the road. In the same 10-month period there were 483 felonious woundings; 6,846 break-ins; 7,758 robberies; 2,224 reported cases of larceny; 299 cases of larceny from dwelling houses; 902 cases of dangerous drugs, a total of 15,810 reported cases of crime and 80 per cent of the crimes are committed by young persons between the ages of 18 and 24. When you look at the unemployment figures you will see that that is the age group in which there is the highest incidence of unemployment.

There is a disturbing increase in the incidence of suicides and crimes of violence against women and children. Undoubtedly, much of this domestic crime is related to frustration and alienation that are associated with unemployment, poverty and destitution. According to criminologist, Prof. Maureen Cain, one of the major factors in the upsurge of crime in the country is the frustration and disappointment caused by the failure of the Government to deliver on its election promises. I had always thought so, but had I said that, the doctors at the University would have said that that was a political position.

Clearly, the incidence of crime is not related only to unemployment, poverty and its attendant frustrations; if that was so then the well-to-do would commit no crimes. But crimes in Trinidad and Tobago are heavily influenced by the drug trade and the prevalence of substance abuse. There is conclusive evidence that many of our crimes are drug related; yet the Government seems totally helpless to do anything about it. In the budget, little or nothing is being done about it.

Under the regimes of both the PNM and the NAR, the feeling prevailed that for one reason or another, these regimes were not serious about tackling the drug problem and the drug trade. Both regimes have received generous offers from friendly foreign governments to assist in the combat of the drug menace. Reports are that both regimes have failed to make proper use of the facilities offered. This is neither the time nor place to go into details, but one cannot just forget the refusal of the NAR regime to accept the offer of the Government of the United States of America in 1987 to assist in fighting this menace.

It is not possible to ignore the recent failure of the present regime to take advantage of the assistance offered by the same Government to build drug-fighting facilities on the south-east coast. Nor is it possible to ignore the fact that some two years ago the US Government gave to this Government over \$4 million worth of vehicles for the protective services, and today, no one can account for them, even though we raised this matter in this Parliament several months ago.

Whatever the reasons for the reluctance of both the PNM and the NAR to accept the assistance offered, I do not know; what I have no doubt about, however is that the drug barons are very pleased with the actions of both these governments, insofar as they relate to the fight against drugs. Whatever the reasons for the peculiar behaviour, the fact remains that the present regime seems totally incapable of dealing with the problem, as indeed, with any other national problem.

One of the primary functions of any government is the safety and security of its citizens. It is therefore the responsibility of the Government, to take cognizance of the serious menace of crime in the country, and if the Government does not take the opportunity of the presentation of the annual budget to indicate to the nation how it is going to deal with the problem of crime, when will it do so? In 1996? The problem of crime is but a part of the entire problem of the administration of justice in this heartless country.

During the debate on a motion in this House, moved by the hon. Member for Couva South during this session, the Members on this side dealt exhaustively with the whole question of the administration of justice. We noted that, theoretically, the fight against crime begins with the passing of laws in the Parliament, followed by the enforcement of laws by the police and the courts, the punishment and the reformation of prisoners in the prison system and the support services designed to reduce the incidence of recidivism. But in fact, it goes much deeper than that. The

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unprecedented rise in crime has also to do with the psychology of lawlessness that is pervasive in every facet of the society.

11.05 a.m.

Laws are passed to deal with a variety of matters but are never enforced. Take for example, the litter laws; nobody bothers to obey them and nobody bothers to enforce them. When this is repeated many times over, there develops in the society a psychology of lawlessness, and it eventually pervades all aspects of our lives. Corruption is a dimension of crime, but no one does anything about it. Now we have come to accept it, even though it is strangling all our efforts to advance economically.

The Government knows exactly what to do with the high incidence of crime, but it simply lacks the political will to do what has to be done. It has neither the inclination nor the desire to establish a police service in which recruitment, promotion and advancement are based on merit and not on patronage and favouritism as now obtains. It does not have the courage to institute a system that ensures that only men of the highest calibre in the legal profession are appointed to judicial office. It is incapable of modernizing the procedures and equipment that are required to speed up crime detection and crime enforcement. To plead that it has no money is to deceive the nation.

The figures for Government expenditure for the Ministry of National Security over the years are most revealing. Between 1983 and 1993, the Government spent \$5,964,822,275 on the security services alone. Of this amount, \$4 billion, or about 80.3 per cent, went on personnel expenditure; 10 per cent for goods and services; while a mere \$71 million or 1.2 per cent went on development expenditure. In other words, the Government has been spending an average of \$590 million per year on the security services, yet when you call the police and report that a bandit is at your door and trying to break in, the reply is that they have no vehicle. That is their idea of prudent financial management.

Does the Government realize that crime is a problem? Of course it does. At page 23 of the 1994 Budget Speech, the hon. Minister of Finance acknowledges that the Government's best efforts at ameliorating social conditions will be frustrated if the problem of crime is not aggressively controlled.

"There is no doubt that the problem is bound up with the high levels of unemployment, substance abuse and the drug trade, and the strains of life in our crowded urban centres."

That is not all; the caring Minister proudly boasts that:

"The Government is determined to arrest and reverse this trend to create conditions where parents could feel safe in allowing their children to walk the streets of their communities and to take public transportation ..."

How is the Government going to do this? The Minister graciously condescends to tell the House that the detailed measures which will be implemented to deal with crime will be articulated during the course of the budget debate.

If this is not the height of contempt for this House and for the people of the country, I do not know what is. On an issue as serious as crime, the Minister could not find time nor space in his two and a half hour budget presentation to tell this country what the Government is going to do in 1994 to alleviate one of its most serious concerns. The obvious conclusion is that the Government is going to do precious little about it. Now, hon. Members can understand why the drug barons and the drug pushers are laughing all the way to the bank while our youths continue to decay under the evil influence of drugs.

Third problem, as I have said, is the public utilities and the deterioration of the infrastructure. The UNC believes that no development is worthy of effort unless it is for the people. Development can only be achieved by the efforts of the people and must, therefore, redound to their benefit. It is nonsense to talk about development if such development does not result in an improvement in the quality of life of our citizens. It is criminal to talk of raising revenue and incurring expenditure of vast sums of money in the name of the people if the lives of the people continue to deteriorate. Of what significance is the budget exercise if when the day breaks tomorrow, the ordinary man, woman and child do not have water to drink, food to eat, adequate housing, proper health facilities, proper roads and drainage, an affordable and efficient means of transport, adequate sporting and recreational facilities, just to mention a few of the basic necessities that make for civilized living? The operations of the Ministry of Public Utilities are crucial in this regard.

Over the past several years there has been a steady decline in the quality of the public utilities and our infrastructure, particularly with respect to water, roads and bridges, hospitals and schools, and despite what the Government says, here too, money is not the problem. Nevertheless, whenever the public demands the basic necessities of life, the response of the Government is always the same: "We have no money, we have no money," like a stuck gramophone record. So often has the Government repeated this slogan that some of the people have come to accept it.

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But the people would be surprised to learn that between 1973 and 1982 the Government spent \$1,636.1 million on WASA alone; between the period 1983 and 1992 it spent \$1,528.7 million, and yet this country does not have a regular supply of drinking water—\$3,164.8 million in 20 years and no water. Do you know why? Because the people of Trinidad and Tobago sat idly by and allowed corruption to "stink to high heaven" and do nothing about it. Of that huge sum of money spent, 80 per cent went to personnel expenditure.

There has been enormous expenditure over the past 10 years, but this Government, even as the service continues to deteriorate, has had the temerity to raise water rates by some 35 per cent. And the people put them back in office. One day some psychiatrist will explain to our children why people behave in this way.

Trinidad and Tobago is the only country I know where water rates are paid for water which you do not and cannot get. Is not that a form of robbery? That is tantamount to telling the criminals that robbery is the acceptable norm in the society, if you can get away with it. Only in this country can a government get away with that kind of contempt for its people. If money is not the problem, then what is? The answer has been known to all of us for a very long time—corruption, waste and mismanagement.

WASA has been described by a firm of Canadian consultants as one of the most corrupt and inefficient organizations in the Caribbean. But that itself is not sufficient justification for concluding that privatization is the answer. We believe that if the Government had the courage to take the steps necessary to deal with corruption, waste and mismanagement in WASA, there would be no need to raise the rates in order to make WASA viable and there would be no need to privatize it. The Government should not even consider the alternative of privatization until every effort is made to make WASA efficient and every such effort has been exhausted. The UNC is against the privatization of WASA at this point and I shall tell you why.

It is in the very nature of things that private investors only invest if they could make a profit—and that is how it should be—the availability of water is then likely to depend on pure market forces. The poor should never be denied so vital a commodity because they cannot afford it. In other words, the poor should not be left to die of thirst because they cannot afford to pay for water.

11.15 a.m.

Secondly, if we really want our exports to be competitive, we must provide our manufacturers with hidden subsidies, such as cheap water, electricity and other public utilities.

Thirdly, WASA is not intrinsically non-viable; therefore, no attempt should be made to privatize it until we have exhausted every means of making it cost-efficient.

Fourthly, there is nothing that private enterprise can do with WASA that the Government cannot do if it wanted to. The figures for Government expenditure on roads over the past 10 years reveal a similar pattern—huge allocations and expenditures, but nothing to show for it. It is the height of cynicism to spend millions of dollars to beautify the capital city by planting a few flowers here and there and providing some benches for vagrants to sleep at night, when the roads in the heart of the city are riddled with potholes and ditches that slow traffic to a crawl on the city's main thoroughfares.

The Minister recognizes that our roads are in a terrible shape and he agrees that if we are going to attract investment in industry and tourism we must have dependable infrastructure. That being the case, what does he propose to do about our terrible roads? At page 19 he says that "we must find new and innovative ways to finance the rebuilding and maintenance of our road network" and his novel approach is to impose a five per cent tax on all motor vehicle fuels as a road improvement tax. In this way he will raise \$50 million and our road problems will be over. That is to misunderstand the problem completely.

Money is not the problem. Between 1983 and 1993 the Government spent billions of dollars on the repair and maintenance of our roads, yet they are worse today than they were 10 years ago. The problem is corruption, waste and mismanagement. Did we not have a similar promise of improvement to our health service when the Government introduced a health surcharge? They took our money, spent it, and left our women-folk to have their babies on the concrete floor. I am reminded that a few years ago our nurses at the Port of Spain General Hospital were complaining bitterly that they were forced to wrap newborn babies in brown paper because there was no linen.

I am sure that the \$50 million will be spent, and at the end of it, all the roads will be worse than they are today. Do you know why? Have you seen the way the Government does repair works all over this country? It first locates the pothole, then wait for the rains to "set up"; and just before the rains come down fill the

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pothole with pitron and mud, not even bothering to consolidate it with so much as a battering ram. Within a day or so, the pothole is as wide and as deep as ever and no one is responsible for what has just taken place with the people's money.

All I ask is, how is it possible that an engineer can order such materials and carry out such works, and not be disciplined? How can a foreman or supervisor get away with such criminal acts? Obviously, because there is no mechanism for checks and balances in this system. There is no accountability.

Although the Minister admits that throwing money at the problem is not necessarily the way to solve it, he nevertheless fails to explain why we have spent so much money on the problems and there has been no relief. He knows that the answer lies in establishing a system of accountability, but he and his colleagues persistently reject our call for the setting up of parliamentary committees which will monitor the implementation of Government policy from day to day. Such a committee would expose acts of corruption, waste and mismanagement. That is one thing the PNM, new or old, cannot afford. One of the major constraints on our country's development is the lack of accountability.

Fifthly, I identified as being among our problems, the problem of alienation. This is a matter that has caused much controversy in the society. Some people would prefer to discuss the issue in small groups and then only behind closed doors. Others would advocate that it be swept under the carpet, or not discussed at all. Yet it is a problem that lies at the root of all our failures to progress economically. Despite the fact that this country is blessed with more than its share of natural resources such as oil, gas, asphalt, fertile land, a tropical climate, seas teeming with fish all around us, we have been unable to develop those resources so as to convert this country into the paradise that it ought to be.

Instead, with all those resources, 22 per cent of our people live below the poverty line. Does anybody not stop and ask why? How is it possible for a government to collect over \$60 billion in oil revenue alone, spend it and still not be able to provide a mere 1.2 million people with so basic a necessity as drinking water? Is it purely the cussedness of the PNM? We do not think so. In all analyses of economic development, it is accepted that a country's most valuable resource is its human resource. For more than 15 years we on this side of the House have been saying that mobilization of that vital resource is a sine qua non for development—whether it be economic, political, or social development.

In Trinidad and Tobago this is an even greater imperative since, unlike India and China, ours is a population of a mere 1.2 million souls. That is all the human resource we have to develop our nation. We cannot afford to divide or alienate even a fraction of it. Total mobilization is vital to success. At long last the Government has come around to our way of thinking—or so it says. I never thought that I would live long enough to hear the PNM, which spent so much time and effort dividing our people, say that our human resources were so vital to our success. But I am glad. It is never too late. But the Minister stops short. He does not examine the causes of our failure to mobilize the human resource. He shies away from the issue of alienation. I wonder why?

The UNC is convinced that one of the greatest constraints on mobilization of our resources in the task of nation-building is the debilitating feeling of alienation among all sections of the society. I have made the point on numerous occasions that in Trinidad and Tobago, for one reason or another, large sections of the population feel completely left out. This fact militates against our ability to mobilize the human resource. For merely raising the issue, I have been accused of trying to divide the nation.

Now the recent report of the Centre for Ethnic Studies tends to substantiate my prognosis. Yet the 1994 Budget Speech is deafeningly silent on the issue. There is not a single word in the budget on how the Government is going to deal with this serious problem. The Minister says, at page 2 of his Budget Speech, that it is dedicated to inclusion. I must confess I am at a loss to understand what that statement means. Maybe someone on the other side will explain as the debate progresses.

I am interested in knowing what the Government is going to do in the light of the report of the Centre for Ethnic Studies. I fear that the next thing we shall hear from the Prime Minister is that he is going to set up yet another committee at the University to tell us what institutions ought to be established to resolve the serious and urgent problems. That would be one way of avoiding the settlement of this crucial issue. But it would be a pity, since it would be to miss a golden opportunity to remove one of the most serious stumbling blocks to our economic, social and political progress.

There are other problems that face the society. But the UNC sees these mentioned as the most major problems confronting us today. One would expect that the budget would have addressed them, especially the budget of a Government that cares. It is against the background of these urgent problems in the society that every budget proposal must be examined and evaluated.

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The first thing that strikes one about this budget is the fact that its estimates are based on an oil price of US \$19 per barrel. Having regard to recent trends and past experiences, I should have thought that a more realistic estimate would have been somewhere in the region of US \$17 per barrel. I am not substituting my own hunch for the advice of the experts the Minister said he has had.

11.25 a.m.

My point is that speculation on the price of oil allows the Government to buy time. It gives the Government a chance to put forward an unrealistic budget and so escape the wrath of the people for the time being, knowing full well that it has no intention of implementing the budget proposals.

For example, the provisional estimates of expenditure for the year 1993 were in the region of \$6,813.7 million, but two weeks ago, the Government came to this House and said: "Oh, by the way, we exceeded that by over \$400 million, you know. Please rubber stamp what we have done." And the "Ayes" had it". That sort of system makes nonsense of the budget debate and reduces it to an almost meaningless exercise. Had the Government based its estimate on a more realistic US \$17 per barrel, we would now have been debating quite a different budget.

There is need for reform in the political system to prevent the Government from changing the provisions of its budget mid-year without first coming to the Parliament for debate and approval. Be that as it may there are many proposals in the budget that are really pie in the sky while others are clearly contradictory. Many have not been thought out clearly for the obvious reason that the Government has no intention of ever implementing them.

At the very outset, the Minister confuses ends with means when he speaks of a vision of the society at page 2 of the Budget Speech. According to the hon. Minister, the PNM's vision for the society is one:

"—where everyone can realise fulfilment . . . of the national community, with a large, vibrant and growing private sector, involving individual entrepreneurs and small, medium and large firms with strong linkages between manufacturing, agroindustrial and services sectors and an integrated competitive market economy with a heavy export bias."

Those are means, not ends.

What is the point of having all these things if our people are not happy? The vision of the UNC is a society in which all our people are happy, physically and spiritually. That is our objective; all else are ways and means. The Minister's

desire that Trinidad and Tobago should become the global city of the Caribbean is a laughable dream. But if the prerequisites of becoming the hub of the Caribbean are, as he says, excellent roads, sea and air transport, ample water and electricity, world-class telecommunications, strong educational and health systems, then, I am afraid, that as long as the PNM is in office, that would remain an empty dream. When they had the money, they could not do it. Are they going to do it now when they do not have the money?

It may astound the young people of this country today to know that between 1973 and 1993—a period of 20 years—the PNM Government spent the colossal sum of \$110.5 billion, and between 1983 and 1993, it spent the unbelievable sum of \$75.2 billion. With that kind of money, this caring Government was unable to provide water for 1.2 million people; it failed to diversify the economy; it could not fix the roads and clear the watercourses; it could not provide permanent and well-paid jobs for our young people; and now, it has the shameless audacity to stand before this honourable House to tell the people that it is going to convert Trinidad and Tobago into the global city of the Caribbean. And the Government expects us to stop laughing.

How can this PNM Government ever hope to make this the financial centre of the Caribbean and Latin America, when it has just destroyed the credibility of, and the confidence in, the financial system of the country by its bungling and mishandling of the First Citizens Bank fiasco. That mess is shaking the very foundations of any confidence in the system.

How can we ever hope to become a financial centre, when the Minister of Finance has just imposed a 15 per cent tax on all banking services? People dealing with banks must now pay a 15 per cent transaction tax if they ask for bank statements, standing orders and any other order, bills, bonds, guarantees, indemnities, negotiated bills, letters of credit and so forth. Trinidad and Tobago is the only country I know that has these kinds of charges.

With this brilliant idea of the PNM, the Minister expects that foreign investors will now be queueing up and stumbling over one another in a mad rush to do business with this country.

The union of which I am President-General has about 9,000 members who deal with the banks. Since they receive their wages and salaries by cheque, are they going to have to pay out of their meagre wages 15 per cent on all their transactions? If that is the case, then as far as I can see, it is going to be a case of away from the banks and back to the mattress. But with the number of bandits floating around, it is more likely to be a hole in the backyard; and with the kind of

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flooding we have been having in Caroni and elsewhere, even that is going to be a hazardous exercise. It seems to me that one of the new difficulties we are going to be facing in Trinidad and Tobago is where to keep the money we do not have.

At page 4, the Minister says that:

"Geographical distance is becoming increasingly less important as a factor in the location of economic activity, as these technologies allow firms to organize production and to serve markets with a degree of flexibility."

From any part of the world. How then can the same Minister say in the next breath that our geography holds the key to our becoming an international capital? These two statements are inconsistent. It would seem that having nothing to say about the problems facing the country, the hon. Minister was obviously filling space and killing time.

The invitation to organize labour to participate constructively in the country's development is going to be faced with one serious difficulty, and that is, the credibility of this Government. Over the past two years, this Government has treated the labour movement with utter contemptuous indignity. The invitation to them to join in tripartite talks turned out to be a cheap device to lull them into a false sense of security while it emasculated the labour movement. Even while talking to them and giving them assurances, the Government was planning and executing savage retrenchment upon the workers.

I wish the Minister of Public Utilities well and I pray for his speedy recovery. He must get well soon so that he can explain to the workers of WASA and T&TEC how he submitted a Cabinet Note for approval to sell out these public utilities, while he was giving the unions and the workers the assurance that there will be no privatization of these undertakings. He must also address his mind to the question of which one of his ministerial—I almost said "prime-ministerial"—colleagues released that Cabinet Note to the press. Let me make it clear: I like this Minister. I merely wish to demonstrate to him that one cannot hunt with the hounds and run with the hares at the same time.

We on this side, the alternative government, are becoming increasingly concerned with the manner in which this Government is handling the national debt. I will repeat that for the benefit of the Minister.

11.35 a.m.

We, on this side, the alternative government, are becoming increasingly concerned with the manner, in which this Government is handling the national debt.

Maybe a third time is necessary:

We on this side, the alternative government, are becoming increasingly concerned with the manner in which this Government is handling the national debt. The strategy seems to be to sell off even the profitable state enterprises to service the country's debt. When the new PNM came to power in 1991, the total public debt was \$11,965.5 million. That figure rose to \$12,984.7 million in 1992, and \$16,218 million in 1993. The external debt went from \$5,225.9 million in 1991 to \$6,000.6 million in 1992 and \$9,279 million in 1993, while the internal debt went up from \$4,911 million in 1991 to \$5,249 million in 1992 and to \$5,439.6 million in 1993.

So that even though we are selling off the national assets to pay our debt, the debt keeps getting bigger and bigger. Now this seems to me a case of selling out the family furniture to pay the grocery bill while borrowing money to pay the rent. Soon you will have no furniture, no food, and no house to live in.

What is even more callous with this PNM Government in its approach to debt servicing, is the fact that it is willing to do anything to pay the foreign debt while ignoring the local debt owed to its workers, contractors and the suppliers of goods and services. It demonstrates a kind of contempt for the local people. What the Government does not realize is that if it does not pay the contractors, they in turn cannot pay their workers, who are then unable to buy food and clothes for their families, thus causing manufacturers and businessmen to lay off even more workers. The result is the inevitable downward economic spiral.

We are happy to hear the Minister talk of the need for reforms of a wide-ranging nature, dismantling the old colonial structures, as he says, and the introduction of institutional reforms to encourage enterprise; reform of the public service to enable innovation and efficiency; reform of the financial structures and institutions; the need for new institutions in the area of industrial relations and the administration of justice. We are happy to hear him say that. But it is a pity that he did not elaborate. Maybe before the debate is over, he will.

What concerns me at this point is the information reaching us to the effect that the Government has embarked upon that programme, as I have said, of privatization of the public service, of having the functions of large sections of the public service, performed by consultants and advisers on contract. I would like this Government to tell me how many persons have been employed on contract since they came to office two and a half years ago. I understand that while there are scores of young graduate engineers from the University of the West Indies

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who cannot get a job, the Government has employed a retired engineer in the Ministry of Works and Transport on a contract basis. He is the husband of one of their Ministers.

Do you now understand why this Government does not want the introduction of investigating committees in the Parliament? The first and foremost reform we need is the establishment of machinery and mechanism to deal with corruption, maladministration and inefficiency. Unless the system provides for meaningful accountability, we shall repeat the orgy of 1973 to 1983. Have these in place or everything doomed to failure.

I now come to the so-called safety net being introduced by the Government. The mere mention of a social safety net is an admission that the Government's policies have failed to improve or provide a decent life for large sections of our community. Who are these people who have been the victims of this caring Government? I like the way the Minister puts it. At page 20 he says:

“This Government is painfully cognizant of unemployment, homelessness, and inadequate health, nutritional and educational services, among certain segments of the population; the despair and hopelessness that breed in desperate conditions, and which have resulted in wanton criminal activity.”

That was actually a quote of the Minister, spoken as a true "Opposition." That is for us to say, not him. He and his Government are the ones who brought on these appalling conditions. The Government collected \$64,822 million and spent \$75,211 million within the last ten years, and this is the result. He and his colleagues behave as though they have just fallen from the moon and found this tragedy that is Trinidad and Tobago. With the soft words falling from his lips so mellifluously and the crocodile tears flowing so copiously, you would not believe that they were among the looters and plunderers of this country's Treasury for 20 years. The real danger of this safety net is its deception. It gives the poor and the destitute the expectation that they will not fall into the abyss of deprivation. So they jump, only to find that the safety net is rotten.

Let us take the Unemployment Relief Programme. The Government has proposed an allocation of \$130 million, the same as last year. But from the reports of hundreds of people, the URP is in many areas under the control of thugs and gangsters who actually do the hiring and they determine who gets a “10-days” and who does not. The jobs are given to drug users to enable them to pay for the drugs supplied by the very people who are hiring. The needy single parent lady with four or five children to take care of, is not offered work. I call this suffering mass

of humanity my "Tuesday morning constituents." They vote for the PNM on Monday and Tuesday they come to me to help them.

Despite the repeated calls from us, this Government refuses to set up a system that will ensure that the neediest are served first. In almost every area of social welfare, the moneys allocated to the poor never reach them. Eighty per cent of the allocation, or thereabouts, goes to cover administrative costs. The rest is absorbed in corruption and favouritism. Even the soup kitchen aspect now of this budget is questionable. There are no proper systems of accountability to ensure that the money reaches the poor and the needy.

One friend of mine described this budget as being similar to what happens to you at a *bhandara*. When you sit down to eat, they put a large tea leaf in front of you and then the sharers start passing the food. One person puts a little bit of chataigne on the leaf and another puts a little bit of pumpkin, the other one puts a little bit of channa, and a little bit of *alloo* and a little bit of *baighan* and *sahina* and a little bit of everything, and so it goes on. But each time they put a little bit, it does not seem to be a problem; it seems to be all right. But when they are finished with you, you cannot digest it. The result is painful indigestion.

This is exactly what the Minister of Finance has done. A little nibble here and a little nibble there and when he is finished with you, his nibbling has eaten off nearly half of your skin. The tragedy is that he has picked on the flesh of the poor, the unemployed, and the middle and lower-income classes.

11.45 a.m.

One must now pay a 15 per cent transaction tax on any financial transactions one may have to do with the bank. So if one wants to buy a second-hand car, one pays between \$2,000 and \$4,000 to transfer the old car, depending on its age; VAT is paid to repair it, and higher gasoline costs to run it. And, if one wants to write to an uncle in Canada to tell him about one's plight, one has to pay more in stamps.

That is what this budget does to the lower and middle-income groups in our society. I fear that this silly provision would cause people not to register the change of ownership of vehicles at the Licensing Office, after they are purchased. Instead, they will make a receipt for the sale of the car, since a certified copy of ownership is only prima face evidence of ownership. But, in such an eventuality, there is the danger that the insurance will be in the name of the old owner and, whereas this would satisfy the law in respect of compulsory insurance, should the new owner injure someone, he would not be covered and the injured person may never be compensated.

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If one was selling doubles to raise the money to buy that car, one would now have to pay a business levy like Neal & Massy and Mc Eneary. If, one runs short one year, and forgets to pay the lands and buildings taxes on one's old house, one would be in real trouble, because one would have to pay a penalty of 10 per cent plus 15 per cent interest. But, if the Government assesses you for more income tax than you think you should pay and you are rude enough to appeal, then the Minister of Finance says that you must deposit what they say you should pay, pending the appeal. If the Government was wrong, and has to refund your money, it would give you only six per cent. In other words, the taxpayer must pay for the Government's mistake. That is tantamount to a forced low interest loan from the taxpayer to the Government.

How can the Government say in one breath that it wants to encourage small business and self employment, and impose such contrary measures in the other breath?

If you are one of those middle or lower income wage earners, you are at present entitled to tax exemption on the \$10 food voucher your boss gives you. The Prime Minister says that if you are now earning more than \$3,000 per month, he is going to take that benefit away from you because you have been abusing it. Apparently, you have been eating too many \$10 lunches.

The provisions relating to loans to the small business sector will not benefit small businessmen but the banks and other financial institutions. Small business will in no way benefit from the allowance proposed for small businessmen. The UNC, the alternative government—the hon. Member did not laugh this time—would have approached this matter quite differently, as I shall demonstrate to you.

If this budget is short on innovative ideas and proposals for dealing with the country's problems, it certainly is not short on promises. We seem to be forever on the brink of turnaround and growth. This time, according to the Minister, we are nearing the plateau of sacrifice and suffering. Last year we were bottoming out and there was going to be growth of one per cent; instead, there was further contraction of the economy. There ought to be a law against Ministers of Finance who tell lies. It should be an indictable offence punishable by fine and imprisonment for Ministers to come to this House and insult it with lies and prevarication, half-truths and reckless promises. Had there been such a law, we would not have had the extent of crime in the society today, if Prof. Cain is correct.

When it comes to deceiving the public, the new PNM is no different from the old. This country has been conned by the old PNM since the days of the late Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams. Listen to some of the false hopes they have been building up in the minds of the people since 1956 and compare them with those of the new PNM.

The history of promises and “mamaguy” began with the late Dr. Eric Williams some 35 years ago when the then PNM government began publishing a series of five-year development plans. The first one was supposed to be a programme by which the PNM was going to fulfil its 1956 manifesto pledges. The oil boom, not yet having taken place, agriculture was going to be the PNM's main plank for dealing with the unemployment problem.

The Government, therefore, promised to pursue a vigorous policy to expand agricultural production and employment.

The Government promised to place the emphasis on the small producer in agriculture, the main objective being to put the country in the forefront of agriculture and keep it there. That was the boast. The farmers were promised adequate credit facilities, improved extension services, research and development increased technical knowledge so as to improve productivity, and markets and cold storage facilities.

With such a programme the PNM boasted that in five years 20 per cent of the total surface of Trinidad and Tobago would be under cultivation. Even the fishermen came in for a few promises. They were promised increased capitalization of the fishing industry and better amenities. Promises of financial and technical assistance so as to boost production. For those five years, the accent was going to be on agriculture as the main instrument of providing productive jobs with better amenities for the workers. And since promises are cheap, why not include others? Another area included in that development plan was the tourist industry. That is why I referred to the tourist industry in 1956. This was to be done enhancing the promotional efforts of the Tourist Board and providing better tourist facilities such as hotels and infrastructure. Does that sound familiar? That statement was made 35 years ago.

Thirty-five years ago the PNM was making the same promise that the Minister of Finance made last week. Those were the days before the oil boom and the Government admitted that it did not have the necessary funds to guarantee that all the jobs needed could be created. What was it going to do? Yes, you guessed it. The Government was going to create a favourable investment framework that

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would attract investors and investments from here and abroad. Does that sound familiar? Thirty-five years ago and \$112 billion later, the PNM is making the same promises.

I do not know now to whom I must address my remarks. There are the new PNM, the old PNM and the real PNM. One faction of the present PNM, calling itself the new PNM, disassociates itself from the sins of the old PNM, while another faction is claiming to be the real PNM and dissociates itself from the new PNM. Would the real PNM please stand so that I may know to whom I am speaking?

11.55 a.m.

As is the case today, the PNM of those days did not have the money to create jobs for the unemployed, so the burden of creating jobs, they said, was the responsibility of the private sector.

As it was in the past, so it is in the present and presumably, so will it be in the future. The Government would encourage private enterprise by creating a new framework to encourage investors. In order to create such a framework, the 1956 PNM Government was going to do the following:

Embark upon heavy expenditure to improve the public utilities;

Provide financial and technical assistance to producers;

Expand trading facilities;

Provide incentives to producers such as tax exemptions on agricultural subsidies;

Place the greatest emphasis on basic infrastructure and service industries.

Having heard more "ole talk" in this budget, of a safety net for the poor and the indigent from the hon. Minister of Finance in 1993, I thought it would be good if I quoted verbatim from page 38 of the 1958 to 1962, Five-Year Development Plan. It reads as follows:

"The aged and the infirm present a problem that is as old as mankind itself. This group must also share in the benefits which will result from economic progress."

These are almost in identical terms with the statements contained in the 1994 Budget Speech at pages 11 and 20.

As I listened to the Minister on Friday last, there came to mind a picture that was quite familiar in the old days. It was the logo of an old recording company,

RCA, I think it was. It was the picture of a pretty little dog sitting on a gramophone record with its mouth facing the horn of an ancient gramophone below which the caption read: "His master's voice."

The Second Five-Year Development Plan, which covered the period 1963 to 1968 set up the National Planning Commission of which the present Member for Tobago East, was deputy chairman. The old PNM admitted that the First Five-Year Development Plan had failed and made a most interesting statement which I shall quote to demonstrate the hypocrisy of the PNM, past and present.

"The long-run objective of our national development must be the full utilization of our human and natural resources together with our capital resources so as to yield to the broadest segments of our society, such levels of living as are commensurate with the modern requirements of human dignity."

Such is the contempt that the PNM feels for the people that it does not even have to find different words to convey the same lies.

Thirty years ago the Government recognized the importance of mobilizing our human resource; yet 30 years later the same PNM Government has been unable to come up with a plan to end the alienation and to mobilize our most valuable resource, our human resource.

The Government blamed the failure of its second development plan on:

"The administrative complexity of executing agricultural programmes, and the structure of agriculture which inhibits full development."

They blamed the small size of the country and the size of the population in absolute terms. The then PNM Government admitted failure of its plan to deal with the problem of unemployment and blamed for its failure the country's dependency on oil and the small size of the non-oil industrial sector.

However, this time, a new five-year development plan—they had all the answers—and the Second Five-Year Development Plan included more promises of how the then PNM was going to solve the problems of the people between 1962 and 1986. The new set of proposals included the following:

Changing the structure of the economy, moving away from the dependence on oil by diversifying to manufacturing and agriculture;

Achieving a satisfactory rate of growth of per capita GDP;

Providing productive employment for the increasing labour force.

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All this they were going to achieve by expanding the non-oil industrial sector, by inviting local and foreign capital to invest in that sector. That was 30 years ago.

In agriculture, they were going to establish the basis for a productive small and medium-term system geared to producing increasing quantities of agricultural produce for the local market and for the export market.

Then came the Third Five-Year Development Plan covering the period 1969 to 1973. You will note that this is just before the oil boom. This time the old PNM decided not to admit failure of the past Five-Year Development Plan even though they did not succeed. Instead, it spoke of structural problems which had to be overcome if a process of self-sustained and internally generated development was to be set in train. The new promise was to embark on the following programme:

- “(i) a diversification of the structure of production so that the economy can continue an internally-generated process of growth in agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing and tourism, irrespective of adverse or favourable developments in the petroleum sector of the economy;
- (ii) the elimination of structural unemployment;
- (iii) a shifting of the centre of decision-making in investment,…”

developing in the early 1980s a more diversified economy with considerably more economic decision making being located internally.

That was 20 years ago.

The people who tell lies and get away with it tend to get bolder and bolder in the lies they tell. In 1969, Dr. Eric Williams promised the country full employment by 1983—1985. This promise was made on the basis of expenditure that looks like chicken feed when compared with today's budget. In fact, the budget for 1970 to 1973 is as follows:

Year	Total Revenue	Total Expenditure
1970	\$327.9 m.	\$3 83.5 m.
1971	363.9 m.	459.5 m.
1972	415.9 m.	549.6 m.
1973	495.0 m.	606.8 m.

Then came the oil boom and madness became the order of the day. It was a clear case of "never-see come-see." The PNM, new or old, should never have been

allowed to hold office in this country for 30 years because of what it did between the years 1973 and 1986; and the NAR should be banned for the next 10 years for what it did to this nation between 1986 and 1991.

Whenever the population of today demands even basic necessities of life, the perpetual cry of the Government is that it has no money. Would you believe that there are some PNM fanatics who echo that statement? They come to believe it now. They say, "If the Government has no money, what you expect it to do?"

It may come as a surprise to some of you to know the amount of money that passed through the hands of the PNM and the NAR over the past 20 years. Between 1976 and 1986, a mere 10 years, \$59 billion. In those same years they spent \$73 billion. After successive PNM governments have spent all that kind of money, there were still no water, housing, jobs, health care facilities, recreational facilities, no protection against criminals. How in the name of sanity can they return such people to office? I submit, then, as now, money is not the problem.

12.05 p.m.

What has been the record of the NAR? Between 1986 and 1991 the government of the NAR received \$32.9 billion in revenues and spent \$37 billion. At the end of their regime, the situation was no different with mass unemployment; shortage of housing; rising crime rate; deteriorating public utilities and rampant alienation of large sections of the population. What is amazing is that the population was treated with the same kind of contempt that is characteristic of the old/new PNM in whatever disguise.

On August 13, 1987, less than a year after the NAR took office, the Hon. Winston Dookeran, Minister of Planning and Reconstruction, told the media that the country would see economic turnaround in 18 months. Blaming the PNM for not using the oil revenue to finance the non-oil sector, Mr. Dookeran assured the nation that everything was going according to plan and that the foundation was being laid that would provide the basis for a turnaround.

For good measure, on August 18, 1987, Mr. John Barsotti, then Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, during a panel discussion at the Central Bank Auditorium revealed the well known secret that the former PNM government had been engaging in regime survival during the oil boom by spending money on projects and subsidies for the primary purpose of staying in office.

On October 18, 1988, the then Prime Minister, Mr. ANR Robinson assured the nation there would be a steady flow of business missions, mission upon

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mission would come in missions in the form of financial institutions, following his recent trip to Europe. He repeated his previous assurance that there would be an economic turnaround by the end of the year; billions of dollars in investments were about to come in it was said.

January 1, 1989, "T&T on the road to recovery," says the Prime Minister. January 27, 1989, Minister Dookeran speaking at the South Chamber of Commerce told his eager audience that the best kept secret in the country was that the economy had in fact turned around. According to newspaper reports, the statement brought spontaneous and sustained applause from businessmen. Obviously, they had neither heard of, nor felt, the turnaround. Yet they were prepared to swallow that line without question. Some people will never learn.

June 15, 1989, Selby Wilson, Minister of Finance from the NAR government, tells a seminar for Berger paint dealers at the Normandie Hotel that the Government's economic policies as unpopular as they prove to be are finally bearing fruit with significant improvement in practically every sector of the economy. He took the opportunity to remind his audience that the country was fortunate to have a government which was not afraid to take unpopular decisions.

July 19, 1989, Minister of Industry, Ken Gordon, delivering the feature address at the Edwin Duval Memorial Lecture told his audience that a dramatic turnaround in the performance of the economy in recent months was now evident everywhere in the economy, along with positive indications of diversification.

August 27, 1989, "PM predicts improvement in key areas." December 1, 1989:

"The ubiquitous Minister Dookeran, at a symposium of the Naparima Old Boys Association boldly proclaimed that Trinidad and Tobago had crossed the bridge after facing a serious economic situation which the new government inherited when it assumed office in 1986."

December 6, 1989, "Turnaround would accelerate in 1990", says Dookeran.

I have a whole bunch of similar headlines that go right up to 1991, but I would not read them because they are too embarrassing.

Then the PNM came back to office in 1991 and the pattern continued.

On January 7, 1992, during the course of the new PNM's first budget, this same Minister of Finance, in true old PNM fashion, bemoaned the high rate of unemployment in the society, just as his predecessor before him did 35 years ago.

Like his predecessor, he blamed the fact that we are heavily dependent on oil. His object on that occasion was to stabilize the economy, which apparently was still struggling despite assurances of the former regime that things were turning around.

The Minister of Finance, Mr. Mottley, said on that occasion that the objective of the 1992 Budget was sustainable growth of the economy; significant and durable reduction of unemployment and restoration of an adequate level of foreign exchange. According to the hon. Minister, the strategy for achieving these objectives would be a substantial increase in investment and exports in agriculture, oil and gas, tourism, and other services; construction, manufacturing with special emphasis on gas, agriculture and food processing. Just in case you got lost, that was the Minister speaking two years ago.

The Minister promised government support for exporters with a full range of technical assistance and extension services for training, product design and market penetration. That was the same thing the PNM of Dr. Eric Williams said 30 years ago. The only new thing the new PNM said in 1992 was that they were going to divest those state assets which have no particular or public purpose value.

He assured us then that a programme of divestment would be based on the principle of realization of the fullest value of our assets and the widest shareholder participation. Already, they have deceived the nation on both counts. They have sold Urea and Fertrin without giving locals the chance to participate in the ownership of their own patrimony.

The theme of the 1993 Budget is now: "From Stabilization to Growth." The economy neither stabilized nor grew in 1992 or 1993. The gross domestic product at current market prices went from \$22.3 billion in 1991 to \$22.2 billion in 1992; and \$24.2 billion in 1993. That represents a fall in 1992; an increase of eight per cent in 1993, but if the fall of the dollar is taken into account, then the net result is a fall in real GDP in the two years that the PNM has been in office.

The per capita GNP went from \$26,000 to \$16,000 and \$18,000 (round figures) respectively in the three years. In money terms there was an increase between 1992 and 1993, but in real terms there was a fall in the three-year period. On the balance-of-payments account even though the overall deficit fell, exports rose faster than imports. A \$3.4 billion surplus on the balance of trade was reduced to \$1.3 billion in 1992, and \$1.8 billion in 1993. The only thing that showed persistent increase was the public debt, which rose from \$11.9 billion in 1991 to \$12.9 billion in 1992 and to \$17.0 billion in 1993.

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It is in this context of the history of false promises that we must really look at the budget proposals for 1994.

12.15 p.m.

This budget looks like the two that went before it. It will hit the poor and the lower and middle income groups harder than those of the high income levels. It will make the rich richer and the poor poorer. It will neither stimulate business activity nor investment in the oil sector. It will destroy the agricultural sector, our main hope of employment generation.

I now come to the proposals of what the UNC, the alternate government, would have done. The United National Congress does not agree with the Government that Trinidad and Tobago, at this point, can or will attract the quality and quantity of investment in the present non-oil industrial sector that would make any significant impact upon the unemployment problem that confronts us. We agree with the Government that we shall have little difficulty in attracting investments in exploration and drilling operations in the energy sector, but as has been admitted by the Government in its budget presentation of 1992, such investments will not create jobs.

Having regard to our present wage structure, such investments we may be able to attract into the non-oil sector, that is to say, manufacturing, are more likely than not going to be in undertakings which are capital intensive and not labour extensive. As such, the figures may show some investments have come in, but the unemployment figures remain the same or even show an increase. We cannot, therefore, depend on the attraction of foreign investment in the non-oil sector or the industrial sector as a strategy for dealing with the problem of unemployment. We must, therefore, shift the accent to another sector, the agricultural sector, while giving the local manufacturers time to retool in order to be able to compete in the international market.

When I speak of the agricultural sector, I am not referring to traditional agriculture, the old colonial syndrome of the production and export of raw sugar, cacao, coffee and bananas, since commodity prices have been falling over the years, and I expect them to continue to fall. I am talking about agricultural production to meet the demands in two centres of potential growth: that is to say, production to meet local demand and production that will and can sustain a profitable export trade in non-traditional agricultural products.

Our food import bill continues to be in the region of \$700 million and \$800 million per year. If we gear our agriculture to producing most of the food we

consume, we shall not only be able to provide a significant number of jobs, but we shall also conserve our foreign exchange. We shall have the added advantage of having provided the country with a large measure of food security, something which is of concern to every other nation in the world. Food would become cheaper, our people would be better fed and so less inclined to crime and other anti-social behaviour. Our standards of living would improve with the increase in jobs and the fall in the price of food, but even more importantly, this enhanced production should lay the foundation for downstream industries in food processing, so providing the agro-industrial sector with jobs for the urban population.

It is mischief to promote the fallacy that any development in agriculture will benefit only one section of the population. Indeed, a successful agricultural sector can create a multitude of downstream activities which would result in thousands of jobs in the agro-industrial sector, which are generally urban based.

Having achieved a large measure of self-sufficiency in food, we must then concentrate on the production of non-traditional agriculture for export. If we are going to be successful exporters we shall have to concentrate on production where we have a comparative advantage. There is no way we are going to compete with the Japanese or the Americans in the export of computers and motor cars; or hi-tech equipment and sophisticated machinery such as are produced by the industrial giants of the world. Export agriculture must concentrate on those crops in which we have a comparative advantage, and export to those markets where we are virtually unobtrusive, such as the ethnic markets located in several metropolitan countries of the world where Caribbean people have settled.

A good example of the difficulties inherent in competing with the industrial giants was when we tried to export our steel to the United States. The steel interests there caused the United States government to impose on our steel countervailing duties and forced upon us a voluntary restraint agreement. But in most metropolitan centres of the western world where Caribbean people have settled, there exist lucrative ethnic markets for vegetables, fruits, ground provisions, spices, condiments and other non-traditional agricultural products.

Since our entire production of these goods is but a minuscule proportion of total world trade in these commodities, we would hardly be noticed and so we could easily penetrate these markets and provide jobs for thousands of our people, instead of being kicked out of the market-place as is so often the case when we collide with the Titans of world trade. The markets of which I speak exist in the

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United States, Canada, Britain, Europe and even in some Eastern and Middle-Eastern countries.

When, in my response to the 1992 Budget Speech, I made this very point and used as an example the great demand abroad for our chiquito figs as an exotic fruit, I was laughed and scoffed at by the ever-increasingly innocuous Minister of External Affairs, who said: We in Trinidad and Tobago have oil and gas to last for more than 30 years and this man is talking about exporting *sucrier* fig. That was the attitude of the old PNM and it is the attitude of the new PNM. Therein lie the problems of this country.

May I ask the hon. Minister where all the oil and gas have got the thousands of unemployed and under-employed, who, while his Government boasts of the reserves, have had no food to feed their children, no money to send them to school, not even water to drink or to wash themselves? Boast about your gas and oil.

Mr. Ulric Cross, former High Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago to London, said that during his term of office, export opportunities for our non-traditional agriculture in England and Europe went a-begging. We could not take advantage of these opportunities because we were not organized to handle the volume of goods needed in those areas. In order to export successfully, volumes and periodicity of supply are as important as quality and price. Importers do not want a thousand pounds of "half-ripe" tomatoes this week and a hundred pounds of rotten ones next week, and none for the next fortnight because transport was delayed, or the fellas went to Carnival or to play cricket.

We in the UNC appreciate the fact that in order to be able to export successfully, you have to produce exportable quantities of high quality goods at competitive prices and regular intervals. There are contracts involved and you pay severe penalties if you fail to deliver as promised. Making deliveries at the contracted dates and times is crucial if we are to develop an export potential in any area of trade.

In examining the constraints to becoming part of the export syndrome, we in the UNC, the alternative government, recognize the fact that we are a small country and as such our land space is severely limited. No single individual farmer has the amount of land, and few have the resources, to enable him to produce the quantities required for export. It is imperative, therefore, that the small farmers be grouped and each group be mobilized to produce a single crop of consistent quality, which when put together will meet the quantitative and qualitative requirements for successful export.

12.25 p.m.

Contrary to popular belief, production for export does not start at the production end, but rather at the marketing end. First you find out what will sell and then you produce it; unless, of course, you are so big and powerful that you can afford a marketing campaign that can create a demand for your product where previously there was none. Our small farmers do not have that kind of resources to do the market research required, nor the financial capacity to acquire the specialized skills required to deal with the rigid demands of packaging, labelling and quality control, and the multitude of non-tariff constraints to exports.

In the absence of any such initiative from the private sector, a UNC government would act as facilitator in providing the support services for the small farmers to enable them to combine and export successfully. If properly handled, this ought not to involve any additional cost to the Government. Our embassies, if properly re-organized and motivated, can provide many of these support services to the farmers at no additional cost to the Government. All they would really need is a computer and a hook-up to the various international data bases.

The embassies can provide the Government with the kind of market information which can then inform production policies and objectives. They ought, quite easily, to be able to provide the farmers with information relating to the laws, the rules, regulations and other requirements to enter the foreign market.

The alternative UNC government will pull it all together. Having decided on what to produce, the farmers must know exactly how to produce the crop so as to obtain the best quality at the most economical cost. All this involves a fair amount of costly research which the small farmers can hardly afford. The farmers must then have easy access to seeds and to technology and scientific production. There may be need for bulk purchasing of seeds and seedlings; there has to be education of the farmer in scientific methods, quality control, handling and packaging. These are not difficult tasks. All they require is the political will to set them in motion. And as I said, once you get agriculture going, you deal with employment, not only in the agricultural sector, but also in the urban areas.

There is no way our farmers can begin the cycle of production, whether it be for the local market or for export, if the Government allows the dumping of agricultural goods from abroad.

Most metropolitan governments subsidize their agriculture. Our farmers cannot compete with these subsidized goods. A UNC government would protect

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our farmers from such unfair competition by the imposition of countervailing duties on imported agricultural products which are dumped in this country, and we are entitled to do it under the new agreement.

Such an ambitious programme of agriculture would require an equally bold programme of land reform. The state being the largest landowner, we shall start with the distribution of state lands for agricultural purposes. Land would be given out on long leases with the requirement to produce a specified crop. Such leases would contain a clause for reversion to the state in the event that the farmer fails to cultivate the same in a husband-like manner.

No agricultural policy can be complete without a programme of water conservation and management. You cannot expect farmers to produce when every rainy season they suffer enormous damage from flooding. Flood control and irrigation works are an important part of any agricultural policy. Details of our plans in this regard are to be found in our manifesto. But the UNC will introduce a system of agricultural insurance to protect farmers against damage and loss.

In the industrial and manufacturing sector, the Government would adopt a similar approach to development in the non-oil manufacturing sector. The embassies would be re-organized to provide a variety of services to the manufacturing sector, so reducing their costs and making them more competitive. We shall provide the small and medium businessmen and manufacturers with market intelligence, identifying export opportunities and providing the support services.

The UNC believes that the urban workers can be organized in a viable system of cottage industries as a means of relieving unemployment in the non-agricultural sector.

Again, the principle is the same. The UNC government would invite the private sector to organize a cottage industry. If, for whatever reason, it is unwilling to do so, a UNC government would locate markets for a commodity in demand. Depending on the nature of the goods identified, the UNC would organize the unemployed into small businesses or in the home where they can produce. We would then organize the small businesses to participate in the packaging, transport and export of the items so produced. The cottage industry is one way to reduce the cost of production to a level that would make us cost competitive in the international markets.

The UNC's policy and programmes to deal with unemployment are closely interwoven with our policy on education. The money spent on education is

unbelievable. The figures are here and when my speech is published, as I hope it will be *[Interruption]* All right, I will give him the total only.

Between 1989 and 1993 this Government spent \$4,981,045,073 on education, and what have we to show for it? Dilapidated schools; poisoned food and water that kill our innocent children; abuse and violence of teachers; more and more youths resorting to crimes and violence, thousands of children who are functionally illiterate, and joblessness among those who have studied hard and even passed their exams. Something has to be wrong. Everybody blames the system, even the Government. It ignores the fact that it is responsible for the system. If the system is bad then, for God's sake, change it! What are you waiting for?

The truth is that there is an almost total breakdown in discipline, but it is a breakdown, which is reflected in the entire society. *[Noise]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please, in the public gallery. Those who cannot be quiet will have to leave. Please be silent while the Leader of the Opposition makes his contribution.

Mr. B. Panday: Thank you kindly, Madam Speaker. After 30 years of uninterrupted rule by the PNM whose founder said he knew that the future of the nation was in the school bags of our children, the Minister of National Security says that 65 per cent of all crimes are being done by youths. Forty two per cent of the young people between the ages of 15 and 19 are unemployed, while 26.8 per cent of the youths between the ages of 20 and 24 are unemployed. For persons between the ages of 25 and 29, 25.1 per cent are unemployed. All these young people are unemployed, without so much as a hope to hang their dreams on—frustrated, angry at being deceived by this PNM regime, alienated and debilitated beyond inertia.

12.35 p.m.

With proper planning and foresight, our young people need not live in this state of hopelessness. We must train our young people not only to make a living, but we must also school them in morals and ethics, in social values, in the benefits of hard work and decent living. But how can a Government do that when it is itself engaged in the most notorious kind of corruption from day to day?

A UNC Government will introduce a computerized system of mass education which can serve, not only schools, but also adults who are in desperate need of retraining or upgrading their skills. An open university of the air kind of thing. I

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know of a private company that is willing to undertake such a task at minimal cost. The offer was made to the Government but it was refused, because the Tsar in the PNM Government wanted to make a killing by bringing a foreign company from which he expects to make a lot of money.

Our education system must be geared to train our students and adults in hi-tech skills, such as computing and programming, telecommunication, robotics, which skills they can sell abroad if there are no opportunities in this country. There is no disgrace in training your youths to get jobs abroad—the Indians and the Chinese have mastered the policy to a fine point. It is to be hoped, however, that having trained our people in hi-tech skills, productive forces of a high quality will be unleashed in the society and will explode in many job-creating activities.

On the question of crime. We have already indicated what we feel the problem in crime to be. A UNC government would facilitate the introduction of a police service at local levels and put them under the control of local government bodies. Communities would be facilitated in setting up crime-watch groups that would work in close collaboration with local police. The localization of the fight against crime is advantageous in that local criminals and criminals from other districts are identified easily and so more easily apprehended. At the central level, the police would be provided with modern equipment for crime detection and apprehension, together with intense training in the use of modern methods of crime prevention and crime detection. But most importantly, a UNC Government would put in place a system that ensures that recruitment, promotion and advancement in the police service are based purely on merit, and not on patronage and favouritism as is now the case.

We do not agree with the Government that the answer to the confusion in the police service at the moment is to place the police under the virtual control of the Executive. Instead, we propose that the functions of the Police Service Commission and the Police Commissioner must be clearly defined, and the Constitution must be amended to make the Police Service Commission subject to the scrutiny of a parliamentary committee on national security.

In the battle against crime, mechanisms must be found to enable the police and the army to work in unison to defeat the criminal element in the society. The army must be encouraged to take a more participative role in dealing with the day-to-day problems of the community, such as flooding, buildings, roads and bridges.

A UNC Government will reform the prison system to make sure that it is self-financing, becoming self-sufficient in food for themselves, the hospitals, homes for the aged and so on.

Public utilities: It must be very hard for you to listen to this. With respect to the public utilities we have said that we will not privatize WASA and T&TEC until such time as every effort was made to deal with the corruption, mismanagement and waste in these enterprises and until every effort was made to make them viable. There is nothing private enterprise can do with WASA or T&TEC that the Government cannot do.

On the question of alienation, which we said was a big problem in the society, there is no answer to the proposal that we have to set up institutions in this society which will provide a mechanism for those persons who feel they are discriminated against, on whatever ground, to find redress. The report from the Centre for Ethnic Studies has given us a lead; we must now set up the institutions that would conduce to the elimination of all forms of discrimination in the society. With the removal of discrimination we should be well on our way to reducing, if not ending alienation; and with the removal of alienation we shall be able to mobilize that most vital resource of which the Government has spoken, our human resource, without which there is no hope for this nation, politically, economically or socially.

The way to proceed is to begin with the setting up of institutions whereby people who are aggrieved will have an avenue for redress of their grievances.

Madam Speaker, unlike the feeling the PNM has generated in this community, we on this side of the House know that the future will be bright, but only we can make it so. The choice is ours.

12.40 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.50 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services (Dr. The Hon. Linda Baboolal): Madam Speaker, let me start by congratulating my colleague, the Minister of Finance, on a very well planned and well thought out budget, which kept the disadvantaged in mind at all times. *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: Order please!

Hon. L. Baboolal: In fact, Madam Speaker, there was a sigh of relief throughout this country on Friday, especially after the wild rumours and

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speculation which had been started by others—rumours like "VAT going up 20 per cent"; "Devaluation of the dollar"—all that sort of thing.

I also congratulate the Member for Couva North on his usual acerbic contribution, in which he repeated his many favourite phrases and rather old jokes. In fact, after two hours, I have to say that his contribution had no substance and no hope whatsoever; and the so-called solutions he tried to put forward only went to prove even further that Members opposite will never form the Government of this country, and will always remain the alternative government.

There was no vision; there was only daydreaming. Criticism is acceptable when it is constructive and helpful, but his was destructive and meaningless. I assure them that the PNM will remain the Government of this country for a long time to come.

I also alert him, and others on that side, to the fact that even their own supporters in Central are fed up with their rhetoric and their posturing, and are beginning to realize that the PNM is the only stable party in this country.

Mr. Humphrey: Where are you living?

Hon. L. Baboolal: I also warn the Member for Couva North to watch his back, because his very position in his party is threatened, and soon we on this side will be asking, "Where is your leader?" And even more so, as my poor Friend the Member for Couva North will sadly murmur, "*Et tu Bruté*" as he sinks into oblivion.

Mr. Maraj: Shakespeare!

Hon. L. Baboolal: This Government is a caring one, one which has made a commitment to this country through its manifesto, to alleviate the social problems and raise the economic status of Trinidad and Tobago. At the same time to put this tiny country on the financial map of the Caribbean and Latin America. We are well on the road to achieving these goals.

From the very beginning, the Minister of Finance, through his projections, indicated that 1994 is going to be the hardest year; and yet in this budget he has managed to come up with more than \$1 billion for the social sector to be divided among things like old age pension, Unemployment Relief Programme, food subsidy, School Feeding Programme, social assistance, free medicine, grants to schools and colleges, apprenticeship scheme, orphanages, Civilian Conservation Corps, Servol and a feeding programme for the needy. Besides that, he went on to take into consideration pensioners, those over 60 years, and has now given them a \$600 tax credit to help their pensions to even go further.

Over the years, the Social Welfare Division has, really, mainly handed out food vouchers and money transfers to the needy, so much so that in fact generations of people have actually to a certain extent become dependent on public assistance. For instance, a woman 20 years ago who had children, was receiving public assistance for her children as a single mother; today some of her own daughters may be single mothers and also receiving public assistance for their children.

This Government is determined to develop in this country, people who are independent, secure, and who have a high sense of self-esteem. To do this we feel that our population should no longer be dependent on handouts, except in crisis and emergency—the death of the head of a household, illness of the breadwinner—that is where public assistance should be used. To ensure this and that each person is given the services that are available to her when necessary, this Government is in the process of introducing an integrated social services delivery system. This has already been sanctioned by Cabinet and it is now going to be put in the hands of consultants, who will draw up a plan of action for implementing approved measures.

For instance, the state will be responsible for policy formulation, for the programme monitoring and delivery of care. Identifying the needs will be administered by NGOs and by a statutory body. What, then, is the system we are talking about? What we intend to do is to divide this country into grids.

Mr. Sudama: Again?

Hon. L. Baboolal: The Member would not understand that, but I can understand that.

2.00 p.m.

Each grid will be assigned a generic social worker and that social worker would need to become familiar with every individual and family within that grid, with the problems that exist within that family, even to anticipate problems. For instance, if there was a child in that family who had been abused in the past, that social worker would have to anticipate the possible abuse of the younger children and act accordingly.

Similarly, if there is domestic violence within that family, a health problem or a psychiatric problem; or maybe, the children are just not going to school, that social worker's job would be to identify these problems and, where necessary, refer to the relevant agency which can help with these problems, or to a specialized social worker, the medical social worker or the Psychiatric Department, whichever agency is needed to help with the problems.

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A very important factor, for instance, would be to ensure that all children attend school. By their very attendance at school, they would then be able to take advantage of free medical and dental services.

The other aspect: The Ministry of Education has decided to bring in something like 40,000 books—the Minister of Education is going to speak about this in more detail. I just want to tell you what part my ministry would be playing. These books will be available to the needy children at a small rental fee. It will be the job of this social worker, in conjunction with the department, to identify the children who would be given these books on a rental basis.

This is what we mean when we talk about integrating, where we will have all the various ministries in the social sector; instead of duplicating services and acting in isolation, we would have the services delivered in an integrated manner in which everyone can access them, whatever the need might be.

This whole thing, as I said earlier on, has now been put into the hands of consultants. Their work will be monitored by a steering committee which will comprise representatives of the key ministries—Education, Social Services, Sport, Community Development and Health. This exercise is expected to take about six months so we hope, by the middle of 1994, to be able to put this into place.

I am convinced that this exercise, in tandem with another which is geared to the institutional strengthening of the ministry, will be very instrumental in ensuring that the expanded safety net which was presented in the budget and which caters for a wide cross-section of the society, will, in fact, be effectively put in place.

This system will also enhance the functions of the ministry, which seeks through a number of programmes, to fulfil its mission which is to protect the vulnerable and the disadvantaged, and to promote a better quality of life for all citizens through the provision of the integrated social services delivery system. This is the promise we made and this is the promise that we are going to keep.

The specific sections of the population which my ministry deals with are the poor and the needy, the elderly and the disabled, the homeless and the socially displaced, the drug abuser, the abused individual, the consumers disadvantaged by unfair business practices. My ministry, according to the budget, will be responsible for that part of the social safety net which includes old age pension, public assistance for the elderly and the needy, the administration of the School Feeding Programme and the provision of care of children at the certified industrial

schools. What I shall attempt to do is to take each one of these and detail most of what is being done at the ministry, and then go on to talk about some of the other programmes which fall under this ministry.

Old age pensions: From the period January to November, 1993, \$238,527,259 has already been disbursed through grants to old age pensioners, inclusive of a food subsidy, to a total of 60,902 persons. There is no doubt that there have been incidents of fraudulent encashment of cheques, and, as a result of that, we have put in place a number of strategies to try to minimize leakages in the system.

One of these is a system of life certification in which an old age pensioner on his or her birth anniversary will be required to go to his or her department so that the officers there will know that he or she is still alive. It is also envisaged that this would help to reduce the number of cheques which have been encashed after people have died and also decrease the number of cheques which have been prepared for people who have died, simply because there is no knowledge that they have died.

Added to that, the ministry is collaborating with the Registrars of Births and Deaths so that on a monthly basis we will be receiving from them, the list of persons over 65 who have died.

We are also seeking to strengthen the nomination system, that is, the elderly might want to nominate someone to receive cheques on his or her behalf because he or she might be bedridden. We are putting in place measures to strengthen the system.

We are also looking at restricting the venues at which old age pension cheques can be encashed, because at the moment they can be encashed anywhere—a grocery, a parlour, a gas station. This is not to make it difficult for the elderly to encash the cheques, but limiting the number of places so that the ministry can keep a better check on where these cheques are being encashed. Of course, we will continue to educate and warn the population against the practice of fraudulently encashing welfare cheques.

Public assistance—For the period January to November, 1993, the sum of \$73,291,083 was disbursed to 25,781 recipients. As I said earlier, we truly believe that transfer payments alone cannot address the needs of the disadvantaged. Because of that, we have embarked on a programme of rehabilitation to recipients of public assistance and other needy people. Through this programme, persons who have been identified as needy can receive a grant of up to \$2,500 from the ministry to establish microenterprise projects, or to receive training and

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eventually, we hope that this will be able to provide them with their own means of employment and their own means of income, so that they will no longer be dependent on welfare payments.

Already, nine micro-enterprise projects have been identified and are in the implementation stage. These include agricultural enterprises to the preparation of food items, seasoning, garment construction, ceramics. We are also trying to put in place arrangements for loans for an NGO. We are now in the process of talking to the NGO and, again, the loans may be up to \$2,500 for starting small businesses and cottage industries.

2.10 p.m.

As far as the feeding programme is concerned, this is really to address the needs of people who do really meet the criteria for public assistance. Since the Echo programme was stopped, we have had an interim feeding programme in place with the assistance of 16 voluntary organizations and we have provided meals and hampers for at least 2,275 persons daily. This is being done, as I said, by NGOs. Now we are in the process of expanding this feeding programme under the SHARE programme with the assistance of an increased number of non-governmental organizations to 4,500 persons five days per week and then to be increased by about 6,300 at the end of 1994.

What is significant about this programme is that it certainly is not going to be a political programme as ECHO was. It is at the moment under a national committee and they are doing all the hiring and the interviewing of co-ordinators who will run this programme. The ministry is acting here just as a facilitator. We are guiding them and showing them that in no way will there be any political interference in this programme.

This programme will also involve a rehabilitative component involving the referrals of some of these beneficiaries to existing training programmes, the apprenticeship programme etc., and other developmental-type agencies so that they can also develop their employment capability. This is the way this Government feels that it should go: developing the individual to become independent, self-employed and income—generating.

The issue of poverty relief is another area of central concern to this ministry, because we recognize, in fact, that many of the social problems we face today do, in fact, stem from this factor. So that the ministry is not engaged only in implementing programmes geared towards poverty alleviation and to feeding programmes, but it has also been involved in research efforts, designed to provide

a database to facilitate more focus and comprehensive programmes for people in need. We have just finished our survey of poverty and this will serve, in fact, as a base on which to design further programmes for the alleviation of poverty.

On the issue of poverty relief, I think I should mention that this country has been participating in a number of regional fora considering the issue and identifying strategies to deal with it, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but also in the region—the Caribbean and Latin America. In fact, it is interesting to know that at these meetings significant emphasis has been placed on horizontal co-operation and the exchange of information and methodologies, so much so, that Trinidad and Tobago has been playing such an important part at these meetings, our country has been chosen to represent the Caribbean on a body which is to be established to concretize proposals and to ensure implementation of policy geared towards promoting social development and poverty attention in the Caribbean and Latin America.

At this point I want to turn to the emergency grant. The emergency grant, as I have said in this House before, is given to people who have suffered loss of all household items due to flood, fire etc. The grant is \$3,000, if your house has been destroyed completely, to enable you to rebuild a small shelter; \$1,500 towards household items, and if, say, a child has lost all his school books and an examination is around the corner, he will be granted \$500.

A rumour is being spread that people in St. Ann's got money while those in Central did not. I really want to correct this. To date, nobody from St. Ann's got any money because we did not have the money. Twenty applications were received from St. Ann's, 11 have been approved and today we got \$60,000 from the Ministry of Finance, so that we would now be able to provide vouchers to these 11 people, while the other nine are still being investigated.

Every single claim is investigated because we want to ensure that the people who are making these claims are genuinely in need of this money. We are now beginning to receive applications from Central. I spoke to my Director this morning and he says they are now getting inquiries from Central. When those inquiries come in, each will be investigated, as is done in any other part of the country, and the genuine cases will receive the help that they are entitled to.

It is indeed a very sad state of affairs when a Member of Parliament seeks to divide this country along racial lines by saying that we are giving to one race of people and not to the other, especially when these people happen to be at the time

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under stress and have a lot of problems. In fact, I think that this is a crime that is punishable by imprisonment. Indeed, it is wicked, malicious and dangerous. This Government serves all races, all classes, people of all colours. In fact, we serve this country.

My ministry also assumed responsibility in 1992 for the four certified industrial schools and orphanages. I visited these homes as soon as we came into office. I must say that at that time I was most dismayed at the condition of some of them. I was determined at that point that we were going to do something through my ministry on behalf of this Government to alleviate some of the problems which these schools were having. But of all of them, the one that dismayed me most when I visited was St. Michael's. At that point, I made a decision for the Government and immediately it was brought to the attention of the Government, there was agreement that it was, indeed, a very urgent matter to have St. Michael's rebuilt.

Recognizing the gravity of the situation, my ministry went on to address these needs. I am pleased to report that the classroom facilities at St. Jude's School for Girls were expanded at a cost of \$288,805, and refurbishing work was also done at the St. Dominic's Children's Home. My ministry has been approximately TT\$3.5 million under the Lomé 1V structural adjustment facility and TT\$6 million allocated from the Consolidated Fund, so that we envisage the commencement of the first phase of construction of the St. Michael's School for Boys before the end of this year. I was just speaking to my colleague the Minister of Works and Transport and he has assured me that we would be able to do this, and the initial cost will be \$4.1 million. After that, we hope to be able to go into the second phase.

On top of that St. Mary's Home for children was also given, not just a facelift; the entire structure has been looked at and we are trying now to ensure that all the children are given a small bed and cupboard of their own, so that they may get that feeling of self-esteem and self-worth that at least they have something which belongs to them.

The new manager of St. Mary's has, in fact, been doing a wonderful job. She has put in place many programmes, little things that mean a lot to children—the birthday club; taking them on outings; taking them to the malls to see Santa Claus, things like that, besides all the other programmes and changes. In addition, my ministry has been doing training of the care-givers at these homes, because one thing we recognize was that many of the people at these homes were, in fact, not very sensitive to the needs of abused children, and children who have been

having problems. Out of 400 members of staff of these various homes, we have now trained more than half and that training programme is going on. The feedback I have is, in fact, that these training programmes have gone a long way in alleviating some of these problems and to increasing the sensitivity of these workers to the needs of children.

2.20 p.m.

Additionally, UNICEF funded a research project on the "situational analysis of children in especially difficult circumstances." Through the information we would be getting from this report, the Ministry is looking at putting in place programmes to deal with issues like juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancies, street and working children and children in institutions and the like. We now have a database from which we can start working on these programmes.

Because of our awareness that the lack of parenting—child neglect, child abuse and so forth—has so often contributed to some of the problems which we see with children we had a programme entitled "School for Parents" which was sponsored, at that time, by NCB. The response to that programme was so great that after the programme was stopped, people kept calling in wanting to know whether it would be continued. We have now received sponsorship from the Neal & Massy Group of Companies for the production of a similar programme in 1994.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services continues to monitor the other 11 registered children's homes to ensure proper standards and procedures are observed.

The ministry at the moment is very much involved, especially, the National Family Services Division, in preparing for International Year of the Family. We already have many programmes in place and more information will be available from January 1, 1994.

The abused individual has been a problem of great concern to this country as a whole. The National Family Services Division has a mandate to address the needs of the abused child, woman and the abused man; neglected and battered children and, of course, any battered person, whether it be a husband or wife.
[Interruption]

We have been doing this through other family life education; looking at our children's homes, as I detailed a while ago, and by other counselling of individuals; by holding sessions with PTAs and schools; by going out and speaking to any group desirous of getting information and advice on what to do when these problems arise.

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There are some constraints. This division has managed to undertake much significant work with external funding. For instance, we have finished a comprehensive report by attorney Stephanie Daly on the codification and compiling of child and family laws in Trinidad and Tobago. I mentioned a while ago, the exercise on the "situational analysis of children in especially difficult circumstances." These, in fact, would help to make significant contributions to the provision of adequate services for the family and especially for the abused child.

We consider that a formal foster-care system is urgently needed. At the moment, we are in the process of putting this in place and before the beginning of 1994 we should have it in place. I wish to discuss a few other programmes in my ministry.

Probation services provide a social work service for the courts, as well as some family case work services for the general community. Fundamental to the function of the probation system, as it is administered by this ministry, is its role as a support mechanism to facilitate the successful integration of youthful offenders into the mainstream of society. In light of the apparent increase in criminal offences involving youth, and especially our young males, we are endeavouring to implement effective rehabilitation programmes to curb the occurrence of dysfunctional behaviour patterns among youth, more than anything else, to decrease the incidence of recidivism

We have put in place a remedial therapy programme for probationers and their parents together. This was inaugurated in June of this year, its purpose being to identify and discuss the problems and needs of probationers and their parents; to be able to increase the level of communication between probationers and parents, since probationers said they could not communicate with parents. It is also to assist in educating probationers and their parents on the pertinent psycho-social issues which affect healthy family lifestyles, and as I said earlier, in an attempt to reduce recidivism by making parents more capable of dealing with the problems among their children and so preventing them from becoming young offenders.

In addition to this, a survey which examines the factors affecting probationers is also being done in conjunction with the Central Statistical Office. This is to give us information which would equip us to be able to develop and implement appropriate and effective rehabilitation programmes for probationers; to be able to develop a comprehensive profile of each probationer so that we can have indepth knowledge of that person's identity and problems; to better equip the probation officers in the performance of his duties. Again, in an effort to reduce the incidence of recidivism.

A committee on the juvenile delinquent and youth crime situation has also reported to Cabinet, and there is a wide range of recommendations envisaging the partnership between state, family, religious organization and NGOs. I speak here of the juvenile delinquent, not the adult delinquent who breaks the law with impunity for political marks.

Just to give an idea of what some of these recommendations are. In the short term we are looking at strengthening the capability of the family to fulfil its basic functions of socialization and inculcation of values. We are looking at conducting parenting seminars and family life education programmes to facilitate families in caring for their children, to be able to produce responsible members of society—including, unfortunately, some Members of Parliament—to provide intensive counselling for families in distress, and equip them with preventive and remedial strategies; to provide support for the families such as day care centres for children and the elderly.

There are so many recommendations here which we are taking into consideration that it would really take too much of my time to go into all of them, but Cabinet is looking at these recommendations and intends to implement most of them.

Let me now turn to the drug abuser. We have put in revised machinery to deal with the demand reduction component of the drug problem. This machinery comprises the ministerial committee, which is headed by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services, the Technical Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TACADA) headed by Dr. Lewis. We have 10 subcommittees of that large committee which deal with issues like research, community prevention, public information, education, the School Drug Abuse Prevention Programme, Treatment and Rehabilitation. These committees have been meeting and are already putting plans into action.

The National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP) has finished its first phase, in which it has been able to deal with training, particularly of leaders in the community. It has established a group which is known as SAP 90 and we are now looking at Phase II which will be community based. We are going to be identifying six communities, each of which could have a co-ordinator, and community programmes will be introduced into these areas to deal with the drug demand reduction programme.

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2.30 p.m.

Contrary to what the Member for Couva North, the ex-Minister, said, the Minister who is responsible for the supply side is working assiduously to reduce the availability of drugs. I am sure when that Minister speaks, he will give in detail the programmes which he has undertaken on the supply side.

The elderly has always been of grave concern to my ministry. We should keep in mind that in Trinidad and Tobago eight per cent of our population are considered elderly, that is, over the age of 60. We have a number of programmes. I have spoken of the old age pension programme. One of the things which we have been doing is putting in place day care centres for the elderly. Three of these have already been established and a fourth is now under construction. Many of our elderly are left at home because everybody is working. They are at home alone, frustrated, with no one to talk to, no one to give them a hot meal and no one to interact with. The day-care centres have in fact, been providing these services and have become very popular with our elderly. Eventually, we may be able to establish more of these day-care centres.

Here they meet with people of their own age group, their peers. They are able to interact, to talk, to laugh and to do their handicraft, whatever, and they are happier. As a doctor in the society, I knew that with many of my older patients their main problem was loneliness and frustration because they had no one to speak to. I am sure that my colleague the Member for Tabaquite will agree with me.

Besides that, we are looking at the rural elderly. We are taking special interest in them. In fact, I have only just received a draft document on them which a committee has researched over the last two years to find out their needs. Some of their needs are different from those of the urban elderly. We are now going to implement the recommendations of this committee. They are now being evaluated by the staff of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services and we will try to put in place programmes especially geared to the rural elderly.

We are looking at setting up a senior citizens' bureau in which we hope to make use of the knowledge, skill and the experience of the elderly, which they have acquired over time and which should not go to waste. We can harness that knowledge, skill and experience to the benefit of the rest of the society. This, we hope, will be a joint exercise between Government and the private sector. We will be setting up a skill database, so to speak, of the elderly. Interested groups, whether cultural, youth, religious and the community will be able to access these services and make the elderly once more useful within their communities.

The disabled: Disability is defined as any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner, or within the range considered normal for a human being.

In Trinidad and Tobago we have estimated that we have between seven and 10 per cent of the population with a disability. As citizens, persons with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other members of the society to participate in the social, cultural, economic and political life of this country. Cognizant therefore of its responsibility to provide adequately for and to promote development of the vulnerable in our society, a multi-disciplinary committee has handed in a draft policy on persons with disabilities. That policy was laid in Parliament and is now out for public comment.

We shall be holding a seminar/workshop on December 14, which is open to all interested groups and all persons who have any contribution to make. They will be welcome to attend this seminar.

The guiding principle of this policy is the introduction of measures which will facilitate the integration of persons with disabilities into the mainstream of community life, into schools and into jobs, as far as it is feasible to promote their participation and their productive involvement in the society.

I have been in consultation with the Minister of Education and we are both very concerned about providing facilities for children with disabilities so that they can have equal opportunity to attend high school or university.

The homeless and the socially displaced: This is a problem which we have been looking at and trying to find solutions. This is not a simple problem. This is a very complex problem. We know, in fact, this has been causing some kinds of problems within the society. My ministry is particularly concerned about the plight of the homeless and the socially displaced segment of the population and the need to alleviate these problems. Social programmes aimed at this segment of the population are geared to provide relief through the allocation of subventions to key non-governmental organizations to assist in the provision of basic needs and shelter for the homeless.

In 1993, the ministry continued their monthly subvention to the Riverside Plaza Walk-in Assessment Centre. That centre, in fact, continues to provide meals and shelter on a daily basis to over 150 homeless persons.

When we talk about the homeless, we have to take into consideration the fact that the homeless comprise a number of different groups of people. We have the

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mentally ill; we have those who are unemployed or whose homes were destroyed by fire and are now homeless. Therefore, each group has to be assessed. Each group has to be dealt with in a different way. We have been trying to put in place staff and programmes to deal with this.

The recommendations of the National Committee on Social Rehabilitation were in fact, handed in. The committee has come up with a number of recommendations which we are now considering. A Cabinet committee has been looking at these recommendations and will be making recommendations to the Prime Minister and to Cabinet as to what directions we should take.

We are aware that this is a problem. We are aware that we have to put in place solutions. We already have in place, as I said, the walk-in centre. We have the Nazareth House, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Marian House and Living Waters, which all receive subventions.

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. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Hon. L. Baboolal: I thank my colleague the Member for Diego Central. [*Interruption*] I would like to thank very much the Members on the opposite side for also supporting me.

Madam Speaker, this committee advanced specific recommendations for dealing with the problems of the homeless and the socially displaced in the short, the medium and the long term. They are now receiving consideration of the key ministries and soon we would be putting in place a plan to deal with this.

2.40 p.m.

I should like to mention that a survey has just been completed which has targeted the non-mentally ill, homeless and socially displaced in Trinidad and Tobago. The data which have been gathered would now provide the information, relationship, causes, and the major socio-economic effects of vagrancy and homelessness. This will supplement the work already done by the National Committee on Social Rehabilitation.

I go on to population issues, although this was not referred to in the Budget Speech. In fact, population issues are very important now, not only in our country but throughout the world. Any measures adopted would impact significantly on the entire country. In keeping with its mission to provide a better quality of life

for all citizens, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services will continue to focus on population issues in 1994, particularly in relation to national development.

The Population Council whose mandate is to design and implement a population policy for Trinidad and Tobago is working on this policy and we hope to get that policy in the new year. At present the council is finalizing this draft policy. I hope this would be submitted shortly to Cabinet. The major areas of the policy which are going to be looked at are: Education, training and research, gender equity, the productive rights and health of people, population distribution and migration, population environment and development.

We are also preparing for the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994. Added to that we have already formulated a national paper which has been submitted to Washington. On December 2 and 3 a regional conference will be held at the Holiday Inn. We would have representatives from organizations such as EGLAC, United Nations Agencies, Caricom, the OEC Secretariat, and the Latin American Arm of Population Development (CUNAPO), as well as our non-governmental organizations. The aim of this conference is to incorporate the Caribbean perspective into a plan of action for population development which will represent Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole.

Let me touch briefly on Legal Aid, an advisory authority, which again falls under this ministry. The escalating crime situation, which we accept is a problem, has meant that there is increased demand for the social services provided by Legal Aid. This authority provides legal services for members of the society who cannot afford to pay, especially since lawyers' fees are now so high. I am sure the Member for Couva South would support that. It is way beyond the reach of the ordinary man.

Under the Legal Aid and Advice Act, the authority is entitled to act for a nominal fee, but most of the time this is not even invoked, because the people who come to Legal Aid cannot afford even that nominal fee. The Act does not allow for a fee or contribution from a person charged with a criminal offence.

We are looking at starting services in areas such as Arima, Chaguanas, San Fernando, Point Fortin and Tobago. We are also looking at proposals to have the Legal Aid and Advice Act, Chap 7:07 of the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago amended to widen the powers of the director; to bring the Act into conformity with existing legislation and to increase the qualifying disposable income. We

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would raise the income level so that more people would be able to access the services of Legal Aid; also remove restrictions imposed by this Act; to ensure that only citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would be eligible under it; to extend the application of the Act to include proceedings under the Domestic Violence Act. Many women and women's groups in this country are concerned because under the present Legal Aid and Advice Act, a woman or victim of domestic violence cannot get any help. We are looking at that, the Attachment of Earnings Act and others. I would not go into detail on all the different amendments which we hope to make.

Let me talk a little about consumer protection. This Government has taken several initiatives to ensure that the interest of the consumer is adequately served. Indeed, the Government recognizes that in any economy, consumers, because of their spending power, play a pivotal part in determining the standard of living by their choice of goods and services. In time of economic stringency, the need to be vigilant is even more evident.

The Consumer Affairs Division has been putting in place a very extensive consumer education programme to provide consumers with the type of exposure and information they need so they can make wise consumer decisions. In 1993, in addition to our normal advisory and conciliatory functions, we gave more than 20 lectures to primary and secondary schools, adult community groups, and parent-teacher associations and have participated in more than nine seminars and exhibitions at which questions from consumers were answered and advice was given on how they could become better consumers.

In pursuing our mission to protect consumers from unfair trade practices, we are in the process of developing a policy on consumerism. Only yesterday I received a draft. I hope that very early in the new year we would get the full document. We have also embarked on establishing five consumer action groups throughout Trinidad and Tobago. They are in Tobago, North, South, East and Central Trinidad.

This project is intended to enhance consumer bargaining power by building solidarity among consumers and to develop consumers who can feel capable of skilfully negotiating and seeking their interest with the business community. It is also a means of trying to improve the relationship between the consumer and the businessmen.

At the moment, we are training consumer liaison assistants who will assist us in mobilizing the consumers in these various areas. I have no doubt that these

groups have the potential for positive, immediate and widespread impact on the quality of goods and services which would be offered by the business community to consumers. More than anything, it is letting consumers know that they have power and rights, but even more importantly that they have responsibilities which they must take seriously.

We therefore expect that the budget measures such as the 50 per cent reduction in stamp duty—I did not hear any mention of that made this morning—and the five to 15 per cent reduction in surcharge rates on imported goods, would benefit the consumer. It is our duty to ensure that this is passed on to the consumer. Additionally, early in the year we propose to begin another project to target those sections of the population not now reached by the traditional education programmes in the *Express*, and on the radio and television.

2.50 p.m.

We are trying to boost our educational drive in these areas by finding other means to do so. We are trying to produce video cassettes, calypso cassettes, etc., to carry the message to certain parts of the society, and in this way spread the word about consumer responsibility.

There is no doubt that this Government considers the socially disadvantaged in the community to be an important part of the community and that it will continue to do everything in its power, in the ministries and as individuals, as representatives of the people, to ensure that they receive whatever this Government can and intends to provide for them—the needy, the disadvantaged and the vulnerable in our society.

I want to end by quoting from this really wonderful document, the Budget Speech, 1994. I want to quote my colleague because he was so eloquent. His feelings were so evident in what he was saying. He spoke so feelingly about the needs of the population that I feel I must quote him:

"The vision that I put before the national community is that of a self-confident people, ready and able to compete within a global community where those who display the most initiative will be the ones who will get ahead. Our vision is that of a country whose small size becomes not a limitation but a strength, and whose importance in the world will be disproportionate to our smallness. Our vision is that of a peaceful, well-ordered, culturally vibrant, prosperous society, acknowledged by the rest of the world as a paragon of multi-culturalism, tolerance and harmony, a cultural mosaic."

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Further on he stated:

"We are not blind to the problems of unemployment and crime and we have sought out and put more resources into youth training programmes. We are alive to the problem of flooding experienced in certain communities in North and Central Trinidad, which have been exacerbated by improper use of environmentally sensitive areas, and we are determined to redress this problem."

Instead of taking seven days holiday, I would think it would have been better for the Member for Chaguanas to have looked after her constituency, while my colleague the Minister of Works and Transport was working very hard to clear the area.

Says the Minister of Finance:

"We do care! Caring always involves doing what is the best in the long-term interest of those we care about, even if it is seen to be painful in the short term. Many Trinidadian and Tobagonian citizens have grown up to be highly dependent on government employment and transfers, and now expect these as a right. Caring means helping these citizens to make the transition to a different way of relating with Government, of altering the expectations on how they are to earn their living, of developing a greater degree of self-reliance, of unlocking the potential inside each and every one of our citizens to be productive, creative and innovative and to give generously to the less fortunate."

Madam Speaker, I thought I had written those words because this quotation clearly summarizes what my ministry is doing, and indicates that this Government is not blind to the problems, but is doing everything within its power and within its resources to take care of all the problems of all sectors of this community.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*): Madam Speaker, I will deal with the "fresh water yankee" afterwards. I do not understand how in this day and age we can still have "fresh water yankees" in Trinidad and Tobago.

The first few lines of my presentation I wrote in Golden Grove Prison. "Forged from the love of liberty, In the fires of hope and prayer." These first lines of our national anthem represent the dreams and aspirations of a people who felt that finally, upon gaining political independence, they were free men and women and would be able to chart their own destiny.

Our forefathers, whether they were African slaves, Indian immigrants or descendants of the Europeans, Chinese or Syrians, made many sacrifices for this nation. Those who were part of the political movement struggled against the system that they felt was unjust, oppressive and exploitative. They had a dream. We still have that dream. The realization of that dream was entrusted to the hands of what was then a people's national movement. The People's National Movement had a national project of freeing our people from the shackles of the past and of building a new society. We had everything to do it—the human and the natural resources.

What has happened to that project of nation building? It was abandoned. How else do you explain the suffering in this land today? Why must citizens feel like strangers and aliens in a country on whose soil the tears, sweat and blood of our forefathers once fell. Blame for the failure of that project lies squarely on the shoulders of those in whom a young aspiring nation had placed its trust. Can we honestly say that the behaviour of successive governments is different from those of their colonial masters? Where is the social justice in this land?

We are new slaves to new masters with a new form of shackles. The outdated rules of this House, the Westminster system of government, where whether you are wrong or right, the "Ayes" still have it, the futility of debates—these are all shackles on our people and a serious hindrance to the creation of real democracy. Indeed, this Parliament is like a soap opera where after 31 years, it is the same plot, only the characters have changed. This honourable House is supposed to be the highest forum in the land, yet Members of the Opposition, who are elected to represent citizens of this country, are mere voices in the wilderness. We can talk in this House until we die, but who listens and who cares? At the end of this debate, will there be any changes to the budget? After I have spoken and I go back to my constituents, can I tell them whether I have made any real contribution to this debate? No, Madam Speaker. We on this side would not have made any difference to that printed document before us.

Usually when a politician emerges from prison he savours what he views as the freshness of freedom, but freedom really is a state of mind. During those days of solitary confinement, I never felt freer. Today, when I entered this House, it is then I felt like a prisoner, because in Opposition you become a prisoner of the system; and those who live in Opposition constituencies are prisoners of a clique in the ruling party. Except for voting every five years, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have absolutely no say in the building of this nation.

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3.00 p.m.

With very few exceptions, this country has always been run by a small clique of the ruling party whose main interest was to serve themselves, and not the country. This country has never given our people—that is Trinidadians and Tobagonians—the opportunity to participate in our national life. We had a brief glimpse of what our people are capable of during the clean-up campaign of 1987. I pray that one day that moment of feeling among our people will return and will, perhaps one day, in this nation last forever.

After reading this budget speech—I did not have a chance to listen to it—I saw once more futility. When for instance, the Member for St. Ann's East referred to the IDB study led by Sir Allister McIntyre, I wondered why it is that this Government chose to implement merely part of that report at an expense of \$1.1 billion. I thought that if the Government was going to combine social and economic development, it would have taken this package as a whole.

I have a copy of this report and in looking at the guiding principles, I have to ask the Member for Barataria/San Juan whether in fact her programme reflects these principles. She has been so full of words. She is really what I would call a windbag, or as they say in Jamaica “bag o' mout,” because this Member speaks, and speaks. This is the same Member who stood up in this country and said that the crime situation is being handled so well that one day you would be able to sleep with your doors and windows open. A couple months later, someone went into her garage and stole her car. That was poetic justice. I think God intervened there and tried to bring this Member back to reality. Her phony accent, reveals her unrealism. We in Trinidad and Tobago do not identify with the Member for Barataria/San Juan, far less does her constituency, because we do not know where that accent came from.

In this IDB report, which is entitled *Building National Consensus and Social Policy*, the guiding principles on page 3 are:

"Effective interlinkages between policy actions in the economic and social fields, for example. It is very evident that an integrated socioeconomic approach is part of the solution to the unemployment problem.

Given the centrality of the issue of unemployment, every programme and project should be subjected to an employment test to determine its impact on employment creation.

A shift from open-ended to targeted programmes, with focus on specific communities, neighbourhoods, and households. In other words, social policies become less macro and more micro.

Public and private outlays on social services become increasingly investment in people, rather than expenditure on people. The perception of government social expenditure as handouts must be abandoned.

Greater efficiency in social services delivery, associated with improved cost effectiveness and accountability. It is a basic premise of this study that the social problems of Trinidad and Tobago cannot necessarily be alleviated, let alone solved, by throwing more money at them.

More transparency in the operation of social programmes, so that public confidence in them grows as anxieties about politicization are dispelled."

And finally:

"Major changes in the balance of responsibility between government, the Private sector, and voluntary sector, as government shares with, or passes on to the two sectors responsibility for delivering certain social services, underpinned by government enablement and facilitation."

When I examined the various programmes outlined—and I listened to the Member for Barataria/San Juan—it is very clear, when I look at those guiding principles from which, apparently, some of these recommendations have come, these principles have not been followed. Let us take the most famous one, the Unemployment Relief Programme. Is it an integrated socio-economic approach? Does that pass the unemployment test? How many sustainable jobs have been created from URP? *[Interruption]* It is a relief programme, but it is public expenditure being thrown at people.

This report that the Government is boasting about talks about passing the employment test in terms of sustainable employment. Does this programme really have a proper targeting? Who benefits under URP? The only people who do, as we all know, are people who hold PNM party cards. What are the criteria for benefiting under this programme? I should know, because I have enough complaints about that. As a matter of fact, all the Members on this side. And when I looked at this budget speech and saw \$122 million being spent on that programme, I asked myself, did you really listen to this report?

Then again, the PNM have a history. Every time they come into office they study things. The commission reports. I am sure there is some room in this

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country where thousands of reports commissioned by the PNM are gathering dust. And this report is not going to make any difference to the Government's programme or policies. As the Member for Couva North said, they have spent billions of dollars in this country, but what do you have to show for it?

Let us take URP again. According to that report if you are looking at the whole social sector it must be an investment in people and not a whole expenditure on them. Can you really tell me whether people working in URP are developing skills? There are women who are sitting in schools, getting "10-days", and; they are doing nothing and are being paid for it, when at the same time that money could have been used to help them develop some kind of skill so that they could have become independent and self-reliant. Is that how the Government intends to invest in people and develop skills?

The question of greater efficiency in delivery. We have had so much corruption in the Unemployment Relief Programme. Do we have an efficient delivery of service?

Accountability and transparency—I asked the Member for Diego Martin East on many occasions: and my colleagues requested—for information on URP. We wanted to know what projects were listed, what constituencies were involved, what kind of expenditures were involved. We wanted to know the names of people who were involved in this programme, to look through that listing to see whether persons are actually being employed over and over again, as we have been hearing complaints, and also whether the real poor are benefiting.

The Minister of Works and Transport, the Member for Diego Martin East, has absolutely refused to provide information to this House and continues to operate the URP like a secret operation. This question of transparency is not a criterion being met by the URP. That report, like any other report, would be taken on a piecemeal basis; they are going to throw \$1.1 billion down the drain because we do not have the system to support an effective delivery, and expenditure of that kind of funding.

3.10 p.m.

The report also states at 9:

"...attention be given to achieving an adequate balance in social expenditures between urban and rural areas, and to the more vigorous promotion of agricultural production (other than sugar)."

When I look at the budget speech, agriculture, once more, was under-emphasized.

Another recommendation in the report is that:

"Account must, however, be taken of the large number of assistance schemes operated by other Ministries."

I should have liked to have the Minister explain to the House—instead of criticizing me about jail—what other programmes exist in other ministries, and whether or not that falls within the \$1.1 billion—in fact, it is not listed there—and as such, are there any other programmes in other ministries which also target some of those same groups? We have not had that information.

Again, looking at the social aspect, another section of the report has to do with the question of employment creation. There were four key sectors identified by that report as areas for employment creation. They were export manufacturing, export of services, agriculture and tourism. Once more, agriculture is left out. The Member for Caroni East will deal with the omission and the very poor attention being paid to agriculture.

Another recommendation made in this report—and I want to expose this, because I have heard so much from the Member for Barataria/San Juan; in fact, for the past two budget debates she has stood in this House and made all sorts of wild promises, in the normal tradition and culture of the PNM, and she has not given us any real report about any accomplishments of her ministry. We are planning to do this, we are planning to do that, is what we get. That is all the Member says. I would like to know how much money was spent on each programme, what has been accomplished in a real sense. Not just how much money was spent, but what have been the results. Because anyone who takes a management approach to a system, does not look at the inputs, but at the outputs. You ask yourself, when these things are put in place, what results are achieved. Of course, like everything else, the PNM has failed totally in all its programmes. It has not really done anything for this country except waste money, just as the Member for Barataria/San Juan came here and wasted parliamentary time.

This morning the Leader of the Opposition must have shocked this nation when he revealed the billions of dollars that have been spent in this country, and yet our people are among the poorest of the poor. He also stated the various statistics to do with poverty. Tell me something, is this social safety net going to add to the saga of waste and mismanagement? Our main concern is that if the Government is going to allocate \$1.1 billion to all these programmes, then there ought to be proper management of them. In the past what we have had was a case where the Government might say that \$1.1 billion is allocated, but really more of

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that goes towards the administration of that portfolio. How much really goes to the people to whom it is targeted? So we are asking for several things.

We are saying, firstly, in cases where new programmes are being put in place or where old ones have failed to meet certain objectives, like the URP, there must be clear-cut criteria, which must not remain a secret of the Member for Diego Martin East, but rather must be one that is published so that the public could be aware of those criteria.

Secondly, we would expect there to be some sort of customer/client bureaux. In fact, a couple months ago I saw in the newspapers a number of photographs of the various customer service officers, and on the very same day those photographs were published there was a consumer problem in my constituency. I wrote to the officer who was named as the person to deal with consumer problems. That was about four or five months ago. To date, I have not had an acknowledgement; I do not know whether the problem was resolved or anything. So I would like to know: Are these people there just to fool the population that they are dealing with them in a professional manner? Or, is it that they are actually functioning? We would like to know something about that. Probably the Minister in charge of the public service could tell us something about it.

Apart from the selection criteria, we want to ensure that there is equity in the system. So far, we have had very serious reservations about the way public funds are being spent, which is going in the way of what we call "political patronage." If there are criteria, I believe that might help to provide some form of equity, but of course, it is no guarantee.

The Member has been talking about domestic violence. That is true; there are many battered women in the society. As a matter of fact, I would have liked the hon. Member to tell us what kind of social infrastructure would be put in place to ensure that the particular Act is observed in a more efficient manner. Whether for instance, a system is going to be introduced where families will be brought in for counselling sessions together, whether there will be some sort of preventive programme prior to matters reaching the courts, and where persons are eventually killed. I have not heard much about that, except that the Minister has made a big hullabaloo about it.

About domestic violence, I do not know why the Member is trying to give the impression to the country that the Government is so concerned about abuse of women and about violence. While I was at the Golden Grove Prison, I understand that the Member for Diego Martin West made a comment—I read about it in the

newspapers, where he said that I ought to be beaten with a "bull pistle" for having landed in jail. Apart from the fact that the matter was *sub judice*, I would like this Government to tell me what is really its policy with respect to violence against women.

If a senior Cabinet Minister would stand on a political platform, in the presence of the Prime Minister and the "People's Man" the Member for Laventille West—I am sorry that he is ill—and make a remark like that, and everybody sits there and takes it, it tells me that something is seriously wrong with this Government. The Member would actually say that a Member of Parliament should be beaten? That shows gross disrespect for the system; that shows that the Member does not care about violence against women; and that sends mixed signals to the population of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the Member's view of women, as far as I am concerned, and it is a shameless and brutal way of responding to a situation when one is desperate.

The Member for Barataria/San Juan has made all kinds of long-winded speeches—I am going to deal with her at the end—but I am going to say, categorically, that while the Government has come with this beautiful budget speech, we know that the allocations provided in the budget are never actually spent most of the time. We know that there are always going to be changes, but what I am saying is that this budget is a public relations gimmick. It is trying to fool the population because the PNM knows that it is in serious trouble. After two years, all the promises which this Government has been making outside about being able to solve all the problems of the country, once more it has demonstrated to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that it is incompetent and ought not to be the Government of this country.

I want now to raise some issues with respect to my constituency, the major issue, flooding. In my maiden speech, I made comments about flooding in my constituency. I asked the Member for Diego Martin East, that Member who is always smiling like a Cheshire cat, a question dated July 10, 1992, which was—this was to the Minister of Works and Transport:

- "(a) Would the Minister state whether he has plans to alleviate flooding in areas in the vicinity of the Caroni River, the Cunupia River, the Guayamare River and the Bovell Canal?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state the details of those plans and when he intends to implement them?"

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The Minister gave a cock and bull story. He spoke about a feasibility study, a comprehensive study, all the “ole talk” he usually gives. This is more than a year and a half ago. Then the Member, if he wants to speak the truth, will testify to the fact that I led two delegations to meet him at his office in two consecutive years to deal with the question of flooding, among other things.

3.20 p.m.

The same Minister came to my constituency on a tour with the Member for Diego Martin West. On the day in question, it started to rain and, immediately, these two illustrious Ministers turned tail, because if they had stayed half an hour, they would have been marooned in some part of my constituency. It is a pity that they left that day, because I do not believe the Member for Diego Martin East really understands what happens when flooding occurs.

Flooding is not a first time problem in my constituency, or in Central, or in many other parts of this country. Flooding has been there for 20 years. Last week Sunday—I cannot remember the date—I received numerous calls from my constituents about having been marooned in their homes since 3 o'clock the Saturday morning. They were asleep and flood waters rose. Many of them really suffered inconveniences and even danger, especially their children. I had to cancel whatever plans I had—I was going to an activity to mourn, or commemorate the women who were killed—and I decided to go to my constituency and see what was happening that Sunday afternoon.

The first place I went to was Caroni Village. I could not drive into that area, which has about 2,000 people. I had to be taken in a boat to go through that community. When I went, there were women calling out to me and showing me the soaked flour bags with all the flour ruined; the rice and groceries had been washed away. Their children had no food. They asked me whether I had bread, or how much bread I could carry in a small boat. They had nothing to eat; the sick people could not go anywhere; people who had operations could not move. People could not even use the toilet for two or three days. They could not bathe. Nothing could have been done. Chickens had died; cows were standing in several feet of water and some of the calves had died. All kinds of things were happening. When I went to other parts I saw the same thing.

But what really touched me was when I passed Frederick Settlement where I could walk in the water, because in that particular area the water was not as high. I saw two children in the ceiling. Their father was asleep and they were there looking out at me. I could not get to them because they were in a low part of the

road. Most of the flat homes were submerged and everything was in water. In the high houses, the cars were submerged. Everything was in a bad state. Of course, by then water was crossing the Uriah Butler Highway, which is a historic thing in that area.

The point I want to make is that this was not the first flood for this year—not as severe as that, but we had floods for this year. Then I went to meet the farmers who had had their agricultural produce washed away. They had planted again and it was washed away again. This was the third time they had planted. All their savings had gone. Some of them had loans from the ADB and that money had literally washed away.

So that is why I have been asking the question: What is the real role of an Opposition Member? Whenever we speak about flooding, for instance, it becomes a joke. The Member for Diego Martin East stands in this House and makes fun of everything. He is one of the most arrogant and callous Ministers I have ever seen in my life.

I have not spent many years in this Parliament, but I know that Hugh Francis was here before and he, too, used to say it was an act of God, but as the Member for Couva North says, rain is an act of God, but flooding is an act of man.

Consecutive Ministers of Works have failed to do any substantial development—except the Member for St. Augustine—to relieve those citizens of flooding. You know why they have not paid any attention to flooding? Because this Government cannot separate party from country. This Government believes in "party paramountcy." It is a principle and a system which was observed by the Burnham Government in Guyana. While the Guyana Government may have done things differently in the way they conducted their affairs, the net effect is the same—where people in this country are not being treated equally, simply because they happen to belong to areas which happen to fall in "Opposition constituencies."

The Member for St. Ann's East makes a lovely statement that there must be a shared vision, with a spirit of inclusion. Inclusion of whom? PNM Members alone? What is this inclusion about?. They have never known what is inclusion. Who is really sharing your vision, the Cabinet? That is it! We do not share that vision, because these Members come here and make fine speeches, but when you examine the actions of successive governments, especially PNM Governments, there have been just words and false promises.

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I want to make it clear to this House that I have absolutely no regrets having taken whatever steps I took to be able to demonstrate to the people of this country that my constituency and the people of this country who are taxpayers should be treated equally. But I also want to tell this Government that that will be its downfall. It is never going to see another term in this House, because the people of this country are fed up with discrimination and false promises of this PNM Government.

It is disgusting, because all the people of this country pay taxes. For instance, in this social programme, \$1.1 billion will be spent on underprivileged and vulnerable groups in the society. But those people who live in those constituencies that are represented by all the Members on this side, including Tobago, can never rest in peace because they do not know whether they will be treated equally under the system. It is not because it is something in their minds—it is based on their experience as a people. So whether they pay taxes or not, is not important to this Government.

We are, therefore, telling this Government that while we are going to use this forum of Parliament and work within the system here, the time has come for it to listen to what we have to say. What the Government got away with in the past, it will not get away with again, because the people of this country expect a government to be responsible and to be a good government. The waste that the Member for Couva North spoke about and all their sins of the past shall never be repeated again. We on this side intend, as a united force, to stand up and fight against the three PNMs whether it is the real PNM, the old PNM, or the new PNM—it is one UNC, I can assure *you*. [*Interruption*]

The Member for Barataria/San Juan has spoken about many programmes. I ask the Member: How many people are going to be involved in the delivery of these programmes? I have a letter which was sent to the Member for Caroni Central from one of his constituents and, in fact, he just received the letter and passed it to me. I would not call the name in the letter because the person might be discriminated against, but if anybody wants to examine it he or she can have it.

The letter complains about the treatment at the Chaguanas Social Welfare Office.

It states that every time the person goes there, week after week, there is no officer. That is just one example. Every ministry, and especially in that ministry which is supposed to be the one to deal with care givers, is short staffed. Members are complaining of work overload.

3.30 p.m.

When this Member comes and speaks about setting up a grid system and in each grid there would be so many workers, that is pie in the sky. It is the normal old PNM rhetoric and promises. What grid and what social worker! How could one or two social workers deal with so many thousands of people who are poor today?

It is 100,000 people who need help. How many social workers would be available to serve those people? We do not need a system where social workers go around to check on people like that. The first thing they should do to restore the dignity and self esteem of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is to give them proper jobs.

Mr. Sobion: Give them a job.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Create jobs for them. In fact, what does the hon. Member mean by "give them a job?" I will tell the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro something. You are laughing at that.

The PNM boasted in Opposition that they had a blueprint to create jobs. They told the whole country that and it was on that basis that the people voted for them. Where is that blueprint now? I would like to see it. Now the Government comes here with a package of \$1.1 billion. We would like to know where that blueprint is. We would like to know what the Government has done as a result that big symposium it had at Chaguaramas, all that money, excitement and big hurrah. What has happened to that symposium?

For five years this Government said that the previous one was vindictive, but quite frankly, this Government is one of the most vindictive and wicked governments I have ever known. This thing about new PNM is really the same PNM and it is not going to make any difference to the development of this country.

The Member spoke about having a relief fund for people who have problems. She said they would have to research every case. That is true. The means test must be passed and the person must be checked out to see whether she/he really suffered the losses. That is quite true. I would like the Member to tell me, what is the turnaround time between the point of application and the point when the person receives the benefits. Is it one week? Is it two weeks? What are we talking about? Six months? A year?

Because when someone suffers from a disaster, that person needs immediate relief. The Government did not need to do any study on or any kind of means test

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of the people of Caroni, Frederick Settlement and Caparo who for that morning or those few days, needed bread and food, and they needed someone to take it to them. This Government says it is caring?

For instance, we had promises about the army going to help. Where did they go?

Mr. Imbert: You would not know. You were in jail.

Miss H. Bhaggan: When were they going down to help? When the floods had subsided?

When this Government speaks about caring, every time the test comes up to prove that it is caring, it fails it. Speeches and nice words we hear in this House. This Government failed the test when people were marooned in their homes for three and four days and in the case of South, for a week it; did not respond to their cries for help. It failed the test and that demonstrated to this country how little it cared for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Imbert: Nonsense!

Miss H. Bhaggan: The Member for Diego Martin Central says it is nonsense. But his days in this House are numbered, and this will be his first and last term.

The Member for Barataria/San Juan was also extremely mischievous when she stood up in this House and said that a Member of Parliament said one race was being given treatment as against another race, with respect to the St. Ann's situation. That was a .most misleading statement because we on this side went on record as having sympathized with those residents in St. Ann's. We appreciated the fact that the state actually gave assistance. What we said was, the same kind of treatment should be given to all citizens of this country. That is what we spoke about, not that we were against anybody. This has nothing to do with race.

That Member for Barataria/San Juan—who cannot even visit her constituents from what I have heard—is being mischievous when she comes to this House and tries to put on the *Hansard* record a statement which is designed to mislead and confuse.

Another point the Member spoke about was senior citizens' homes. I would have liked her to tell us where these senior citizens homes are located. Because, if they are dealing with the question of the elderly, many of our senior citizens are accustomed to a certain kind of lifestyle and many of them feel more comfortable in their own homes. When a senior citizen is removed from his home, even if it is

an old home with no electricity and water, to put them somewhere else even, if the physical conditions are better, something about the ambience destroys them. In dealing with senior citizens, we are totally against the institutional approach.

This Government speaks about communities in partnership, but we are saying that there ought to be a programme designed probably where the unemployed or poor in a community could receive assistance from the Government to take care of the home of a senior citizen in his or her own home—cook, clean and do all the things that the person needs done. But at least that person would be living and sleeping in his own bed. Many of our senior citizens, as they say, prefer to die at home. For instance, I have known many persons who were at the hospital or sometimes they fall ill at home but when they are told they would be taken to the hospital, they say: "No, I am old already; I am going to die. I want to die in my home."

When the Member stands up in this House to tell us that the Government is going to adopt an institutionalized approach to senior citizens and the problems of senior citizens, it tells me that this Government does not understand the trials and tribulations of senior citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Baboolal: Madam Speaker, at no time did I say that we were taking an institutional approach to senior citizens. I spoke about day care centres to which senior citizens would be taken in the morning by their relatives when they go to work and picked up in the evening. The whole idea is to give them company and peers. At no time did I say we were putting any institutional programmes in place for the senior citizens. I do not think the Member was listening anyway.

Miss H. Bhaggan: It just shows that the Member does not even understand what she is doing. Because when senior citizens are taken from their homes, whether by their relatives or whomever, they are put into a day care centre which is an institution where people are paid to do a job. While some of them may be trained as care givers, the history of institutions has been one where there is not that same care and attention.

We are saying that if persons are elderly, let there be a programme within the community. Because when a person is removed from that community—remember there are cultural differences, there are religious differences, there are special diets; there are all kinds of peculiarities with respect to that individual, so it tells me very clearly that this Member is in the wrong ministry. In fact, she is in the wrong place. I do not know what the Member does. For two years now, I cannot name one thing that she has done which has impacted on the population of Trinidad and Tobago favourably.

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I can assure the Member that my being in jail had a greater impact than her being a Minister.

Mr. Valley: And Bas knows that!

Miss H. Bhaggan: You leave my leader alone. That is my Guru.

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. R. Palackdharrysingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

By the way, I need to mention to the Member for Diego Martin Central that I had a dream while in prison about that book *In Defence of the People's Interest* which was written by him and the Member for Laventille West. The Member for Laventille West is seriously thinking about removing the name of that Member for Diego Martin Central from that book, because the Member now believes, and he is very firm in his mind, that he does not think the Member for Diego Martin Central is carrying out anything in defence of the people's interest. So the name of this Member will be removed from that book forthwith. At least, that was my dream.

3.40 p.m.

On the point of leadership, I want to make it clear to this House, that while there may be three and four PNMs, there is only one UNC. There is one leader. As a junior member of this party, I am quite prepared to subject myself to the chastisement of my leader. I make no apologies for that. As a young and new member of Parliament, I am still learning, and as such my Guru ought to give me lessons on how I ought to behave. The problem with the PNM is—In fact, who is their leader? Which PNM are we talking about? [*Interruption*]

The Member for Baratavia/San Juan also spoke about doing things to mobilize consumers. In the Trinidad and Tobago culture, how do you mobilize consumers? This is not the United States of America, you know. This is Trinidad and Tobago. You do not mobilize consumers by saying, "Let us go down the road together."

As a matter of fact, I forgot to tell the House why I went down the road together. You see, hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent—taxpayers money—to tell this population, "let us go down the road together." In fact, the

Member for St. Ann's East is also now telling us to go down the road together. So my constituents and I were going down the road together; then we decided that we were going to wait for the Member for San Fernando East so he could go down the road together with us. But this PNM is a false PNM, because instead of the Member for San Fernando East coming, he sent the police.

I want to ask the Member for Barataria/San Juan how her ministry intends to mobilize consumers. I hope she does not intend to obstruct a highway. Because you see, this Government has now embraced the market-oriented economy, which we have nothing against, because that is the way the world is going, but we continue to insist that it has to be done in a different way. We do not agree with the way the Government is going about it.

I have a problem with respect to the role of consumers in terms of how a powerful lobby is going to work in this whole free-market system, except by taking militant action. I would like to know whether the Member for Barataria/San Juan is contemplating militant action, because people in Trinidad and Tobago do not go for this so-called sophisticated pseudo type of thing that the Member is probably accustomed to, based on an old sophisticated air.

The Minister probably thinks that there are Members going out there educating the public telling them, "Let us have a tea party and discuss products we should buy and which we should not." If you are going to have any impact as consumers in a market-oriented economy, it cannot be done by tea parties. It is going to be done by mass mobilization. We in Trinidad and Tobago have a particular culture that when we mobilize, it is not in tea rooms. We of the UNC mobilize in public places.

I would like to know from the Minister exactly what methodology is going to be used to mobilize and educate consumers so that they would be able to put pressure on the merchants in the country. But that is a political issue. When I say, "political," I am not speaking in terms of party politics, but from the point of view of actually fighting against a system. The question of pricing and the whole question of cartels and all the issues which we have been raising over the years are things which we ought to be thinking about.

I would like to let the Minister know that it may have been well for her just to type her speech today and circulate it so we could read it for information. But her track record clearly is one where she is, as I said, in Jamaican language, a "bag o' mout."

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In looking at the budget speech, there are certain words—in fact, it is a well written budget speech. It is a speech which will impress people if they are living in "Timbuktu"; it will not impress people who are living in Trinidad and Tobago. It is a nice speech, nice words, lovely construction of sentences. It was all designed to build up a mood. Maybe on a political platform you can do that, but when there are thousands of people who do not have food, or a bed to sleep on, or a job, that budget speech makes no difference to them, except to say, things are going to get worse.

When the Member spoke about our becoming the global city of the Caribbean and the hub of the Caribbean and the dawn of the 21st century, those are lovely dreams, but how do you do that when social problems are today eating away at the heart of the society? In looking into the future and examining the policies of this Government, it is very clear that we are going to be in the doldrums for a long time. I do not know whether we are going to come out of it. The Members on the other side speak about gloom and doom, but when you look at other countries which have been experimenting with the same policies as this Government has, and you look at their performance in terms of their context, you would realize that with the policies they are implementing, there is very little hope for change in this society.

One of the key things in this society, especially if you want to create what is called a global city, is to have your people as one, have them really share that vision, not because you tell them to do it, but in whatever actions you take they feel that they are participating and that they belong.

Since our system is one where we on this side represent citizens and the Members on that side also represent citizens, the only way anybody could have a shared vision of all these lovely things here is if this Government decides to treat the Members on this side with respect. When I say, respect, not "Good morning" and "Good afternoon," in case people want to be that simplistic, but, respect which means that when we make representations in this House, Members opposite do not try to treat us as if we are nobody, as if we are people out of this system.

If the system provides for elected representatives, it means that those representatives must be given the responsibility and the freedom to be able to do that job. But every day that we relate to the Members on the other side, it shows over and over again that they do not care about the people of this country. As far as they are concerned, especially the Member for Diego Martin East, we have no problems.

When you sit in the Cabinet you are able to influence decisions. As the Member for Caroni East would say, when the pie is to be cut, those in the Cabinet are the ones cutting it, and they cut the slices to sizes that they want, and too often, when they cut the slices, there are 21 and not 36. If there is to be a national pie and if there is to be sacrifice, and since we are all bearing the brunt of sacrifice, then whatever little benefits there are must be shared equally. But we are asked to share the losses, the sacrifices, like everybody else, but we are denied the simple things of life.

Today there are people in this country who are condemned to perennial flooding, to swarms of mosquitoes—the Member for Arouca South knows what I am talking about—where people cannot even live in their homes. We have a situation now in the aftermath of flooding where sewers are running through large communities, and we have not had an effective programme of spraying. Cesspits had overflowed into people's homes. To this day, we have not had spraying.

When there is an epidemic this Government is going to say, "Well, I have got millions of dollars now for disaster relief." That is wrong. The time has come for us to take preventive measures. As the Member for Tobago West is saying—and she is right—deaths are occurring in this country out of the complications of dengue fever. I have constituents who died from that, and I am sure there are some in areas represented by Members on the other side.

3.50 p.m.

I, like many others on this side, had constituents who have died with certain symptoms, but the death certificates do not say "dengue fever" because it depends on what other side effects they had.

It is not that the Government does not know; it is that it does not care. When the Government comes here with a fine-sounding budget speech, we are impressed; then we are assailed by a fresh-water yankee with a pseudo air of sophistication. How can we ever believe this Government when we are not seeing any real and meaningful development taking place in the society?

The whole question of consultation, for instance, is a big joke. The whole issue of democracy in this country is something which we should laugh at, because there is no real democracy in our land. The only democracy we have is where every five years one can go and vote, and then even those who vote do not have a voice. Those are serious issues.

I do not intend to come to this House to repeat things I have said in the past regarding the statistics about the poor. Everybody in this country knows what is

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going on with poverty, unemployment and the crime situation. We know that. Do you know what people want now? They want action from this Government, not speeches and advertisements saying "Let us go down the road together." I see they are now fixing the roads for us to go down together.

The time has come for us to ensure that there is equitable treatment in the society. I would repeat it. There are Members on this side who have struggled at all levels for that kind of system where there will be social justice. We are not happy that this has not yet been attained. How, therefore, can we see the dawn of the 21st century when these deep problems exist in our society; when people who are citizens of this country have absolutely no value.

That is the way we on this side define where we stand. I am sure if you go back to *Hansard* when some of the Members of the Government were in the Opposition, you would see that they said the same things. They promised this country that they were going to be different. They promised this country that this was a new PNM and they were not going to repeat the mistakes of the past. Two years has gone and there is no difference between this PNM and the other PNMs.

We are therefore convinced that there is only one PNM, and that is a PNM that should never be returned to office. It should be sent into the political wilderness because it is responsible for the state of this country today. After the speech of the Member for Couva North, the Members of the Government should stand in this House and apologize for all the money they have spent without any kind of development for our people. The time has come for them to say that they are sorry that they have spent this money and children are hungry today; they cannot go to school; school walls are collapsing. The present Government has failed the society. It should apologize and make a promise that it is going to do things differently. But, then what is the point?

The PNM is a paramountcy party. The party is before country. This is why I was surprised to hear the Member for Laventille West, with all his fine speeches, say that the PNM shall prevail and the PNM is great. At the most crucial time in his career, he chose to tell this country that the PNM comes first. This thing about putting country first is, as usual, the rhetoric and public relations gimmick of the PNM. I know it is distasteful, but we have to tell them that because I hope, perhaps, that by saying it over and over, they will understand what we are saying.

Madam Speaker, I see from your body language that you are amused; I do not know for what reason, but I can assure you that we on this side shall be spending the next year continuing to fight in this House. We are going to continue to ensure

that we pave the whole road towards creating a society which is just and fair. All of us on this side, including the Members for Tobago East and West, are a team and we are going to make sure to fight for a just, fair and equitable society. We are a party of the people and people know that they are important in this party. We want to tell the PNM that it runs this country by a small clique, but its days are numbered.

We, too, would like to know that the country's problems could be solved. But, we know that they can only be solved under a UNC government. And, we are well on our way of forming such a government. *[Interruption]* That is the problem with the PNM. It is that it has stifled all creativity and what we have here clones. I do not know whom they are clones of, whether of the late Dr. Eric Williams or. George Chambers. What we have is a bunch of clones on the other side. Our party is a different one. Our dream, too, is to create a society where people will be treated equally. It is a vision we have. We know it is a vision which is shared by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We do not have to tell them to share that vision; they already have that with us.

Therefore, this budget speech is not going to make any difference to any major development of this country. And, as far as the Member for Barataria/San Juan is concerned, she would make two more budget contributions in this House and that would be the end of her political career. As for her comments on my being in jail, I can assure her that it was a pleasure to go into the prison as part of serving my people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, as I listened to the contribution of the interim Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Couva North, this morning, I understood, perhaps, why the Member for Chaguanas is aspiring to bigger things.

After listening to the contribution of the Member for Chaguanas—which did not address any measures proposed in the budget, as far as I can recall—I realized why the Member for Couva North had to use a political pizzle on her. Clearly, the Member for Couva North is grooming someone else for the post of leadership—perhaps, the Member for Couva South.

Mr. B. Panday: So, that is what you do on the other side. I have always wondered about that.

Hon. C. Imbert: I was particularly disappointed, however, with the manner in which the Member for Chaguanas sought to denigrate hon. Members of this

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House by calling them all sorts of insulting names. I considerate it reprehensible and distasteful for a female Member to use degrading terms to another female Member of this honourable House. I hope the Member will take counsel, perhaps, from her father and will comport herself in a proper manner in the future.

4.00 p.m.

Before I go into some of the other bits of mischief in the contribution of the Member for Chaguanas, let me deal with some deliberate mischief on the part of the Member for Couva North.

The Member for Couva North made an allegation, in typical fashion, that there were scores of engineers looking for jobs, yet, the Ministry of Works and Transport had sought to employ the spouse of a Member of the Government. I have before me the statistics from the University of the West Indies. The number of Trinidad and Tobago Nationals who graduated in Civil Engineering from UWI over the last five years is as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Graduates</i>
1989	3
1990	0
1991	0
1992	1
1993	2
Total:	6

The University of the West Indies graduates approximately 150 engineers from the Faculty of Engineering in St. Augustine every year. The vast majority of these engineers are electrical, mechanical and chemical engineers. In the Ministry of Works and Transport at present, there are 68 engineering posts on the establishment, 21 of which are vacant. Nineteen of these vacant positions are for civil engineers. None of the vacant positions are for electrical engineers. We have a full complement of electrical engineers, and there are two vacancies for mechanical engineers. The Member for Couva North demonstrated, as usual, a classic ignorance, if you would permit the word, of the statistics and the pattern with regard to the development and production of engineering graduates in this country.

There are vacancies in the Ministry of Works and Transport for 19 civil engineers and the University is producing none. Therefore, it is false for the Member to say that we are by-passing engineering graduates in favour of retired engineers.

Mr. Maharaj: I would like the Member to tell this House whether a retired engineer who is related to a Member [*Interruption*]

Hon. C. Imbert: I am not giving way. The allegation that we are not hiring young engineering graduates from the University of the West Indies is absolutely false. Further, for the record, the Ministry of Works and Transport has not employed the spouse of any Member of the Government. Not one! This is a deliberate mischief of the Member for Couva North.

Let me return to some of the issues [*Interruption*]. It is obviously part of the strategy to diminish the image of the Member for Couva North by the fifth columnists in the UNC feeding him false information.

The Member for Chaguanas, who, unfortunately was not within the public domain for a period of seven days and, therefore, was unaware of activities taking place in this country made a number of inaccurate and misleading statements—spurious allegations, as usual. I refer specifically to the response of the Government to the flooding that took place in the central plains of Trinidad after the extremely heavy rainfall over the period November 18 to 21, 1993.

The Government, as it does in all parts of the country, mobilized and pulled all of its resources from North and South Trinidad and located them in Central Trinidad to deal with the problem of flooding in the last week. The second battalion of the defence force was immediately mobilized on the same day of the flood, but the Member, as I said, was not in the public domain.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was mobilized immediately. Also, the Drainage Division, the Highways Division, the Unemployment Relief Programme. If the Member had been able to watch television whilst she was at the President's pleasure, she would have seen video footage of earth—moving equipment from the Ministry of Works and Transport operating in Brasso, which I believe is an area located somewhere in one of the constituencies of the Members on the other side, on Monday—the same day that the Member was at the President's, pleasure. It is clear that the Member for Chaguanas knows not of what she speaks. I will forgive her for that. She was not around and did not know what was going on.

Miss Bhaggan: Where else?

Hon. C. Imbert: Kelly Village, Frederick Settlement. I have a complete list. It is necessary to deal with the work of the Ministry of Works and Transport particularly with regard to the work of the Drainage Division.

The Member for Chaguanas, like all Members on the other side, is wont to come week after week—and, today, we had an example of that—and use the words: alienation, discrimination, victimization and equity.

Madam Speaker, do you know something? When I went into the records to find out where we spend the money in the Drainage Division, over two-thirds of the money spent on drainage development works is in the Central Trinidad area. The largest drainage development project in this country over the last 10 years—\$22 million project to build embankments on the Caroni River, to dredge the Caroni River, to straighten and realign the channel, to put in pumps capable of pumping 10,000 gallons of water per hour, was in central Trinidad.

4.10 p.m.

When I asked my engineers to compile for me what they had done in 1993, I looked again and 85 per cent, of expenditure, was in central Trinidad. Yet, Members opposite want to talk about discrimination. If I were to reduce myself to her level, I would say that we are discriminating in favour of the people of central Trinidad. This Government is about everybody. Since we recognize that the problems of flooding are most severe in the low-lying areas of Trinidad and Tobago, in the central plains and the Oropouche Lagoon, this is where we concentrate the focus of our Drainage Division.

We do not discriminate. We put resources where they are required. That is how this Government operates all the time. The Members on the other side always like to come here and mislead people. They said it was just a little shower; a few raindrops. But was eight inches of rain in three days, exceeding the 30-year average for the whole month.

The Minister of National Security and I decided to take immediate action and to have an aerial survey to determine the worst hit areas so that we could call in our resources, tell them where the areas that are most affected are and direct all our operations. How else are we going to determine the problem? Do we go by boat, or do we swim through the flood waters? Obviously, an intelligent person would get into an aircraft and do an aerial survey of the area. It is the only way.

When the Mississippi flooded, do you think President Clinton swam down to Louisiana or went in a boat? That is nonsense! Because we went up in a

helicopter, within hours we were able to determine that the worst hit areas were Kelly Village, La Paille Village and the same Frederick Settlement that the Member was talking about. We had already seen it hours before she arrived there; just making mischief as usual. We were able to direct even from the helicopter.

Miss Bhaggan: I would like to inform the Member that La Paille Village did not flood.

Hon. C. Imbert: As I said, we were able to direct and locate resources in the worst hit areas.

There is another point that should be made. I see the Member for Chaguanas is making a lot of news these days. She had better watch out. Her colleagues may get worried. Look at this nonsense! It is the *Express* dated Wednesday, December 1, 1993. Page 4 states: "You will never understand until your house is flooded." I do not know if the house of the Member for Chaguanas was flooded.

On October 5, 1993, my house was hit by a mud slide four feet high and mud flowed through my entire house. I do not know what she is talking about. I have had a personal experience of flooding. I do not know if the hon. Member for Chaguanas has had such an experience. If she says so, I would have to accept it. I know that I personally experienced flooding. Do not come and tell me this kind of nonsense about I must have my house flooded. My house was flooded on October 5 and there was damage running into thousands of dollars. I did not run to the Government and beg for assistance. I dealt with my own problem.

Miss Bhaggan: URP people came and cleaned it out.

Hon. C. Imbert: Nonsense!

Let me move now to the problem of flooding throughout the world. There are some important points for the Members on the other side to appreciate. If we are going to deal with the problems of flooding, it is necessary that we learn from the lessons of the rest of the world.

In the United States, several approaches are adopted to deal with the problem, including controlling the flood waters by building embankments and dams. For the benefit of the Member for St. Augustine, it is called flood protection. Similarly, flood waters can be controlled through upland run off control, which is called flood abatement. There are flood protection embankments and levies or detention basins. Those are two approaches to dealing with flooding. There is a

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Third approach which has been developed in the United States over several years; that is, proper land use planning.

In the budget, the Minister of Finance has established the mechanisms for the creation of a catastrophe fund. In this way, we are in keeping with modern trends in the United States. In the United States there is a National Flood Insurance Programme and insurance companies are encouraged to set up special catastrophe reserve funds, such as the Minister of Finance is trying to facilitate.

In addition, there are certain minimum standards that are established for flood claims. One of the things people in the United States have recognized is that there are certain , building practices which must be discouraged in flood prone areas. In order to qualify for catastrophe insurance in the United States, buildings must be elevated to a level that exceeds the 100-year flood; the newly constructed buildings must not obstruct existing drainage channels and watercourses and contribute to further flooding. This is the policy in the United States.

Mr. Humphrey: Since the Member is concerned with what is done in the United States, would he indicate whether Federal Government funds are directed to the insurance companies or to the flood victims themselves?

Mr. Manning: What does that have to do with the budget?

Mr. Humphrey: That is not your budget. That is the IMF/World Bank Budget.

Hon. C. Imbert: In the United States, the approach is to encourage insurance companies to set up catastrophe reserve funds. We are doing exactly the same thing. I hope I have dealt adequately with the misinformation coming from the Members on the other side about flooding; where the money is spent; discrimination and alienation. Most of the money is spent in central Trinidad, but they will continue to say that is not so.

The Member for Chaguanas in her contribution, which more or less was a castigation in very degrading terms of the Member for Barataria/San Juan, just went through misleading the House, quoting the Member out of context and saying things that the hon. Minister did not say. I do not think there is really too much in the contribution of the Member for Chaguanas that I wish to deal with.

I will focus the rest of my contribution on the work that the Ministry of Works and Transport has done, and where we see the ministry going in the future in the context of the policy objectives and the policy framework of the budget.

For 1994, the Ministry of Works and Transport has been allocated the total sum of \$667 million. Inside of this is a road improvement fund of approximately \$50 million. I would deal with that at some length because I am of the view that the maintenance and improvement of our roads are very important. I would demonstrate how funds spent on maintenance can result in reduction of vehicle operating costs.

4.20 p.m.

Let me deal with that first. It is necessary for me to correct some of the misinformation that has been circulated. In the budget speech, the Minister of Finance spoke about the creation of a road improvement fund and some commentators, who are no longer with us in this House, said that this money will not be spent on roads—it is just an allocation—but if persons would just take the time to read the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order and look at what is done in other countries with regard to road improvement funds, they would understand and would not talk foolishness.

In the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order it is clearly stated that a special fund, under the control of the Board of Inland Revenue, will be created. The fund will be in the Central Bank and could only be accessed for road repair, improvement and maintenance. It does not form part of the Consolidated Fund; therefore, all the money in that fund will be for road repair, improvement and maintenance. It is all here in the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order.

Mr. Robinson: Would the Minister state what is the total allocation for road construction and road repairs for 1994, that is to say, the fund plus other moneys allocated?

Hon. C. Imbert: I would certainly answer that question, but in due course. I am coming to that. The fund also requires accountability, and this has been another issue raised as a red herring by commentators.

On page 568 of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 1993, clause 49 states:

"The Minister responsible for highways and main roads shall report every six months to Parliament on the operation of the Fund." Clause 48 states:

"All accounts related to the fund shall be

- (a) kept separately by the Comptroller of Accounts ... and laid in Parliament;
- (b) audited annually by the Auditor General "

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In addition, clause 45(2) states:

" ... the Minister responsible for highways and main roads shall be advised by a Management Committee comprising of one member each nominated by the Ministers responsible for highways and main roads, finance, town and country planning, and one representative nominated by a private sector organization representing Industry and Commerce."

Here we have an advisory committee which will look at all the roads in the country from a global perspective, from the perspective of the public sector, from the perspective of the private sector, and this committee shall advise the Minister on the administration of the fund.

I believe that sufficient safeguards have been put in to ensure equity and accountability, the two favourite catchwords of the Members on the other side.

Let me say I have also heard that that is a small amount of money and we would not be able to do anything with it. Let me throw that comment where it belongs. The Ministry of Works and Transport's normal allocation for goods and services—because another aspect of this fund, the way we intend to administer it, is that it shall be used for goods and services, for the procurement of materials and for special projects, such as the improvement of certain major intersections in the country.

The annual allocation for goods and services for road building materials for the Ministry of Works is somewhere in the vicinity of \$6 million. This is almost 10 times as much. I do not know if that answers the question of the Member, but I can assure you that with these funds, although it is only a nominal increase in the price of gasoline, just nine or 10 cents per litre, we can raise revenue of \$50 million and do more, much more, because we are going to use a system of contract work and of allocating funds for materials. We can do more than 10 times the road maintenance work than we do at this time. The Member for Couva North said it was a novel approach and it just shows me the lack of knowledge of Members on the other side and the lack of research.

Since 1982, in our neighbouring Caricom territory, Barbados, a transport levy was introduced which operates in a similar fashion. The Minister of Transport is advised by a wide-bodied committee on the projects and the way the resources should be allocated; and the transport levy is put in a special fund which is audited and made accountable in the same way, and in that way the funding available for road maintenance in Barbados has been as much as Bds. \$20 million annually, which is approximately TT \$50 million. Through this fund, over the last

10 years the Barbados government have been able to bring their roads up to a standard that they are now considering reduction or the complete elimination of the transport levy, because they have been able to substantially upgrade their physical infrastructure. It is precisely the same direction in which we wish to go.

I have some figures here which show the cost benefit ratio of road repairs compared to savings in vehicle operating costs. Members opposite always like to cry down the studies that we do at the ministry, but one cannot be operating like a loose cannon. Before one can solve a problem, one must determine the extent and nature of the problem.

Over the last nine months, through a study funded by the Inter-American Development Bank, we have been able to investigate the condition of every single main road in Trinidad and Tobago, and we have also been able to determine the cost/benefit ratio in rehabilitating these roads. In some cases it is 50:1. The savings from \$1 expenditure on road repairs will be \$50. I have some of the figures here. For the Western Main Road, the cost/benefit ratio of repairs is 50:1 to the motorist. For the Southern Main Road, the benefit cost ratio is 24:1.

We have a complete listing of every single main road in Trinidad and Tobago and its existing condition. We have devised a computer module to determine how we should repair the road, whether we overlay it, completely reconstruct it or whether we should be involved in routine patching, and we have determined a comprehensive and effective programme of road maintenance and improvement.

We are now going to use the results of this IADB-funded study to utilize the resources of the Road Improvement Fund to ensure that the resources from the fund are allocated to those roads which have the highest volumes of traffic and which are in the worst condition. We are using these two criteria: the condition of the roads and the volume of traffic. We have complete data out of this study that has just been completed—one of the studies they are continually complaining is irrelevant and a waste of time, that we will never finish and that they want roads in their constituencies. We have checked all the roads—all the roads in their constituencies, too—and we will be repairing the roads in the entire country. I know that I will get one of those strange questions listing about 110 roads in the Oropouche constituency: When will you repair these roads in my constituency by the ½-mile and 3-mile mark?

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. Colm Imbert: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Before the interval I was giving some information on the proposed Road Improvement Fund. I indicated that we had done a survey of all main roads and highways in Trinidad and Tobago, and determined the benefits that would arise from rehabilitating these roads in a number of different ways—total reconstruction, repaving, patching and so forth.

We are well poised to utilize the resources of this fund and, as a matter of fact, we expect that very early in January the population would see some positive results from this minimal increase in the price of petroleum fuels.

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, before we had the tea break I got the impression that the Minister was saying that the allocation from the special fund will go only towards roads that have heavy traffic. Am I to assume, therefore, that in the Nariva constituency no work will be done?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I had hoped that I would not be interrupted during my contribution by every single Member on the other side who would get up and say: "Are you going to fix roads in my constituency?" I closed that segment of my contribution before the tea break with a plea to the Members on the other side: do not list the 110 roads in your constituency.

The criteria used for repairing roads do not arise from the Road Improvement Fund; these have always been the criteria for repairing roads in any part of the world. We would want to reduce vehicle operating costs and travel time. We shall use two primary criteria to determine which roads we shall rehabilitate. One is, the condition of the roads, what would happen to the roads if we did not maintain them. Because we have done much analysis to determine what happens to roads throughout the country. As I said, we have created several computer modules using the most advanced computer technology, and we have been able to predict what would happen to roads if certain levels of maintenance were done to them. If you spent \$1, \$2 or \$3 million.

We have established the minimum condition that we would want for our roads and we shall use the results from our study to determine how we shall repair these roads. Let me say before I am asked, which roads we are going to repair. We have done our examination on the basis of district by district and we have established in the districts of St. George West, St. George East, Caroni, St Andrew/St. David, Victoria West, Victoria East, Nariva/Mayaro, St. Patrick and in the Windward and

Leeward districts of Tobago, that we have as an immediate priority the rehabilitation of some 341 km of roads throughout the country determined, as I have said, through our analysis.

In addition, although the initial focus of the road improvement fund will be to deal with some of our major roads which are in urgent need of repair, we will also extend the focus in the Road Improvement Fund. This will be done, after we have dealt with the more critical roads, to some of the secondary roads. I hope that will forestall any questions coming from the other side about whether we are going to repair main roads.

The initial focus will be on main roads and highways, but we shall also extend the programme to secondary roads that are in urgent need of repair and those that have high volumes of traffic. As I said, the Minister with responsibility for main roads and highways will come to Parliament every six months and report on the collection of money in the fund and on expenditure from the fund, and we intend to use a mix of allocation of resources.

Some of the money will go towards contractor repaving of roads, some of it will go towards special projects, because we have determined that by a small expenditure on improvement on an intersection such as the intersection of the Churchill-Roosevelt and the Uriah Butler Highways, we can considerably reduce travel time spent on the road and vehicle operation costs. As a matter of fact, the ministry has identified a number of different improvements. We will be looking at some of them and—

Mr. Mohammed: I would like to know from the calculations that the Minister has made, if he could give any indication as to when the road improvement project will start, January, February, March?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I am in the unenviable position in this House of having to reply to questions that indicate that the Members on the other side are not listening. I said we are going to start in January, 1994!

Mr. Mohammed: I did not hear.

Hon. C. Imbert: You were not listening.

The establishment of the Road Improvement Fund also falls into the process of reform that has been taking place in the Ministry of Works and Transport and it also points in the direction that we want to carry the ministry. In the Ministry of Works and Transport over the last 15 years or so—as a matter of fact, since the early 80's—the allocation for goods and services, for construction materials, in

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terms of the total allocation for the Highways Division, has been steadily decreasing. This is because of declining revenues.

What has effectively happened is that the ratio of labour to equipment and materials has declined from an acceptable ratio of perhaps, 60:40; 70:30, many years ago to 85:15. So that 85 per cent, prior to this budget, of all the allocations to the Highways Division was allocated to labour and only 15 per cent was allocated to materials and equipment. That is a very inefficient ratio.

With the allocation of \$50 million of additional funding for goods and services, and materials and equipment, we have now established a completely new ratio, somewhere in the vicinity of 60:40 which will allow us to be much more efficient. This is the way we want to take the Ministry of Works and Transport. We want to rationalize our operations so that they become more material intensive and the Government gets more productivity and output for the dollars spent, for the tax revenue imposed on the population.

5.20 p.m.

I hope I have been able to give some background to the Road Improvement Fund and how we intend to use it; and there are provisions for accountability.

Other areas of road improvement in which the Ministry of Works and Transport is involved—the Member for Chaguanas said that we are doing nothing, we have done nothing, but just a few weeks ago I had the privilege with the hon. Member for Diego Martin West to launch the first phase of a \$250 million programme for upgrading the agricultural access roads and bridges in the country. This was in the Penal area. One of the first areas to receive benefits from the Rural Access Roads and Bridges Programme is an Opposition area. In this package of roads and bridges, we have done a complete geographic spread over the country:

- 1 In the northern part of Trinidad which stretches from Maraval to the Plum Mitan area;
- 2 Penal/Debe area which includes La Fortune Trace, Kernaham Trace,
- 3 Bridges in the north-eastern part of the country—Sangre Grande, Toco area;
- 4 Bridges in the central area—Little Coora Road, Cumuto Road, Couva Main Road, Piparo Road, spending \$8 million there for the construction of four bridges,

5 South-eastern area, Mayaro/Guayaguayare area, where we constructing some bridges.

6 Tobago, where we are rehabilitating some 2 km.

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. The Hon. K. Rowley*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I was pointing out that the ministry, in allocating resources and funding from international agencies for infrastructural development work, does not discriminate. You would have heard that I called out a list of road and bridge improvement works that stretch from Maraval in the north-west to Sangre Grande in the north-east; to Plum Mitan; to Piparo—I think that is somewhere close to the Member for Couva South—Little Coora Road, Cumuto Road, Couva Main Road, Mayaro, Toco, La Fortune Trace, Penal and Tobago. This is how we conduct our business.

The first package costs \$55 million. The Ministry of Works and Transport is the executing agency on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, and is in the process of identifying the other roads that will go into the second and third phases of this programme, which will cost over \$200 million over the next three years, to be spent on improving agricultural access roads and bridges in this country. At the end of the programme by 1995/1996, we expect to have upgraded over 100 km of agricultural access roads throughout Trinidad and Tobago and at least 25 major bridges on our primary roads.

Perhaps, at that time Members on the other side will come back to this House and say that we have done nothing. I will simply read out the list of roads and bridges that have been rehabilitated, and perhaps they will admit then that this Government is, in fact, doing a lot.

Let me move on to the activities of the Drainage Division. I will not spend too much time on this because I think I have debunked the myth that we discriminate against persons from central Trinidad.

We have approached the World Bank for a US \$100 million loan for a major national drainage development programme. The ministry has collated data with regard to the areas that are most affected by flooding and it is using this as a starting point for developing the actual criteria and parameters for the programme.

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I would just read some of the areas under consideration, again to dismiss the allegations from Members on the other side. I shall start with the East-West Corridor.

Of course, there are problems in all parts of the country: there are problems in the North, there are problems in the South, there are problems in Central In the East-West Corridor from Diego Martin right up to Arima, there is need for construction of silt traps, for walling and paving of undeveloped rivers and watercourses, for reconstruction of culverts and so on.

In San Fernando there is need to develop the Ciperó, Marabella and Vistabella Rivers, which are undeveloped at this point, to construct detention basins, to realign the watercourse.

In Sangre Grande we need to look at the Guaico River, the Cunapo River, to widen, realign, dredge the rivers. Also the Caparo River, Mamoral, Flannagin Town, Todds Road, Montrose. I think these are areas known to Members on the other side. We are also looking at the construction of detention basins and improving the hydraulic characteristics of the rivers and watercourses.

In the Caroni River, which affects Kelly Village, Caroni Village, Frederick Settlement, Bamboo Nos. 1 and 2, El Socorro, St. Helena, Cunupia, Warren Road, Guayamare, Las Lomas, we are looking at realignment, dredging, widening, construction of retention basins, installation of pumps.

In the Oropouche area, lest the Member for Oropouche feel forgotten, in the Barrackpore, Penal, Woodland, St. John's Village, Debe area, we are looking again at the construction of detention basins and pumps.

We have gone forward to the World Bank and we are hoping that within a period of two years—because again, we could operate like a loose cannon and just spend money willy-nilly, but we need to put things in a holistic perspective, determine what the problems are on a national basis and develop a national strategy. In each area they will be different—in North, South and Central the problems are different, the solutions will be different. I can assure this honourable House that the Government will address each part of Trinidad and Tobago equitably.

I think that deals with what we are doing in the Drainage Division. As I said before, 85 per cent of the money spent on drainage improvement work in 1993 was spent in central Trinidad.

In the air transportation sector, hon. Members will be aware that very shortly we will be turning the sod for the development of the Piarco International Airport, which is a US \$80 million international airport development, about TT \$450 million. We expect to start construction some time in January, 1994, which is just a month away, and it is hoped to complete the new passenger terminal building and the new expanded airport within a period of two years, by December, 1995 or January 1996, for the latest.

This project has been in the planning stage for several years and we have now managed to bring it to fruition. In the new airport there will be a new passenger terminal complex and new cargo handling facilities; there will be improvement of infrastructure. The access to the airport is going to be improved so that no longer will passengers have to travel around these convoluted 90 degree bends to get to the airport; there will be safe access directly off the highway. We have put in drainage improvement works. We have started this already out of savings that the Ministry of Works and Transport was able to generate in 1992 and 1993 from the IDB-funded improvement works to the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway which, again, we have done in the last year or two.

5.30 p.m.

We have extended the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway all the way to O'Meara but, again, the Members opposite will say we have done nothing. Anyway, we were able to generate some savings from that highway development work and were able to start some interim work for drainage development in the Piarco area. Part of the project will be a major drainage catchment. We are going to build an artificial lake which, hopefully, we can use for recreational purposes as well and, perhaps, irrigation during the dry season.

This Piarco International Airport Development project flows from a feasibility study funded by the Inter-American Development Bank and supervised by the International Civil Aviation Organization. It was completed in September of 1992 and indicated that the present facilities at Piarco, unless urgent interim work was done, would reach a point of breakdown by 1995, so one can see why it was necessary for us to do this project.

In addition, the study demonstrated that the present facilities, because they had been developed in an ad hoc manner, cannot accommodate the kind of airport development expansion that we see at Piarco towards the 21st century and beyond. So the study recommended that the best solution was a new terminal on the north side of the runway, rather than renovation of the existing terminal: the

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most feasible and cost-effective solution was a new terminal. As I said, we start construction in January, 1994, and we hope to finish within two years.

The economic analysis of the project done by the International Civil Aviation Organization indicates—it is a pity the Member for Oropouche is not here—that the internal rate of return for the project of the north terminal option, is 13 per cent; and that the net present value with the 9 per cent discount rate is 15 per cent. So that the project is extremely feasible and this is the first phase of the airport development at Piarco. We hope to go into other phases such as a world trade centre, a bonded industrial park, a hotel development, and a business centre.

We hope to make Trinidad and Tobago a major stop-over point for aircraft from Europe going to the Americas, and between North and South America as well. We are looking at the feasibility of an aviation fuel pipeline directly from Pointe-a-Pierre to Piarco to make Piarco attractive for refuelling of aircraft. We also intend to make Piarco a major air cargo trans-shipment centre for the region and for North and South America. So this is the focus of our work in the air transportation sector.

In addition, we cannot ignore that we are also trying to rationalize the air transportation sector. The Ministry of Works and Transport is now responsible for bilateral air services negotiations, and over the last year, we have been negotiating, and concluding agreement with Luxembourg and the Netherlands Antilles. We have signed an agreement. For air services with Suriname; we have been in negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany and Venezuela; and we have commenced initiatives with Guyana, all in the interest of encouraging more air traffic and more movement of people and cargo by air transportation through Trinidad and Tobago.

We are expanding our focus and we hope that, coupled with the physical development, we can also improve the regulatory framework for bilateral air service agreements and bring more airlines and traffic through Trinidad and Tobago.

In terms of the domestic sector, we are continuing towards improvement of the domestic airbridge operations and we hope that we can achieve the resolution of the problems in that sector in the public interest and in the interest of all concerned. The Government's position with regard to transportation—and I will go to sea transportation in a little while—is to put in place systems and mechanisms that are in the interest of the travelling public; and we are mindful of all the competing interests involved.

We seek, as a Government, to listen to all the interest groups and try to fashion a solution that is in the interest of everyone concerned to provide safe, efficient and economical transportation—air, sea and land—for the citizens of this country and I am hoping that we can continue to resolve some of the issues with regard to the domestic airbridge situation to arrive at a solution that will be to the benefit of all concerned.

Let me move now to the Port Authority. In 1993 the Port has continued on its path towards restructuring and efficiency. Just recently the port of Port of Spain—the Port Authority—was on an investment mission together with the Port of Plipdeco to South America, promoting Trinidad and Tobago. This is an example of a brochure of the Port Authority promoting Trinidad and Tobago as a major area for trans-shipment of cargo

Miss Bhaggan: Drugs!

Hon. C. Imbert: Legitimate marine cargo. We anticipate from this initiative that the Port Authority, together with the Port of Plipdeco, can get some growth in trans-shipment activity in Trinidad and Tobago and that we can become, not just the major trans-shipment centre for the Eastern Caribbean—which it is already—but, for Latin America and the entire Caribbean. That is our goal. We intend to increase the efficiency of the Port.

One of the major areas of loss from the Port over the years has been the inter-island ferry service. Recent studies indicate that the annual loss on the ferry service is some \$50 million.

Miss Nicholson: Compulsory loss!

Hon. C. Imbert: Because of the inefficiency of the operations, we have sought—and again we have used a process of consultation—we have consulted with the interest groups. I myself met with the Tobago House of Assembly. I believe the Member for Tobago West was present and I listened to all the questions from her at that meeting, put them into perspective, and they will be considered when we examine what we are doing with the inter-island ferry service.

I can add that the Port Authority invited tenders for the private operation of the ferry service in October. The tenders closed in November and I can say that it is anticipated that a recommendation will be made in the very near future for an operator, after consultation of course, to introduce a new fast ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago.

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We are looking at vessels that are capable of speeds of 35 knots, which is twice the existing speed, and are capable of making the trip between Port of Spain and Scarborough in two and a half hours, instead of five hours, in much more comfortable surroundings, with much higher passenger comfort, greater passenger safety and convenience. We anticipate that by the middle of 1994 this new ferry service will be in operation, thereby enhancing the quality of service available to the citizens of this country, and a testimony to the commitment of this Government to provide the services that are required by the population.

The Port Authority will continue with its restructuring. In Jamaica the Port Authority makes a profit. It went through the restructuring process many years ago, as our Port is now seeking to do. I was in Jamaica recently and I have had the pleasure to meet with the Managing Director of the Port Authority on several occasions and the Minister of Transportation of Jamaica; and it is my understanding that that Port makes as much as J\$100 million, approximately US \$5 million, profit every year and that that money is used to fund the infrastructure work in Jamaica.

The profit the Port Authority of Jamaica makes pays dividends to the Ministry of Transportation and is used to fund infrastructural rehabilitation. I would like to see the day, not too distant, when the Airports Authority and the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago can pay dividends to the state, instead of being subsidized by the state. And the money can be used to improve the quality of life of the citizens of this country. This is where I am taking the Ministry of Works and Transport, together with overall reform of the system.

5.40 p.m.

Because we have inherited in the Ministry of Works and Transport a colonial system, a vast number of different sub-systems and mechanisms, some of which are no longer relevant, one of the things which we will be doing in 1994 is a complete management audit of the Ministry of Works and Transport to determine the performance of each individual unit within the ministry.

We are going to set performance targets, performance criteria and reporting systems. We are going to look at the quality of output from the input into the system and we hope at the end of the year that we shall be in a position to make meaningful changes and reforms in the way the Ministry of Works and Transport does business, to provide a better quality of product and better product for delivery to the citizens, which is only what they deserve. This is where we are taking the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Modernizing Trinidad and Tobago: In addition, the ministry is charged with the responsibility for construction of public buildings, and in 1994 we shall see the commencement of construction of the first project in the city centre, the National Library Complex, which is to be located in the Hart Street block at the corner of Hart and Abercromby Streets. The first phase in our city centre redevelopment project, also includes the development of another block at this end of this honourable House, the Knox Street block, where, again, we will be renovating and redeveloping the infrastructure to provide a building that will accommodate the Registry, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General and the Ministry of National Security.

Also, in 1994, we will be doing designs for a National Performing Arts Centre which is to be located on the Princess Building grounds. We are also looking at renovation of the Red House and its precincts. We will be doing designs for that in 1994—we will be doing designs for the improvement of this fine building.

As part of the city centre restoration, we are also looking at the rehabilitation of Woodford Square. We are developing a design brief at present for that project.

Let me just go a little further down the road to Independence Square, where on Monday, the hon. Prime Minister will open the newly developed and beautified Independence Square—testimony to the performance of this Government. We are launching that project on Monday. And they say we do nothing.

I might add that that project was funded by a number of public spirited organizations and companies. It was not funded out of the Treasury. We have done two blocks between Abercromby and Edward Streets and we are moving now on to the block between Abercromby and Chacon Streets, and the approach we are taking so that we would not hear these ridiculous allegations, is that we are in discussion with the commercial banks. Since they reside in the precincts of Independence Square, we have asked them to fund the next phase of the restoration, the block between Abercromby and Chacon Streets and, further, the block between Chacon Street and the Cipriani statue—the present location of the “Drag Brothers.”

I do not want to steal any thunder from my colleague the Member for Diego Martin Central but I can say that the new building, the manufacturing centre for the Drag Brothers which is close to Riverside Plaza and the Besson Street Police Station is well advanced. I passed it just the other day and construction is proceeding apace. Plans are also in progress to give the Drag Brothers a properly

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located retail centre, but I do not want to steal any thunder from the Member for Diego Martin Central. He will speak about that.

Mr. Maraj: You have your own thunder.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you.

In addition, one of the priority projects of the Ministry of Works and Transport is beautification of our highways. Throughout 1993 we have utilized the private sector to do a lot of beautification work. You will notice that our main roads and highways have been developed with grass verges and shrubbery being put in. This is done through private sector initiative where the private sector takes over a stretch of grass verge or a median such as the Wrightson Road median to rehabilitate and beautify these areas.

One of our priority projects for 1994 is to invite the private sector to beautify the Beetham Highway from the Barataria Interchange right down to the Cruise Ship Complex, on a build/operate basis. Again, no funds will come out of the Treasury. We are asking the private sector to take over this stretch of highway and, through controlled advertising, generate sufficient revenue to completely rehabilitate and beautify the highway, the entrance to the capital city. We are developing the brief at present and we hope within the next few months to invite proposals for this project which will be totally self-financing, and, again, will not be a burden on the Treasury.

This is the focus of the Ministry of Works and Transport. We are dealing with reform. We are looking ahead. We are fulfilling our mandate to improve the sea, land and air infrastructure in this country for the benefit of all our citizens. We have major developments at Piarco Airport. We have major developments at the Port in Port of Spain. We have in the pipeline as well a number of loans that will be coming through in the next year or two for complete rehabilitation of all main roads and highways in the country.

We expect to make an application to the Inter-American Development Bank within the next four to five months for a US \$100 million loan to do complete reconstruction of all main roads and highways in Trinidad and Tobago. We are also in the final stages—we are in the design stage now—of rehabilitation of another series of main roads with a loan from the European Economic Community in the sum of \$100 million. We expect to start that work within the next year.

While it is surrounded by noise, the Ministry of Works and Transport is doing its work. Its mandate is to improve the infrastructure to improve the quality of life

of every citizen in Trinidad and Tobago. We shall not be distracted, we shall not be sidetracked by the disgruntled noises coming from those who had their chance to run this country and who flunked it. They simply threw it away.

In the budget Speech the Minister of Finance has pointed very clearly to where—

Madam Speaker: The Minister has two more minutes.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Speaker; I am winding up.

The Minister of Finance has pointed very clearly to where he is taking this country. He has identified the following as priorities for action and implementation in 1994:

1. Institutional reform and encouragement of enterprise;
2. Investments in energy and tourism.

These are major growth areas.

3. Innovation and efficiency in Government.

I have outlined some of the reforms we are making in the Ministry of Works and Transport towards greater efficiency. And, of course, you heard the brilliant contribution of the Member for Barataria/San Juan on a tight and comprehensive social safety net.

Before I take my seat, I might add that the records indicate that the cost of administration of social programmes by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago varies between 6 per cent and 16 per cent. The maximum figure is 16 per cent; the minimum figure is 6 per cent. Depending on the programme, it varies in that band. Therefore—I am tempted to use unparliamentary language—these claims by the Member for Couva North that 80 per cent of the funding that goes into social programmes is used for administration, are a total fabrication. In the URP, the cost of administration varies between 6 and 8 per cent.

I commend the Minister of Finance on this policy statement that sets the country on the path to growth and recovery, identifies the key areas of investment focus and sets the framework for the continued leadership of this country by the People's National Movement for the next 25 years.

5.50 p. m.

Mr. Sahid Hosein (*Siparia*) : Madam Speaker, I rise with mixed feelings to participate in what clearly is a charade that passes for democracy. Let me first

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make a comment on the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin East. He has been telling us what his ministry proposes to do but, not much of what his ministry has done. I expect nothing more because this is the third time I have had the opportunity of listening to him saying the same thing. It is always about what he is going to do but not what he has done. But there is a reason for it and I will come to it shortly.

Before I start my contribution, proper, I wish to take this opportunity to wish my colleague the Member for Princes Town a happy birthday. *[Applause]*

I am extremely glad to see that the allocation to the local government bodies has been increased by \$89.723 million. Indeed, at first glance that seemed to be extremely impressive. One got the impression that the Minister had finally got his act together, given the importance of local government. But further examination of the figures revealed something completely different, in that there is an increase under the allocation of "Severance Pay" by \$101 million. It is not only in the Ministry of Local Government. You go to Agriculture—and let me quote the figures.

Now, I heard a member of the union representing those workers saying, "Boy, the fellows in the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources get away." Severance benefits under that ministry is \$13,323,000 and you had a reduction in wages of \$9 million. So clearly, they are going to send home people and they have made provision this year.

Let us move on to the Ministry of Works and Transport. I expected to hear the Member for Diego Martin East say something about his ministry, because, you see, all these grandiose plans he has, I want to know whom he is going to use to complete these works. Severance pay for that ministry is \$52,730,000 and a decrease in personnel expenditure of \$34, 154,290. Why did they not tell us that?

Mr. Mottley: Madam Speaker, these are provisions that have been agreed for the 60 to 65 age group to go home which, with the reduction in retirement age, we have made provision for.

Mr. S. Hosein: In the absence of any information to the contrary, I am prepared to accept the position, but he said it is for age 60 to 65. But \$100 million, and \$9 million and \$42 million? Is it that they have only old people working? But I accept what he said. He is one of the Members on the other side you can rely on. But then, how does one explain the reduction in wages? If they reduce wages, obviously, they are going to send home people. Are they not going to pay them

severance? I expected the Members on that side, especially with ministries that these matters impact upon, to get up and say something about it.

In order to put the situation of local government into proper perspective, I want to start off by dealing with some of the functions of local government. You know, these things sound so very mundane to many of us—it is not important until you miss having these services performed.

You have the cleaning of drains, spraying, the cleaning of cesspits, the control of rodents and pests, the maintenance of markets and abattoirs, the maintenance of cemeteries and crematoria, the approval of building plans, the inspection of public places, schools, shops and so forth, the maintenance of roadways, the cutlassing of roadways, the repair of landslips, construction of box drains, the provision of recreation grounds, pavilions, collection of garbage, street lighting, to name some of them.

In fact, under the Act, you have the distribution of truck-borne water, the provision, maintenance and control of corporation buildings; control and maintenance of homes for the aged; maintenance and control of child care centres, construction, maintenance of all drains and watercourses, provision, maintenance and control of parks, recreation grounds, and it goes on and on.

When you really sit down and think about it, the lack of these services is going to impact heavily on the citizens of this country, especially those who live in the rural areas and depend, to a large extent, on these services. These services can be performed in two ways: either by direct labour or by contractor services.

I will begin by dealing with the whole question of direct labour. It is a pity that the Member for Diego Martin Central is not here, because he continually comes to this Parliament, misleads the Parliament, makes wrong assumptions and has absolutely no clue—nor does he care—I am convinced that the Government, of which he is a part, does not care at all about local government, and there is a reason for that which I will go into later. In his absence I wonder whether I should go into it.

The Minister of Local Government speaks about the establishment, that is, the number of workers in any particular corporation. That was the basis of his argument on retrenchment. These establishments were set in the 1960s. They were fixed, whether it is 200 or 300, for a particular area. One would understand, given the oil boom, that tremendous developments have taken place in this country. There are many more roads and housing estates, therefore, there are greater demands on the services of these local government bodies.

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6.00 p.m.

One would think, instead of a contraction, if one is to provide these services by direct labour, that one would have to increase the workforce to meet the increased demand. I make that point because the Minister continues to put forward the argument that it is a question of make work and in times of plenty a friend was brought and so forth. I do not subscribe to that view. It had to do with the increasing development and demands.

The Minister then made the point that the workers are not productive and that he has a problem. I took the pains to go through, more than once the agreement between the CPO and the NUGFW, and clearly there is a position for task work which lays down the conditions under which task work is to be executed. It provides for these workers to start at a certain and finish at a certain time. If that is the case, I cannot see anybody having a problem with that. If there is a problem with that, the logical thing to do is to go to the majority union and say "We have a problem with this; let us sit down and negotiate." But, no, that is not done.

In any event, these workers are supervised by a monthly-paid staff. If anybody is to be held accountable, I personally would want to hold the supervisors accountable. One should not retrench the workers on the basis of that argument and leave the supervisors.

There is a situation where we have gone into a different system. Previously we had county councils, now we have what are called regional corporations, in addition to the existing municipalities. Again, one has to ask: What were the criteria for setting up the establishment to execute whatever services that were to be offered? There seems to be no method in establishing the workforce. One would think that several factors would impact upon that decision, namely, the size of the population, the number of kilometres of roadway and things of this nature. That is not the case.

I want to quote the figures from the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure, Statutory Bodies and Similar Boards*. There is Sangre Grande with a population—I am quoting from the electoral list of the EBC—of 36,882 and it is going to cost \$14.17 million to pay the establishment. Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo—which is generally of a similar nature, a wide geographical spread, with a population of 97,000 voters, yet the allocation for wages is the same as Sangre Grande's. One wonders how the numbers were arrived at.

In the Penal/Debe area there are roughly 54,000 people and the allocations—and this clearly seems to be a case of outright madness—is just under \$7 million; and Siparia which also has a population of a similar size, has an allocation of \$12.27 million. One wonders, is this a case of somebody getting up one morning and deciding that this establishment is going to be set? Or, are there clear guidelines as to how certain figures are arrived at in order to ensure that there is equitable distribution of services throughout this country? I know people do not like to hear the word "equitable," so I would try to use another one.

In local government there is a situation of total chaos and madness taking place right now. There are 10 CEOs, seven county superintendents, seven ROCs and in a number of instances there are no important technical people, for example, survey crews. For those who understand local government, survey crews are extremely important. If there are problems with roadside drains and one needs to identify which are the reserves, or construct a new road and has to identify properties, one cannot wait to see if the Ministry of Works and Transport or another corporation would send a survey crew. I would think that one would want to ensure uniformity in the provision of certain key personnel in these bodies.

For example, there are no plumbers in some corporations. I remember in the Debe/Penal Regional Corporation the CMOH's Department shut down the market in order to do some plumbing works; and it took six weeks to get the works done because Penal/Debe Regional Corporation does not have a plumber on its establishment. The same thing happens with electricians etc. There is total chaos.

In fact, it is so bad that the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation is squatting in a most cramped and uncomfortable position in another corporation's office. One would think that these minimal, basic requirements would be met at this time if the Government is serious about local government.

If it is that they are moving away from direct services and going into contracted services, one would expect, given the retrenchment that has taken place, and the corresponding decrease in personnel emoluments, that there would be a corresponding increase under "Contracted Services". Because the Minister has stated on more than one occasion that "we have to get the private sector involved." Obviously, I take it to mean that when the private sector gets involved it has to be paid. The Government may get a few favours for free, but obviously, they have to be paid.

This is the direction the Minister wants to go; this is his vision. If that is the way to go, one would expect that there would be an increase in the allocation for

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contracted services. There is a minor increase under “Goods and Contracted Services” which, more or less, is to take care of the increased cost of scavenging.

It seems to me that every time the Minister opens his mouth, his policy develops incrementally basis. He has no set policy, and as the wind blows he sets policies. Then there is the situation with equipment. This has been in the press, and I have said it on many occasions in this Parliament: Unless there are certain basic pieces of equipment, you might as well close down local government. I am not saying that it should be closed, but clearly this is the direction in which the Government is taking local government. There is no doubt about that in the minds of Members on this side.

For example, it is easy to access pitch once proper arrangements are made, but the corporations do not have vehicles to get it. The URP has an oil-sand quarry, but, again, if the corporation wants to avail itself of the oil-sand to repair the roads—and I need not talk about the need to get the pitch and the oil-sand; for, everybody knows about the need—there is no transportation to collect these things. How on earth then are we going to continue in this mode of operation? If by magic one gets materials, there is no roller to compact it, so you just spread it, rain comes and washes it away. For example, in my constituency there is a slippage on the roadway. The road is blocked and because the corporation's backhoe is inoperable, the road has remained in that state for days.

I want to talk about this vision the PNM has for local government. The history of the PNM and local government is a very sad one. I want to throw my mind back to the late 1960s and early 1970s when there was, virtually, no local government in this country. There were no elections and no regional bodies were operating under the PNM government. There is a reason for that.

Under the PNM everything is a question of having to go to see the Minister. They have literally created that culture, so now whenever somebody wants something done, even in my constituency, they want a letter to go to see the Minister. And they have created that environment in order to manipulate and control people. You must see the Minister to get whatever you want done.

6.10 p.m.

I turn my mind to the events of the past year. The budget of 1993 revealed that local government was allocated under “Wages” \$46 million less than in 1992. To make up for that loss, yes, there was a supplemental vote of \$20 million leaving a

deficit of \$26 million. Earlier in the year, the casual workers were fired despite an assurance given by the Minister.

I want to quote from the "Minutes of meeting to discuss measures to be adopted in the context of the reduced 1993 budgetary allocation held" on December 30, 1992. It seems to me that this was a meeting between the Minister of Local Government, CEOs and chairmen of various municipalities and corporations.

It says in part on page 3.

"In response to fears expressed regarding the possibility of retrenchment, the membership was given the assurance that alternative strategies, such as early retirement were under consideration."

When the fear was raised that persons would have to be sent home, they said, "No, we are not sending home anybody; we are giving consideration to alternative strategies. One of the considerations is early retirement." But, that is one Minister, who, in my own view, if he "says stand up," you hold your head and bawl and run. Events in this Parliament over the time I have been here prove me right. Early in the year the casual workers were fired and after that the regular workers were put on reduced days.

The Minister of Local Government in discussions with the union promised them that by August 4, 1993 the workers would revert to their "10-days." Of course we know that was not the case. In fact, during the course of this month I expect that a number of workers will have to be sent home because there is simply no money under the vote to pay them.

If the argument for sending home these workers is that they are not productive, then on the same premise, should the population not fire the PNM? I make that submission. For not only have they proved not to be productive, they have also proved to be extremely destructive throughout the length and breadth of this country. In order to keep on the workers up to today, the Government had to vire money from the votes. My information is, and I speak subject correction, that you are not supposed to use funds that are allocated for developmental purposes for recurrent purposes.

The Member for San Fernando East stood up in this House and made much ado about his party and Government honouring the court award and giving back the workers the 10 per cent and their COLA. I said, fine., But it gave the workers 10 per cent on the one hand and on the other, then sent them home and took it

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back. Maybe, that is what they mean when they say "a caring Government"; I do not know. The Government did not at any time seek to negotiate with the union. Even if it did, they disregarded the wishes of the union. Members opposite talk about the law of the land. One would have thought that if it had an agreement negotiated by the agent, the CPO, and the recognized union and it wanted to alter the terms, then obviously, it should have gone back to that union and not taken a decision unilaterally. Why was not the option of early retirement explored? I am sure there are those between the ages of 60 and 65 who would be quite prepared to accept the option of early retirement. It was offered to WASA and the Port. Why was it not offered to the workers of local government? Are they different? One has to ask all these questions.

I want to touch on the effect of retrenchment on workers. When you retrench a worker, you are sending whole families into poverty and destitution, extended families in some cases. And not only poverty and destitution, but you are also into condemning children to a life of illiteracy, and in some case, crime. I wonder whether we care enough to understand that.

The Member for San Fernando West made it a point to say in this House that Dr. Eric Williams was responsible for his education. I disagree strongly, but be that as it may, if Dr. Eric Williams was responsible for his education, then by the same argument, Mr. Manning is going to be responsible for a lot of ignorance and illiteracy in this country.

The Minister in a contribution earlier, said he had a gut feeling—in fact, it was reported widely in the press that local government can operate with half of the workers. His view was half should go. It makes me wonder and it makes me fearful. Is this how this country is being run, on gut feeling and instinct? One would expect that in this day and age there would be some scientific and feasibility studies done which would be brought to this House, and which would inform the decision as to whether people would have to be retrenched. No wonder this country is in such a mess today.

In looking at this year's provision, I see that the vote has been reduced by approximately \$26 million. Over 1993 and 1994 that translates into the loss of between 2,500 and 3,000 jobs at the local government level. If you say that is on the basis of reduced days, then you are talking about 5,000 jobs in the space of two years. We are not talking about 10, 15, or 20, going here and there; we are talking about significant numbers. "Caring" Government.

The Member talked about giving autonomy. Again that is so much propaganda and nothing else. The intent is clearly, as I have said earlier, to

destroy local government. They want to control and manipulate people. Because, while workers are sent home, the URP are now performing some of the works that were normally done by the local government workers.

And that is not by accident. This policy was articulated on Saturday, December 12 1992, at Kent House, Maraval. It was the report of a meeting of the Minister of Local Government, Acting Permanent Secretary, ministry officials and chief executive officers to discuss measures to be put in place to effectively accomplish the strategic objectives of local government in the context of the reduced allocations in the 1993 Budget.

6.20 p.m.

Under sub-head 17, at page 9 is stated:

“The Minister suggested an arrangement could be made with the Labour Intensive Development Programme (LIDP) whereby the corporation provides the material and skilled labour and LIDP the unskilled labour for specific projects.”

From since then, they had this plan in place to bring in URP to usurp the workers who were performing at local government level.

There is a reason for that; it is not accidental. The problem with the local government bodies is not labour. He thinks they have all the labour that they want. At least the Minister claims so. They have too much as a matter of fact. What they need is materials. Here they are suggesting the corporation provide the materials and URP provide the labour. The reason for doing that is to enable them to determine who works and who does not work, what work takes place and where, because that is how URP operates.

As I said earlier, the Minister talked about private sector involvement. All I need to say to that is that it is rubbish. As I indicated earlier, you would have seen a concurrent increase in retrenchment in contracted services. Incredibly, while on one hand we have this road repair fund to deal with main roads and highways, while this reduction in allocation is taking place providing a certain flexibility in terms of not having to meet that expenditure, on the other, the vote for materials to repair roads in local government remains the same.

I wonder if any Member on that side talks about that, for it affects their areas as much as it affects ours. Imagine in this day and age providing \$400,000 to repair roadways in a whole regional corporation. That is madness!

The Government could not be serious about local government!

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I ask: In light of what took place, main roads and highways, what is the position with state traces? I heard the Member for Diego Martin East say that they are going to look at secondary roads after. The fund that has been set up, does it provide for that? In this instance it specifically states highways and main roads. Maybe he can alter the mandate at some point, or is it an open-ended mandate? Even if that is the case, the authority for state traces and secondary roads is local government bodies.

Why then, are the local government bodies not provided with the money to do the work? Clearly, it is a pattern, but they come in with URP and start to repair the roads and then there is no use for local government. It is all in the interest of controlling what takes place—controlling and manipulating people. What criteria were really used for determining how much the vote is going to be?

I refer to this table I compiled. Under “Good and Services,” for a population of 36,000 in Sangre Grande, \$3.8 million was provided; for a similar geographic area, Couva/Tabaquite/ Talparo with 97,000 people, \$5.2 million was provided. It is a bigger area. Debe/Penal, in one case \$2.5 million was provided. For Siparia \$3.2 million was provided. Look at the disparity in the total allocation. For Penal/Debe, with 54,654 persons, the allocation was \$10.2 million; for Siparia with 56,307 persons, the allocation was \$15.58 million.

One would concede that indeed the picture would be different for the corporations, cities and the boroughs because of their special circumstances. I have no quarrel with that. The problem I have is the criteria which have been used to determine this allocation. The reason for the Penal/Debe Corporation’s allocation being so miniscule is that half of the amenities that you would normally want to provide, they simply do not have. There is no hope with this present allocation that they would ever have these services. The people in that area are at a serious disadvantage.

We hear about so many studies. One wonders in this case where you would radically want to change and reform the system, why the same thing was not done. Clearly, there is no need to do that. One does not waste resources on something that one intends to get rid of. Those are not the only problems at local government. There are several others.

What I am going to touch on is the records of the workers. Too many workers have been complaining. Interestingly, I believe it was in a Sunday newspaper, I saw the Chairman of the Tunapuna/Piarco Corporation, one Mr. Jaigobin making the same point that workers who came in 1985 have a better kept

record of service than workers who came in the 1970s, years before. This complaint is across the board in every single regional corporation.

The record of service of workers is important, I am not sure that what obtained in the past, is going to continue into the future. When the permanent workers retire, the senior regular workers then go into the permanent cadre. That is why it is extremely important. Not only that, but there is an interesting development, where the workers who are retiring now are not being replaced. Over a period you would find that the establishment of the cadre is going to get smaller. That tells you that the permanent workers in local government are not being replaced.

Even when the workers retire, they have to go from pillar to post begging every ministry official or who has some contact to get what is rightfully theirs, their retirement benefit. Why should we be treating our citizens like that on retirement, after they have served the state faithfully? Each Member of Parliament has that problem. Everyone of us would have had the instance of workers coming to us asking for help. They spend two and three years going from pillar to post.

I want to make one point, which I think applies to the civil service right across the board. The time has come when we must stop this policy about promotion on seniority. Seniority, yes, if it goes together with ability. *[Interruption]* I have no problem with that. It is something I stand for, something I feel strongly about. Promotion should be on merit; it should be on ability.

Hon. Members: Good point.

Mr. S. Hosein: All the points I have been making are good points. You are just not able to understand them.

6.30 p.m.

The point has been made that the corporations must be self-sufficient. And I do not have a problem with that. Obviously, that is the way to go. They must become self-sufficient, but under the present system of deficit financing, there is no incentive, and that is the problem. The system of financing creates a problem. It happens in Port of Spain. The more revenues they raise on their own, the less the subvention from Government. There is no incentive as politicians or even for administrations to take steps to increase the take from a particular area because there is no benefit. It appears as a benefit this year and then next year they reduce the allocation so the benefit disappears.

In the same way people would accept the road tax. People would grumble but they would accept the fact that you have raised fees if they can see it translated

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into a tangible benefit. I expected that the Minister would have set a base allocation for all bodies and say: Look, this is the allocation, whatever you raise in addition to that is gravy. It is yours. Do what you want as long as you develop it within a certain framework. But we are constrained by that because of the financing arrangement. If the Minister is serious and influential enough—and I think he is—then he would deal with that disincentive. As a politician, he understands what it is.

Hon. Member: There is already a plan to kill local government; ask Minister Valley, the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. S. Hosein: Well, if there is, I might be spitting in the wind at this time.

I regret the absence of the Member for Diego Martin Central because he has been planning for increased rates, corporations have published a list of increased rates, and I think they have started to implement the plan. One wonders at the legality of collecting increased rates; in some cases, because there are certain laws which surely have to be amended. I have not seen these laws being brought to Parliament to be amended to collect the increased taxes. I know that several pieces of legislation have to be amended in order to increase rates in certain areas in local government. How is it that they have already begun charging increased rates to the public?

Also, what further percentage of revenue are they going to access through this measure? Have they done a study? It is important that they do that to see how it will impact on revenue. Let me read the relevant section of the Municipal Corporations Act, section 109 (2), financial provision, which states:

"The Corporation may collect on behalf of the Government such fees, rates and taxes as the President may by Order prescribe, and may retain for its own use such portion of those fees, rates and taxes as the Minister to whom responsibility for Finance is assigned may determine by Order."

I would expect that if the Government is serious about these bodies becoming autonomous, then the Minister would proclaim the required Order to ensure, as provided under the Act, that part of the moneys which are collected for licences is retained by the corporation. This is provided for in the Act. But, instead of doing the proper thing, instead of going in a positive direction, it has chosen to fiddle with fees and make these minor adjustments.

Of course, there is a problem with that because whatever part of the fees is kept means less revenue to Central Government so I do not anticipate that that will ever happen in our lifetime, if we still have local government.

There is an interesting development. There are corporations which want to acquire lands, but the Minister keeps insisting that they have to pay from their development fund. However, in response to a question in this House which I posed to the Minister of Planning and Development, I believe it was, he said acquisition of land is paid from a special vote in his ministry and whether it is highways or public utilities, it is paid from that vote. Does he then want to place a burden on the local government bodies by telling them that they have to pay from their already minuscule development vote? Why does the Government want to do that? One would have thought that, as is the case with the rest, they would take it from the vote. And it does not stop there!

They are telling us now that where corporations are unfortunate not to have a proper market, like the Princes Town Corporation, they must build one with their own resources. The corporations can hardly fix a pothole in a road but they are telling them to fix things with their own resources. Penal/Debe must build its own corporation headquarters from its own resources. Whatever money they get from goods and services they are being asked to use that money to construct a building. The people in these areas are at a disadvantage.

My view is that there are certain functions that the Central Government still has a responsibility to perform. It has to bear the responsibility for the construction of new markets. It has to bear the responsibility for the construction of administration buildings. Why does it want to put the people in that area at a disadvantage to the rest of the people?

Symptomatic of the chaos which is inherent in local government is delay. Over a year after this matter was brought up, there are still no standing orders to regulate the functions of these local government bodies.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member's speaking time has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. S. Hosein: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank you and Members for allowing me to continue.

There is also the problem of something called a co-ordinating committee where the heads of different departments, Works, T&TEC, WASA, would sit together with the corporation and deal with the problems that come up. Nothing ever happens because they send some junior clerk who cannot make, a single

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decision. When I raised it in this Parliament, the Minister said it was up to the corporation to sort out their business. One would have expected that being a responsible Minister he would have looked into it and tried to exert his influence on his: colleagues to ensure that the committee functions. And this would be in the interest of the citizens of this country. I thought that was the purpose of government.

Finally, on local government, I want to make a plea. I have made the plea before but I need to make it again. The time has come, if this Government is brave and bold enough, to consider seriously the provision of pension for local government representatives. There are a number of people who have served tirelessly at local government level, which is a full-time job despite what people may think, and are being paid on a part-time basis. They have sacrificed their whole lives and when you see them at the end of their political careers, they are virtual paupers. They have nothing because they have spent their whole lives in the service of the people of country. The time has come to quantify a period of service above which they will be given a pension. If Members opposite are a caring Government, they would seriously consider this.

Time is running out and I want to speak about my constituency. I wanted to say a few words on the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin East, but he said so very little that I do not want to use my time on his offering. Ah! He seems to be a bit peeved so I will deal with some parts of his contribution.

He made the point that in the past 10 years the ministry spent \$22 million. The people of Caroni are not concerned with what the ministry did 10 years ago. The flooding is today as it was last week and will be next week. They are concerned about the amount the ministry will spend now.

Mr. Imbert: The sum of \$22 million; referred to a specific project, the Caroni River dredging improvement project between 1983 and 1987.

Mr. S. Hosein: I have heard that, Madam Speaker. I thank him all the same. He talks about spending 85 per cent of the allocation on drainage, but that is obvious. One would not go up to San Juan, Aripo, El Tucuche and spend money on this one would spend money in the areas that are flood prone. It is obvious that if Central is flood prone, one would spend most of that money there.

6.40 p.m.

The Minister was making this big hullabaloo in the press and on television about spending most of this money. Eighty per cent of \$500,000 is not much

money, so what is the Minister shouting about? The percentage seems to be big, but be honest, quantify the amount of money. In any event, the money has to be spent where there is flooding. I am disappointed in the Minister; I never expected him to make mileage and propaganda out of such a situation.

The . Minister made the point that when he was flooded out he did not run to the Government, but he did not have to run to the Government; he is part of the Government. In response to a question from the Member for Tobago East, he said that the allocation under “Goods and Services” this year—if I heard correctly—was 10 times what they proposed to spend under the Road Improvement Fund.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I said the annual allocation for road building materials is approximately \$6 million and it has been so for the last three or four years.

Mr. S. Hosein: The Minister spoke about the benefits one would get if the roads are repaired. Everybody knows—it is logical—that if the roads are good, you will spend less money on your vehicles. I do not think we needed to be told that this afternoon.

The Minister has me very worried because he spoke about utilizing these funds for special intersections, and the moment you hear about special intersections you are talking about \$15, \$20 million. I want to ask the Minister of Finance whether that was the intent when the fund was established. Even at this early stage the game is being changed; one wonders what is going to happen further down the road. Is the purpose going to be changed? We on this side are going to have a serious difficulty if he is going to use this money for special intersections because those are costly projects.

My constituency has made significant contributions over the past years to the national purse, through its gas, oil and agriculture. Today it is poised to make a further contribution in that the Southern Basin Consortium, Rocky Palace Rig I is being operated in the middle of my constituency and despite all these contributions the constituency has made, it continues to be extremely neglected.

In my speech on the previous budget, I quantified the contribution in terms of US dollars that the constituency had made in terms of gas and oil to the national purse. Today the roads are worse than they ever were, water comes by the grace of God and flooding is ever present when it rains. Unemployment and poverty are rampant and significantly higher than in the rest of the country, and that is borne out by the *Mc Intyre Report*.

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Earlier this year, January 17, 1993—that was an amazing day for me and I will never forget it—in response to a call I made for the equitable sharing of resources in this country, the Prime Minister redefined the word ‘equity.’ I made a copy of that speech and I play it over and over to convince myself that this is the Prime Minister of a country saying these things—that equity does not mean equal; equitable does not mean equal.

Mr. Bereaux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. Equity means fairness, and it does not mean equal. That is the proper definition.

Mr. S. Hosein: And the Prime Minister of this country—

Mr. Bereaux: Madam Speaker, please rule.

Madam Speaker:—the dictionary meaning.

Mr. S. Hosein: The Prime Minister of this country made public a policy of the PNM that we knew all along—that to them equity does not mean equal. And surprisingly he went on to say that because of the cultural background of the people in central areas, the emphasis you place on them, those who have the tendency to disrupt the social fabric, you would not have to place on others. That is why I understand that the Member for Chaguanas had to take the action that she took, because if you want anything you have to disrupt the social fabric to get it. The Prime Minister of this country disrupted the social fabric. I want to serve notice: We will follow the advice of the Prime Minister, and, if it means disrupting the social fabric to get what is justly ours, then so be it.

I spoke about the Southern Basin Consortium an Exxon operatorship. Do you know what is taking place there, Madam Speaker? The residents of my constituency, even though the rig is being operated in the middle of the constituency, cannot get work, and when they query that, the response from the officials is that they are getting letters from Ministers, and those letters have priority. You can deny it if you wish; you will have the opportunity. And maybe if we are to get work we would have to disrupt the social fabric.

I have also indicated to them, as a responsible representative, the importance of the success of that project and I have persuaded them up to this point to "Please, hold your hand, let me try to work out some arrangement." I understand the importance of the success of that project and I have been able to persuade them, "Please abide with me."

Of course, I expect the Member for Laventille East/Morvant will respond because I have addressed my concerns to him in a decent, civilized manner, as I think all civilized people should. I expect that I shall hear something positive.

It is instructive that the roads leading to the rig are virtually impassible. I have asked questions about various roads in this Parliament—Rock Road, Rochard Road, Scotts Road, Clarke Road—and the Minister gets up and reads a report. The report and the reality are two entirely different things. I say so not because I want to score points on the Minister, but because that is a fact. He gets up and reads something and I ask him, "Where are you talking about?" It is a total fabrication. What usually happens when I file a question is that the Minister asks his ministry for a report; they quickly do something to the road and say, "Yes, we have done this."

At present buses refuse to go onto Rock Road, close to the Member for Ortioire/Mayaro's constituency, it is a border. Even the "PH" cars refuse to go there and there are no taxis on that road because of its condition. Children have difficulty attending school at this time because of the condition of the road; they either reach to school late or they have to leave home very early in the morning.

What is worse—and my Leader alluded to this—is that when repairs are done, they are done most incompetently; You find that workmen will come in and drop some material into a hole, oil it; invariably it is never sealed because the resources are not there. And the first shower of rain that falls washes it down the drain. So the money that was spent goes away with the rain.

6.50 p.m.

I want to speak briefly on the water situation in my constituency; again, at best, it is chaotic. We are in the situation where we get water from three sources—Navet, on one side, Caroni/Arena on the other side and Penal on another side. In the Penal plant at this time, three out of sixteen wells are operating. The Penal plant services part of the Oropouche constituency, part of the Siparia constituency, part of the Fyzabad constituency and part of the La Brea constituency—three out of sixteen wells operating.

In Siparia it is a similar situation—three out of twelve wells are in operation. And one wonders, because there is no sign of relief. I understand that five pumps were purchased recently, and instead of sending all the pumps to one area to deal comprehensively with the problem, one was sent to Siparia, one to Penal and one somewhere else, so that it makes no difference to the supply, and people continue to be fed up.

There is also the problem where because of the Navet system WASA cannot send too much water into the constituency. There is a piece of pipe 3,000 feet in

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length that has to be replaced. Every time WASA tries to send additional water the pipe bursts; 3,000 feet of 12" ductile pipe is needed to replace the existing one.

Has the Government considered the implications of the expansion of Point Lisas on the water system? Has the Government considered the implications of extending the St. Patrick improvement into La Brea? I am extremely worried about the impact of those developments on my constituency. It seems to me that the little water we are getting presently is going to be a thing of the past; it is going to vanish completely.

And of course, there is the question of the rebate. WASA has assured the Public Utilities Commission that it is putting a rebate system in place, but nobody knows what that system entails or when it is going to take place. This is important for those of us who are being called upon to pay for a water service we are not receiving.

It pains me to hear my Prime Minister get up and publicly condemn the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The only way T&TEC and WASA can be successful, by his argument, is to bring in foreign management. It is an insult to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Thirty-one years after independence, the Prime Minister is saying that we have not developed the capability of managing entities like T&TEC and WASA, despite evidence to the contrary in the case of T&TEC. The problem in these utilities is not management; it is political interference—taking their "boys" and putting them in top management positions where they make a complete mess of everything. It continues up today; it has not stopped.

In the case of T&TEC I understand that it is a *fait accompli*, in that a certain company is earmarked to get the generation contract as a joint partner with T&TEC. This process of inviting bids is just a "mamaguy" and a red herring. I am informed that Enron has already been chosen. If that is the case, I want to warn that Enron's proposal is to put the power plant on barges out in the Gulf, not on land, so that the minute—

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I really hoped that I could sit and listen to the contributions of hon. Members without interfering, but the last comment of the representative for Siparia is just not true. In fact, if the Member would make that comment outside this Parliament, he would find himself in considerable trouble. I want to make it clear that it is not true and I hope that he would desist from making allegations of that nature.

Mr. S. Hosein: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the intervention of the Member for San Fernando East. Future events will bear us out; we do not have

very long to wait. My concern is with Enron coming into this country and putting generating plants on barges, so the moment things get rough, they would disconnect their plant and leave.

Madam Speaker, T&TEC has personnel whom this country must praise, especially the technical personnel. There are personnel today who are operating the No. 1 Unit that when installed had a generating capacity of 40 megawatts; today with refurbishing by the same Trinidadians, that plant is providing 54 megawatts. What is of significance is that that plant is 34 years old; it has really extended its useful life more than twice and yet the technicians are able to produce. So that there are people with the expertise.

I think it must be mentioned, because when T&TEC was buying the No. 3 and No. 4 units, Mr. Ken Julien was the deputy chairman of T&TEC and the senior engineers wrote a report against buying that plant, but T&TEC went ahead and bought the plant. When it was put down at Point Lisas, Mr. Ken Julien was chairman. Today, half of the plant is not working, and now we have Mr. Ken Julien involved in finding a partner for T&TEC. I say no more.

All this talk about privatizing in order to get cheaper tariffs—my understanding is that people do not come here because they like us; I think everybody understands that. They come here to make money, pure and simple—end of argument. I want to refer to what is happening with TSTT.

TSTT is allowed a certain margin under the law, but today the feeling is that TSTT is making more money than it is entitled to. The Public Utilities Commission has been calling on TSTT for the past three years to produce its books. Not at all. So if TSTT is doing this, what prevents the other people from coming in and refusing to show their books. Right now TSTT obviously owes every customer a rebate. Not only that, another company has set up a system whereby a call from overseas it is going to cost less; TSTT says: "No, no. We have a monopoly; we do not care if it costs you less or not, we are going to disconnect you if you utilize that service." So today TSTT is threatening its customers. Are we going to have a similar situation with whatever entities come in?

I want to make the point that when this country was flush with money, we had these mega projects, and many people put money into their pockets. Now we do not have the projects so people cannot put money into their pockets. But we are having the divestment and the sale of our assets now, and obviously, if people are so minded they can put money into their pockets. So one morning we are going to get up, under the divestment programme, and hear that the Twin Towers has been sold.

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I want to talk briefly about agriculture, my constituency having a heavy agricultural base. This year agricultural production, according to the report, is down by 36.4 per cent. That is no accident, because agriculture is not a priority of this Government, and I think never will be. There is a situation where the infrastructure is not there—bridges are broken and so forth. What pained me this year was to have farmers tell me they have lost three crops—after storm Bret they lost their crops; they replanted and there was a subsequent flooding; then they planted a third time and everything is gone. Something has to be done.

7.00 p.m.

The problem is not so much the flooding, as the lack of maintenance. There is nobody to cutlass and clear the drains and the channels because the Government has retrenched the workers and it is going to continue to do so this year. So that the flooding is expected to get worse, because the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Ministry of Works and Transport, and local government bodies all perform these functions.

But when the Government sends home the workers, as it has done this year and last year, there is nobody, and that is why there is so much flooding. The outfalls are not being cleaned, the drains and rivers are not being maintained. I see this year or next year being no different, because the Government is going to send home the workers. The farmers have lost three rice crops this year, and it is instructive in the light of trade liberalization.

Despite pressures to allow foreign rice into their market, Japan has been saying no—this is a culture; and whereas they protect their rice farmers, our Government does nothing because it knows if it does nothing it has to pay less subsidy. Less rice produced, less subsidy it has to pay. In light of trade liberalization and Japan wanting to keep their market closed—I wonder if the Prime Minister read this article on page 5 of the *Trinidad Guardian* of November 29, 1993 which is headlined: "Trade barriers cost US \$19 billion in higher prices." They list certain items, and under "Textiles and apparel" the American public pays \$15.85 billion more because of tariffs in order to save 71,639 jobs.

The mighty USA which won a moral authority recently to push trade liberalization, has barriers and is protecting certain vulnerable sectors of its economy. What are we doing? We are opening up. How does the Prime Minister feel when he reads this?

Mr. Haniff: Sells out our farmers.

Mr. S. Hosein: Does he have an option?

Mr. Haniff: No option! Instructions!

Mr. S. Hosein: Madam Speaker, there is one thing that must be addressed if we are serious about agriculture—the absence of the Oil and Water Board. It is affecting my constituents badly. It is an oil and agricultural constituency, and every time there is an oil spill these people have nobody to go to. When they go to the oil company, there is no Oil and Water Board to arbitrate, so the company simply ignores them. Of course, when they go to the courts, according to the law, they have to go back to the Oil and Water Board for arbitration. So if the Government is serious about agriculture, then it should deal with that situation.

Madam Speaker, can you tell me how much time I have again, please?

Madam Speaker: About three more minutes.

Mr. S. Hosein: Madam Speaker, I want to wind up—

Hon. Member: Wind down.

Mr. S. Hosein: —by congratulating the Member for St. Ann's East on the mechanism which he used to establish the road repair refund. He established the fund under the Audit and Exchequer Act, as stated in the document, Chap. 69:01 Part VIII, section 43, which provides a certain framework within which the fund would be set up, for obvious reasons, in that there would be transparency, reporting to Parliament, etc. I expect that he could come to Parliament, if he so requires, to make regulations as to the operations; and I congratulate him. But there is a reason for that. Why was the same mechanism not used for the Civilian Conservation Corps, or URP?

The Auditor General's Department say that it is a nightmare to audit the reports of the Unemployment Relief Programme. They cannot say whether funds were utilized as intended by Parliament. In fact, we as parliamentarians cannot say what the funds were intended for. They get these reports and they say “X” was done and “Y” was done and there is really no accountability. That is the problem we have with URP. No accountability, no mechanism, no transparency.

The same thing applies to the Civilian Conservation Corps. In fact, I ask, what is the mandate of the Civilian Conservation Corps? What are they supposed to do? How are they going to operate, is it another URP? *[Interruption]* Madam Speaker, I would like to wind up by saying that we are heading the way of what we used to call "banana republics" in South and Central America. We shall end up with a small, rich and powerful elite with the rest of the people being extremely poor and at the mercy of the vagaries of these policies, where wages will bear no

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relation to the cost of living. In fact, it will be a struggle, because wages will be at rock bottom as so many people are going to be competing for one job. I suppose that that is what the Government means when it says it cares.

There was an article in the newspapers—I cannot remember what date—where the Minister of National Security indicated that a third battalion was formed, at Cumuto, for the regiment. Now that is instructive. It was supposed to deal with people like Abu Bakr. My own view is that it is to deal with a public that is becoming more and more discontented.

I end my contribution on a more positive note and say a few words on the Self-Help Commission. I think the time has come when the role of this commission has to be expanded, because that is the one institution in this country that has been able to bring people and communities together.

Miss Nicholson: Ask them who set it up!

Mr. S. Hosein: The time has come when the Government must give serious consideration to a vote matching that of the National Self-Help Commission as they are now funded by EEC; expand that dynamism, that community spirit by increasing the vote. And not only that; give legal status to the National Self-Help Commission.

Miss Nicholson: That would be dangerous, very dangerous.

Mr. S. Hosein: As I say, the time has come when their mandate should be expanded.

I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs (Mr. Edward Hart): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be given the privilege of making a contribution to the debate on the 1994 Budget, and to record my support for the measures enunciated for the fiscal year, 1994.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Member for Siparia, my good friend, Sahid Hosein. You may recall, Madam Speaker, that the Minister of Finance, the Member for St. Ann's East, in his presentation stressed that this budget is the natural development of the vision shared in the PNM manifesto, which states in part:

"We are committed to the furthering of a society where everyone can realize fulfilment both as an individual and as a member of the national community."

The thrust of full participation in national development would, if achieved, be a source of joy and fulfilment to every citizen of this country and the nation as a whole.

I seek your leave, Madam Speaker, to offer my sympathy to the hon. Leader of the major Opposition in this honourable House. It must be a source of great sadness and disappointment to this tireless political warrior, who has spent most of his public life struggling valiantly, but not too successfully, against a parasitic oligarchy, alienation, marginalization, discrimination—more often imaginary than real—to find himself in the latter years of his political career battling against a "loose cannon"—

Mr. Mohammed: Yes, Eddy, tell them.

Miss Bhaggan: You will be a human cannon ball.

Mr. E. Hart: —and indiscipline within the ranks of his party.

7.10 p.m.

Hon. Member: Take your time. [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. E. Hart: Battling against a loose cannon, as I said, and indiscipline within the ranks of his party. Perhaps he can take some comfort in the knowledge that a loose cannon may sometimes self-destruct.

The Member for Couva North mentioned that in politics how you make up your bed, so you sleep. I often wonder if he sleeps. This afternoon he repeatedly spoke about the UNC being an alternative government. Chalkdust sang a calypso called *Port of Spain gone insane*. I think this afternoon, the way some Members are behaving, apparent the UNC has gone insane.

Since last Friday I have paid close attention to comments on the budget coming from a wide range of sources, and which have been given full prominence in the print and electronic media. To me, the commentary has been most instructive; it has inspired me to set out some very broad parameters within which I propose to make my contribution.

For example, a very prominent political theorist, who has been an equally unsuccessful political practitioner, has recognized, "the call to arms" which was the theme running through the budget speech of the hon. Minister of Finance. But the commentator went on to observe that, "He did not see any ammunition or generals." I wish to assure that theorist that "the call to arms" did not come out of

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a vacuum and that there is more than adequate ammunition, and sufficient generals and supporting troops to ensure victory when the battle is joined.

As usual, the national community has been treated to a surfeit of inane criticism of the budget, irrelevant criticism. Political leaders of non-parties and non-leaders of political parties have had their say, and what has stood out very clearly is that they are not only bereft of a single idea that would contribute to the solutions of our problems, but they also continue in the fine tradition of trying to score cheap political points for their own partisan interests.

What appears to have escaped their notice is that the 1994 Budget seeks to mobilize national support to deal with the serious crisis in which Trinidad and Tobago like so many developed and developing countries finds itself.

The hon. Minister of Finance was at pains to impress upon this honourable House that the time had come to suppress partisan political considerations and for all hon. Members on both sides of this honourable House to join hands and together—and I emphasize "together"—rescue Trinidad and Tobago from the economic mire in which we find ourselves, and set our dear country once more on the road to peaceful and orderly progress.

It is against this background, Madam Speaker, in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, that I intend to address the proposals in the budget.

This year has been one of considerable introspection with respect to our present programmes of work and the direction in which we should proceed in the years ahead. We have had much discussion on the strategic plan for the ministry in the area of sport and have formulated clear objectives in this regard. In fact, we have begun active implementation to take the ministry in a new direction.

At the outset, let me say that we view sport as an essential element in the promotion of overall national development, as playing a vital and energizing role in improving the quality of life of all our citizens of our beloved republic. We also view sport as an increasingly important ingredient in the quest for economic growth and economic development. From a developmental perspective, sport is visualized as a continuum that moves from foundation through participation and performance to excellence.

The foundation element refers to the early development of movement and literacy and general motor skills upon which all later forms of development are built. Without a sound foundation, young people are unlikely to go on to become

sport participants. Participation is broadened and is geared to fun, enjoyment, healthy living and basic competence and involvement in competition.

Performance, on the other hand, involves the identification of talent, the provision of the necessary support services to facilitate development, as well as opportunities to engage in some structured form of competition at club, national or regional level. The excellence phase of the continuum applies to those performers who are selected through specified criteria to compete at national, international or regional levels.

My ministry has set itself six major objectives in its strategic plan for the period 1993-1997. They are:

- (1) To increase participation in sport at all levels;
- (2) To raise standards of performance;
- (3) To increase the quality and quantity of sporting facilities;
- (4) To provide information for and about physical education, leisure and sport;
- (5) To promote sport as an industry;
- (6) To formulate a national sport policy.

This year, as in the past years, the Physical Education and Sport Division of my ministry, has worked against human and financial resource limitations to implement in a very successful manner, the various sporting programmes, namely,

- (1) School and Community Coaching Programmes;
- (2) School and Community Swimming Programmes; Annual Residential Sports School;
- (3) Coaches Development Programme; and
- (4) Physical Education Programme.

I shall now highlight some of the progress that has been made through the programmes that I have alluded to earlier.

I now refer to the Coaches Development Programme. Not so long ago, in most communities, the priest, the policeman and the school teacher all played a part in influencing the lives of our young people. But with the passage of time, another leader has emerged. This person is commonly called "the coach".

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When you drive through the luxuriant vegetation of the countryside with the breeze reverberating in your ear, you often see many of these coaches conducting clinics with young men and women. However, we as ourselves, that if one day these coaches stop coaching these youngsters, what would happen to all these young hearts? What would these young people do?

There is an old saying that the devil finds work for idle hands to do. So we have decided that we shall take these people and train them so they will be equipped with the technical know-how, all the modern methods, so that they can conduct their sessions properly.

The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, mindful of the important role the coach must play in the development of the young people, has established this programme. We conducted it in four areas. There is much talk on the other side about not caring for the rural areas. We had programmes at St. Andrew/St. David, Caroni, St. George East and St. George West. As a result, we now have 179 additional Level I community coaches. This, no doubt, would significantly increase the number of young athletes being exposed to knowledgeable and well-trained coaches. We at the ministry intend to continue this coach education thrust in 1994.

7.20 p.m.

You would also agree that the environment of the school is one of the best places for laying the foundation for sports. In this regard, the ministry conducted in-service training programmes for both primary and secondary school teachers in the disciplines of track and field, cricket, football and netball, where the teachers were exposed to modern methods in sport psychology, exercise physiology, bio-mechanics, analysis of performance and so on. This programme for teachers will be further intensified during 1994.

Before I took up this new-found career, I worked as a coach with the ministry and I was privileged to conduct sessions right in Carapichaima. We went further south to Cedros. We were up in the north-eastern counties, and so on. We as a Government have always cared, not only about the urban areas, but about the rural areas as well. I want to make that point emphatically this evening: We care about everybody—as you can see from our programmes.

I now turn to the physical recreation programme. We as a Government are very mindful of the anti-social behaviour that is prevalent among some of our young people. We are particularly concerned with the increasing incidence of crime among the very young. Moreover, at present, too many of our young people

attempt to gain their physical and social experiences by pressing a button which activates an electronic device, thus hindering their physical, social and emotional development. You can see these youngsters all in the shopping malls and other areas taking part in these games. You will appreciate that long ago when young people came out and indulged in certain games their creativity and innovativeness came into play. They would make tops from guava branches, scooters with the ball bearings, and things of the sort. We are trying to bring back these things.

In an effort to reduce these growing trends, my ministry has embarked on a physical recreation programme which targets young people in the age group 8–14 years. This is the impressionable age, which we term the golden age learning.

The United Nations definition of youth is 15-25 years, but we have decided to reach the youngsters, catch them early, age 8-14 years, because our young people have to compete against so many ills. You have the obscene lyrics in the maxi-taxis, right in their living rooms some of the programmes they see on the television stations are, violent programmes. So we decided to catch them young.

One recognized that this programme cannot be the panacea for all the problems of our very young; it would, however, offer them an alternative lifestyle which will assist in their total personality development. This year, 5,670 youths in 32 communities benefited from these programmes. When people on the other side say that we are doing nothing, I repeat, 5,670 youths in 32 communities benefited from these programmes. These youths, both male and female, were exposed to minor games, like rounders, fun-filled games—let the children come out and have fun. We are not talking about dangerous games like sitting on the highways. We will not expose our young people to those games. We had cricket, football, netball and other disciplines as well as rap sessions on the environment.

It is important for the young people to know about the environment and taking care of it. Not so long ago we had flooding in the St. Ann's area where people were cutting down trees ruthlessly. We spoke to them about attitudes. There is a glaring need for attitudinal changes in this country, of both young and old. We spoke about nutrition, about the harmful effects of drugs and also personal hygiene. In this context our ministry sees sport and physical recreation as a preventive mechanism against the social ills that are presently bedevilling the young people of our beloved country.

We also had the school and community coaching programme. There is much work being carried out in the ministry, led by our charming Minister, the Member

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for Port-of-Spain South, the most highly decorated female in the Caribbean, who is leading by example.

The youth of Trinidad and Tobago have an abundance of energy and talent which need to be harnessed and moulded in a positive direction. We firmly believe that one of the avenues for realizing this goal is through involvement in sporting activities. To this end, our community coaching programme this year was expanded to reach out to the rural and semi-rural areas, thereby ensuring that our rural brothers and sisters have an equal opportunity in receiving coaching, thus enhancing their participation in sport. The sporting disciplines offered were hockey, netball, tennis, track and field, football, basketball and badminton.

May I emphasize that thousands of young people benefited from programmes in 1993, an increase of approximately two and a half times over the number of persons coached in 1992. In our mass participation thrust, we are striving to reach even greater heights by increasing the outreach programme by 50 per cent between 1994 and 1996, even with our limited resources. For the information of this honourable House—I think this is very important—the breakdown of participants by districts in the 1993 community coaching programme is as follows:

St. George West	1899
St. George East	1040
North Eastern Counties	1142
Caroni	1748
Victoria	2029
St. Patrick	248

Again, we have spread it all over.

May I also point out to hon. Members of this House that in addition to having a positive multiplier effect on the rest of the community, this programme is the springboard for our young people to rise to national and international prominence.

Permit me to turn to school and community swimming programmes. Here in this beautiful twin-island state of Trinidad and Tobago, our fun-loving people journey regularly to our beautiful beaches and rivers for leisure and relaxation. However, a high percentage of our population cannot swim. The ministry's swimming programmes, therefore are conducted at four venues, namely: Sangre

Grande, Couva, Chaguaramas and Diego Martin. These seek to provide opportunities to many of our citizens to develop their aquatic skills. They would have the survival skills when they go to the rivers and beaches, so it would be more enjoyable and safer. I am happy to report that this year 12,756 persons were involved in these programmes. Approximately one third of this number were children attending primary and secondary schools in north, central and north-east Trinidad.

At each of these pools, clubs have been formed, activities have heightened and children who have started from the "learn to swim" stage have graduated to competitive levels. I am happy to report that some have even gone on to the national level. I can name Terri Ann Evelyn and Toni Dwarika. So we are working.

At the recently concluded Central American and Caribbean games, we struck gold in this discipline through the efforts of 13-year old Sangeeta Puri, and, ironically, Miss Puri does her training at the Diego Martin swimming pool.

7.30 p.m.

Members on the other side say that the emphasis is placed on the urban areas—I spoke about that already—at the expense of the rural communities. I want to report that we at the ministry have two buses, which are over 16 years old, and we utilize them to the fullest. We go to schools, to name a few: North Oropouche Government, Sangre Chiquito Presbyterian, Sangre Grande Hindu and Biche RC—and take these children from school to the swimming pools and back. In County Caroni we go to the McBean Hindu School, Couva RC School, Milton Presbyterian and the Chaguanas Government Schools.

Finally, I know the Member for Tobago West, who has apparently left, would be extremely pleased to hear that we have a proposal for the development of swimming in Tobago. We always include Tobago. This programme was submitted by a former Olympian, Mr. Paul Newallo, who is employed at our ministry presently. We visited Tobago earlier this year—my charming Minister, our technical team and I—and we spoke to the people at the Tobago House of Assembly. Presently, we are having regular meetings with them to see what could be done in the sister isle.

Residential Sports School: The sports school is a major outgrowth of the ministry's year-round coaching programme where we have identified the cream of the crop and we bring them to this school in August. In this programme, concentration is not placed only on improving their techniques and skills; they are

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also exposed to personality development, communication skills, treatment of injuries and so forth.

I have worked along with high profile coaches at the sports school for years. I was a games coach at the ministry for eight years and I have always found it a joy to work there. This year we had approximately 300 youths drawn from all over the country—deep south; Cedros; Diego Martin in the west; Toco in the north-east, Moruga in the south-east and Tobago. They were exposed to disciplines like netball, football, basketball, tennis, cricket, volleyball and track and field.

During our 10-year existence, the sports school has assisted in producing both junior and senior national players, and we are confident that many more will come out of the system. I call to mind Jason Austin, the present under-20 national goalkeeper. I met him when he was 11 at the Sangre Grande Junior Secondary School. I recall also Mervyn Dillon who toured with the West Indies Youth team; I had him under my charge at Toco Composite. We are really working and we are confident that we are on the right track, and we are going to take sport in a new direction.

I now turn to the delivery of the sports product on a national basis. No one agency has been able to deliver the complete sports product to its people. This is exemplified by the input into sport of the private sector in most progressive countries. In this context, the Government, with which I have the pleasure to be associated, has developed a shared approach to the development of sport, particularly in light of the dwindling financial resources. For example, the National Gas Company has agreed to work along with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Trinidad and Tobago Basketball Federation towards the development of basketball in Trinidad.

Then, we have the Neal and Massy Holdings which have joined hands with the ministry and organized youth soccer clinics for primary school children aged 10 to 12 years. This is the golden age for learning, as I said; when one can catch children at that age it is easy for them to absorb what they are taught. So this is the age we are targeting. I sincerely hope that other conglomerates would come on board so that we could conduct more exercises like these.

The Members for Naparima and Princes Town were very anxious to hear about sporting facilities. On page 36 of our manifesto we said that we were going to upgrade and provide sporting facilities. There is nothing that we said in our manifesto that we are not doing. We are delivering. We are working feverishly on this exercise. The hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs would give the good

news of the developments that are taking place in this area during her presentation later.

However, a major issue with respect to facilities is the unsatisfactory state of playing fields throughout the country, especially in the rural areas. I myself have visited some of these facilities. On the invitation of my good Friend the Member for Siparia, we went to Bhoopsingh Park and other areas and he has submitted some proposals which we intend to address. I also went, at the invitation of the Member for Princes Town—may I take this opportunity to wish him a happy birthday—and we visited the Yolande Pompeii Park.

Additionally, the ministry plans to provide educational programmes for the use and maintenance of recreational facilities. This is a very important aspect.

I would now leave the local scene for a while and turn to international networking. The international networking also played an important role in the sports thrust of 1993. In this regard, Members would recall earlier in my presentation, I alluded to a sports school programme conducted by the ministry. After a 10-year period, we believe the concept should be further developed to become an institute of sport.

In this regard, we sent our acting Director of Physical Education and Sport, Mr. Hasley Crawford, an Olympic gold medalist—I think he has graced us with his esteemed presence in this House; and I think he should be applauded; not many nations have a gold medalist, and we must cherish him—accompanied by a member of a state company, to certain places including the United States of America, Germany and the United Kingdom. As a result of these visits, they have forwarded recommendations to the ministry, which are now being studied.

I can assure Members that an institute of sport will bring with it modern technology that is presently being used to improve performance worldwide. We are eagerly looking forward to this development. International networking did not stop there. We went even further when the acting Assistant Director of Sport attended the Fourth Permanent World Conference on Anti-doping in Sport which was held in London a few months ago.

The former administration apparently did not have that sense of direction. Sport must be understood, to put it in a nutshell. Many people do not understand sport. Probably, the former Member for Princes Town wanted to do something at the Yolande Pompeii Park. It is a puzzle, but we would try to address it and see what we can do.

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What has happened is that, apparently, for four years the past administration forgot there was something known as sport and in the fifth year, when they realized election was coming, they tried to put facilities all over the place and they have made a mess of things, so to speak. We are now trying to take up the loose ends and see if we can repair these facilities.

At the invitation of the Member for Caroni Central, I went to Lange Park and Edingburgh 500 where we noticed there was no water and there were other numerous problems, but he knows there is something good in store for them; whether at Lange Park or Saith Park, something good is coming. I would leave that to my Minister to elaborate. *[Interruption]*. Yes, the Member would be getting something for Chaguanas. All the talk about alienation is not true.

I want to assure Members that the ministry intends to work closely with the regional corporations to see if plans could be worked out to reduce further deterioration of the nation's playing fields. It is not easy with limited resources and equipment. We feel it for everyone and we are working on it.

7.40 p.m.

This conference I referred to a while ago, the one dealing with anti-doping in sport, focused on the increasing use of performance enhancing drugs by young athletes worldwide. To name a few: anabolic steroids, stimulants, growth hormones and blood doping. This is an area of concern. If I could touch on anyone at random.

With blood doping, athletes in an effort to increase their performance and break world records, months before the event have blood taken from them, probably a pint or two, and nearer to the event it is replaced into them. When the blood is pumped into the athletes they are supercharged. These athletes will be able to absorb more oxygen than the average person. This is done mainly with middle distance runners. We must look at these situations, and while it may be argued that doping in sport is not yet a serious problem in our society, you will no doubt agree that the old saying, "Prevention is better than cure." applies.

We have used our initiative. We are participating in a world research project which was mounted by the World Health Organization; secondly, we have received and continue to receive information and literature on the effects of the use and abuse of performance enhancing drugs.

You may be surprised to know that there are many drugs which are sold over the counter for simple ailments, which if used in a certain proportion, may result in an athlete testing positive after an event—drugs for the simple cold and asthma.

We buy them daily. We must now go to our people and educate them about these things.

Presently, one of our officers is conducting research on the perception of drug use in sport in Trinidad and Tobago. The officer is interviewing sporting administrators, sport medicine doctors, druggists, addicts themselves, physical training instructors and the ordinary man in the street. The result of this research will form part of a world study on the perception of drug use in sport. This will provide strategies for the dissemination of information, education and the strategies to be employed in reducing the incidence of drug abuse in sport worldwide.

I wind up my humble contribution, having taken my cue from the Minister of Finance, who himself was a silver medallist but, who, for his presentation of the budget, should be awarded gold.

It is no secret that we are experiencing difficult times. However, notwithstanding our present difficulties, my ministry is convinced that its programmes and projects, besides developing the sporting talents of our people, would also serve as an opiate for the people, be a moral booster, create employment, develop nationalism and would enhance the mood and the psyche of the people of this nation. The Member for Oropouche laughed when he heard the "word opiate".

Permit me to use a few examples. I am not an economist, but we all know the economy in Brazil is in shambles. However, through the success of the Brazilian national football team, the people of Brazil, their aspirations, their national consciousness and pride are extremely high. On the local scene a couple years ago, nobody wanted to attend the Malick Senior Comprehensive Secondary School. The rate of absenteeism was extremely high. Now that Malick has come on the football scene, and is on top, the classrooms are filled once more. The residents of Malick wear their jerseys, "Proud to be Malick." They want to belong, they want to be part of it. This is what I mean.

Think about Sonny Ramadhin and Alfie Valentine when they bowled England in the 1950s. All hell broke loose, and people took to the streets. They were merry and happy because of the achievement in sport.

When the West Indian cricket team wins a match, everybody goes into the workplace happy and smiling the next morning. Sometimes people who do not even speak to each other are happy and greet each other. That is what sports do.

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I shall conclude by saying this Madam Speaker. That eventful day, November 19, we lost the football match one nil, but we won. I will tell you how.

The businesses did extremely well. For the whole week people in St. James were in the streets. The businesses had great turn-over. On Frederick Street in the stores you could not get a piece of red cloth. You could not get a red jersey; business was thriving. The vender and the small man were doing well [Interruption] That is another kettle of fish. Remember you have a case coming up. We talked about the racial harmony. The Chinese, Indian and the Negro—everybody.

I work at the ministry. The coaches who were looking after the strike squad reported, that when they left Fyzabad and were on their way to Port of Spain, they were mobbed. An old East Indian lady in Chaguanas, draped in red waved at the team with a stick. We were one, we were together. I object to politicians who continue to practise the politics of obstructivism and divisiveness. We do not want that in this country.

In support of that same strike squad, a Hindu school in South composed a Hindi tune. I would not be able to sing it but I am telling you. Even the Member for Tobago East who was the then Prime Minister, got caught up in the euphoria and gave a holiday. He is not here to say what he gave the holiday. For—kind of prematurely. We lost a match and he gave a holiday. I cannot understand it. This is what sport can do. I am making the point that we were one.

I have here before me—*"The economic impact of sport in the United Kingdom in 1990"* This was prepared by the Henley Centre, July 1992. This is why I say we intend to take sport in a different direction. I quote one extract:

"The message in the report is clear. Sport is more important to the UK economy than a number of manufacturing sectors, including the motor industry, and has registered a major pattern of real terms growth since 1985."

Madam Speaker, this is the power of sport. I hope Members on the opposite side would join hands with us, support our programmes at the ministry and see if we could take sport in a new direction as we venture into the 21st century.

I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*) Madam Speaker, like previous Members who spoke, I want to add my compliments and congratulations to all the previous speakers. I want to remember one of Chalkdust's calypsos as well, when he indicated at one time there were too many quacks in this business.

The last speaker was attempting to find out what was happening on this side, enquiring whether the Member for Couva North was sleeping or with whom he was sleeping. He should have spent some time reading the draft estimates.

If he look at page 262 he will discover, since he has laid so much emphasis on sport—He is very correct. It is agreed by the academics of the world today that sport is one of the areas that can really bring people together.

7.50 p.m.

The Parliamentary Secretary went on further to make the point, drawing on the November 19 experience, when the entire national community came together. When one looks at this estimate, one would see for goods and services a mere \$4.4 million. One must consider that 60 per cent of the population of Trinidad and Tobago are under the age of 18 years. Under “Minor Equipment Purchases” \$500,000 has been allocated. Is the Government going to reach out to the youths of this country with this kind of allowance? When one looks at the other ministries one sees the amount of money they have been allocated.

Last Friday, after this budget was presented, I went to the gas station some hours after. When one goes for CNG, one has to join a long line to be served. Some of the drivers at the pump were talking; they described this budget as a “PP” budget. I asked what they meant by that? Did they mean a washroom budget? They said no. A “PP” budget is: “Patrick Putting Pressure on Poor People” by placing penalties.

If one looks at this budget, one sees it is a budget of penalties. Every person is now being asked to put out more and more money—which he does not really have. Every single thing has gone up. I ask the question: How are people really going to manage? Did the Minister take any look at what is happening? We have a very high unemployment situation and many of the Members have indicated that. I ask: What was the consideration?

First of all, the Minister of Finance started off by quoting a US \$19 price for oil. He has indicated that he had consultation. The consultations that we had, indicated between \$17 and \$18. If he is placing this at \$19, the chances are that he would not get the kind of revenue that he requires. Immediately, we are looking at the possibility of not being able to serve the national community.

Another area of the budget I should like to deal with is the allocation of \$1.1 billion for the safety net, which is an increase of only 48 per cent over last year’s amount, and that comprises 14 per cent of the total expenditure. How did he arrive at this? Would this really serve the national community?

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In this budget, we see very little for foreign affairs. To me, the budget does not address anything about foreign affairs. As the Member for Couva North indicated earlier today, the alternative government's proposals are very clear.

In my own capacity as shadow minister for foreign affairs, I have done my homework. Without a cent cost to the taxpayers, I went to Caracas in connection with community problems, problems which the Minister of Foreign Affairs failed to address. More than that, I have taken the liberty of trying to find business opportunities for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It has taken me to Guyana, Toronto, New York, Miami and Haiti. Those are visits that I made that did not cost the taxpayer one cent.

Here the alternative government is working. I have established contacts elsewhere, using the telephone, letters and fax. I make this point because when you look at the embassies we have in different countries, you see the amount of money that is going to be spent on them is close to \$17 million. And yet these embassies are not creating any monetary returns.

If you look at the offices in Washington, Toronto, London and elsewhere, there is no trade section. There is really no one there who is qualified to offer any trade advice to people coming to Trinidad with business in mind. We are going to develop, says the Minister, we are going to make this the financial centre of the Caribbean and put this little country on the global map. But how are we going to do it?

What would the UNC Minister of Foreign Affairs do? Immediately, we would establish a meaningful and applicable trade section in every embassy. How would we go about doing this? In Trinidad, there are a number of embassies such as the Canadian and the American Embassies, and they all have an effective trade section. I ask: Why is this absent from our embassies, why after so long?

Last year, the Minister indicated to us that he had employed the services of a team of lobbyists in the United States. To date, we have not had any report on what they have done. We do not know what we are paying them and what services they are offering. This is very unsatisfactory. We know that there is need for lobbyists in any part of the world, but we need to maximize our expenditure on them. We need to make sure that they are serving in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Indeed a very important segment of any government of any country is when we look at the draft estimates, again, we do not see any area in which it is going to bring in trade. There is absolutely none!

Mr. Manning: Shadow minister of Foreign Affairs?

Mr. Sharma: Yes, Member for San Fernando East. When the Member for Siparia was on the floor, the Member for San Fernando East interrupted him saying that if the Member repeated outside what he said here he would be in trouble. If your Minister of Finance and Member for St. Ann's East presented this budget outside Parliament, he would be in similar trouble.

A foreign affairs ministry would look at travel and tourism. What does that mean to Trinidad and Tobago? The Travel and Tourism Council, which is highly recognized all over the world, indicates that one of every nine jobs would be related to travel and tourism. Actually, it would be responsible for one tenth of the world's gross domestic product. We have seen nothing in this budget to take us in that direction.

The Minister spoke about increasing the number of hotel rooms in Tobago to 5,000 in 1994 or thereabouts. Would the tourist come to Trinidad and Tobago only to stay in his hotel room? The Member for Tunapuna mentioned swimming. When one looks at the 1994 Estimates, one would see only Maracas beach would be developed in 1994 and at a cost of \$400,000.00. The question is, if one is going to bring tourists to Trinidad and Tobago, where would one take them? What provisions are being made? Are they thinking only about hotel rooms?

This comes to the question of small businesses. What provisions are being made? When tourists go to any part of the world, they would want to buy handicraft, local products and local foods that are easily available from small business houses. There is absolutely no provision in the 1994 Budget for these things. Basically, we are saying that there must be some kind of provision for the graduates of YTEPP. We are training these people to go into small business but we are giving them absolutely no financial resources.

8.00 p.m.

Mr. Maharaj: I hate to have to raise this, but the Government and ourselves had agreed that we would terminate the debate at 8.00 p.m. Based on that, we have made arrangements accordingly. It would appear that the Government is not prepared to honour that commitment. We would probably have to determine what we will do. I do not think we should be treated like this. We have been getting this kind of treatment and the time has come for us to do something about it.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, that is a misrepresentation. The arrangement is that we would have three speakers each. Obviously, we did not consider the

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Leader of the Opposition. We said that we would go to approximately 8.00 p.m. There is no way I can say that we would finish at 8.00 p.m., unless we want to be here until Christmas. We have agreed that when the Member is finished, we will adjourn the House, and that is what will happen.

Madam Speaker: I think the Member is not really being given a fair opportunity. He has had many interruptions. Will the Member continue, please.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, will the Leader of Government Business, considering all the interruptions, terminate at this point, Sir? *[Interruption]* I was instructed by the Chief Whip that we would finish at 8.00 p.m. I have a death in the family. Tomorrow is the funeral. I have something to participate in tonight. To go to Fyzabad takes me 75 minutes. I would appreciate it if the Leader of Government Business you would reconsider the position. I will do better tomorrow. *[Interruption]*

A budget is not just about financial figures. All of us represent homes and we try to run our homes in such a way as to ensure the highest degree of success in the interest of our family members and our community. A budget must represent the same thing. *[Interruption]* As a result, the budget must be reflective of the wishes of the community and the way of life—

The UNC is aware, and very much so, that the people of Trinidad and Tobago must at all times come first. In this country, too many of our people are not happy and are losing the will to continue living. We see school children, venders and government workers having great difficulty. One of the areas that create this is the high degree of unemployment. So we need to do things that would create employment so that people can earn their living. This will lend to developing their will-power.

There are many ills a human being can suffer, but when that human being begins to lose the will to live—which is what is happening under this PNM Government—he starts to think of different things. It is in this regard that we propose to have centres set up to assist those people throughout the country. In the areas of business, a foreign affairs ministry would attempt to establish networks to assist people with goods to export. For instance, when we went to Guyana, 23 local investors went with us. They all came back with business. Subsequent to that, another 13 went, who all came back with business. The point is that the Government failed to assist these people. It was the work of the UNC. The same thing happened in Miami.

There are a number of people, especially near Christmas time, who want to purchase goods, but the Government has no machinery in place. Previously it had spoken of a one-stop shop. That does not exist at all. That is not available here. For instance, a person going into the office in Ottawa asking to do business in Trinidad can receive absolutely no information, no guidelines. Very often they will tell you to contact Port of Spain. Are they aware of this? They want to make this country the financial centre. What exactly are they telling the investor?

What we propose to do is to make sure every one of our centres is equipped with the human resources to start with—a reception area. There are a number of toll free lines available. None of our embassies has those. If one goes to a BWIA counter in Toronto and ask to fly a passenger out of Vancouver, that passenger has to make his own arrangements from Vancouver to Toronto and then get on to a BWIA flight. That facility is not available. If a passenger wants to leave Seattle to come here to do business, he has to find his way to New York and then get on a BWIA flight. We have nothing set out there. It has been so for several years and they keep saying that they want to change the system. But absolutely nothing is happening.

The Member for Diego Martin East talked about the unavailability of engineers. He referred only to UWI graduates. We have students attending more than 34 universities in the United States studying several disciplines, including engineering. We have students on scholarships in Canada. Is he aware of these things? Is he saying that UWI is the only university in the world which turns out civil engineers? Is that what he is telling the country in 1993, that we are unable to produce civil engineers. That is a slap in the face of UWI. If he is saying that the pass rate is so low, then he should go on to tell us why.

Mr. Imbert: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I merely indicated that there are 150 engineers—electrical, mechanical, chemical and civil. There are Jamaican students as well as students from other Caribbean territories, but the civil engineering students are just six. The Member is misleading the House.

Mr. C. Sharma: The point is that we have a number of local graduates from the university. We have a number returning from the United States, Canada and England, and today this Minister stands in the national Parliament and says that we are unable to fill those vacancies. He indicated that there are 19 vacancies. Have they been advertised? The answer is, no. How are these posts filled? It is very questionable. It comes back to the URP. A number of retired people find employment there. How often do you do this and why do you continue to do it?

Mr. Imbert: Again, the Member is misleading this House. All the vacancies were advertised widely in the press.

8.10 p.m.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, if what the Minister is saying is correct, I am advising him to give us that advertisement and before the end of this month we will have those vacancies filled. Try us. The point is that there is too much corruption in employment in the Ministry of Works and Transport. Do not pretend that it does not happen. We live in this country. I am the lone representative of the majority of people in this country. I represent 65 per cent of the people in this country who are under the age of 35.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. When the hon. Member says that there is too much corruption in employment in the Ministry of Works and Transport, what specifically does he mean?

Mr. C. Sharma: The PNM has been known for corruption across the board. Countries are known for different things. This country is known for Hasley Crawford, Jean Pierre, and PNM corruption. We have seen where Government has spent millions of dollars and has given no account.

What the Member for Tunapuna said about November 19 has answered the question. Do you want more answers? You are part of it. Tell us about National Quarries; has there been any corruption there? The answer is, yes. That requires bull pizzle. The Member for Tunapuna indicated that on November 19 this country was red, the Hindu schools were singing bhajans. The country is still red. Why? Because of PNM corruption.

This country, through its oil revenues, has obtained billions of dollars. What do we have to show for it in 1993? Absolutely nothing! What does this budget set out to do? Does it really set out to put pressure on poor people? The answer is, yes. We are going to pay increased rates for everything. If you want to empty a swimming pool—the Prime Minister's residence has one—you pay \$200. Few people have swimming pools in this country, but to get a passport one has to pay \$500. I am from a poor neighbourhood; I did not learn to swim through the ministry; I learnt to swim in the lagoon, and I am proud of it.

We have seen in the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, which was delivered on Friday, increases in every area. We have seen, for instance, on motor vehicles, that for certain periods one would have to pay different sums of money. Vehicles over five years old \$2,000; vehicles between two and five years \$3,000;

vehicles under two years \$4,000; but if you purchase this vehicle from a motor car dealer who is registered for VAT, you would not have to pay this particular tax.

Can someone who wants to sell a vehicle not employ the services of a registered service dealer and under—invoice the car and save that tax? It is very simple. If the car is sold for \$10,000, one would pay \$1,500 VAT on it. Right away one is establishing areas for avoidance and evasion, so this was not carefully thought out.

The Minister went on to say that for people who fail to pay their licence there is a proposed charge three or four times higher. The question I am asking is: Is that constitutional? How can they decide that? If a vehicle is down for whatever reason, parts are unavailable, and as a result the vehicle is not on the road, why would this driver now have to pay for three years on a vehicle that he was not able to use? Again you are seeing in this budget that the Government is concerned only about collecting revenue. It does not care who suffer in the process.

We see also several fee increases, which only last year had gone up, for instance, postage. How, the Government expects people to keep in contact with their relatives? The cost of the telephone is already high and now the cost of posting a letter has increased several times over. Again the rich in the national community can afford to make their phone calls. Who is going to write these letters? Again it is a tax on the poor people. So the drivers were correct when they said this was a "PP" budget, "Patrick Putting Pressure on Poor People." It is evident right through.

The Member for Couva North indicated that we are not in favour of the privatization of WASA and T&TEC, and he advanced some very cogent reasons. There are moneys to be had, if we have a money problem. For instance, there is the 936 loan available from Puerto Rico. I am looking at some statistics and I am not seeing Trinidad and Tobago applying for these moneys under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act, and the question to ask is, why? *[Interruption]* No, no, no, you did not get the most money; somebody fooled you. I will give you the figures. I have them here. *[Interruption]*.

Madam Speaker, you will realize that we can obtain moneys at much lower rates, even lower than what you saw coming into the Pride Project. For instance, through the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act, we got \$819 million in 1991, in 1990, \$1 billion. We saw where Jamaica got the largest amount of money—\$150 million in 1991.

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The Member for St. Ann's East indicated—and he was correct that we must become involved in NAFTA, but what is he doing in this regard? Very little. Let me qualify it. NAFTA has been around for a while. This Government had, and still has to a large extent, a wonderful opportunity to become involved in NAFTA. Do you understand what NAFTA really is? *[Interruption]* I am not sure. Nobody in Trinidad and Tobago is now sure. We see where NAFTA is going to create the world's biggest and richest market, \$6 trillion for 360 million consumers.

The Member for San Fernando East is saying that we are getting involved. What is NAFTA going to buy from us? The Member for Diego Martin West is totally ignorant of what is going on there. NAFTA is going to purchase agricultural products, to a large extent. You are destroying agriculture in this country. Miami has established the world's largest cruise line and we have a market for tropical fruits. *[Inrterruption]*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the Member for Fyzabad is having a very tough time.

8.20 p.m.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, why does the Government always say it is doing the right thing? For instance, in the area of agriculture, there is an existing market for our tropical fruits. Since this Government came into power it has done absolutely nothing to make fruits available to the United States. Recently I met in Trinidad three fruit brokers from the United States and they were looking at the cruise line that operates out of Miami—which happens to be the world's largest and busiest seaport—and they could not obtain from the Ministry of Agriculture—what kind of fruit is available in Trinidad and Tobago. They were interested in things like papaw, mangoes, citrus, bananas. To date, the Ministry of Agriculture is unable to say what kind of fruit we can provide or the quantum.

The other point I want to make is that we must truly get involved in NAFTA. How? By first educating the national community of Trinidad and Tobago as to what NAFTA is all about. How can we gain benefits? As I have indicated, NAFTA is at this time the world's largest single area for business, and countries that are getting involved are already getting benefits. We saw last year, for instance, in a short space of time where Canada exported \$360 million in pharmaceuticals. How much they import is a good question. They can import as much as they want, the point is, what do we have to export? We are already importing from the United States. The Caribbean market is the second largest—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I just want to understand the Member clearly. Is he endorsing a move by the Government to enter NAFTA? Is that what he is saying?

Mr. C. Sharma: This side will endorse any move the Government makes in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Tell us what you want to do; you talk about consultation—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, just to be clear. I want to know whether the Member considers such a move to be in the national interest.

Mr. C. Sharma: The Government has not told us the move. This is the game. All of us at some point have had to be exposed to some schools of thought in psychology, and one of the very evident ones is the games people play. The PNM has been playing these games all the time, across the board. This is not the place to play games, it is the place to arrive at meaningful solutions, in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

This is the direction in which we have to go. The Government has a wonderful opportunity for consultation, but it plays games again. It says it is consulting but there is absolutely no consultation. We consulted and we determined that we would terminate tonight at 8.00 o'clock, but now even that they have changed. That is totally unfair. We must be part of the whole; certainly we are a part, but we need to work together. This is not happening at all.

I am hoping to limit my presentation to what the UNC will do in terms of foreign affairs. We propose to establish *[Interruption]* Madam Speaker, I am sure that you are feeling sorry for me. Can you instruct that we adjourn the House at this point?

Madam Speaker: I have pleaded for you more than once. Order, please. Will the Member continue.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, I have to talk about this. Of the 341 URP projects in 1993, when one looks at the distribution of these projects it could not be by accident—for it took place in 1992—one sees that close to 70 per cent, of the projects went to PNM constituencies. The Minister says it is not quite so much; was it 69 per cent? Why does this continue to happen?

Another area of employment that does not come to the attention of the national community, the Civilian Corps—how are members recruited? The Government would say that the positions are advertised. Beautiful! But I want to

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share an experience of last year. When they were recruiting the young men and women, before the advertisement appeared in the print media—and I want the Government to deny this—application forms were given out to people. They came to my office for recommendations. *[Interruption]* Last year or this year. It does not matter. The point is, these things are always happening. This is the game the Government plays; it plays with dates. So before the advertisement appeared in the national newspapers, the PNM party groups were distributing forms. This must stop!

I am a student of psychology; when you do this to the young man and woman of Trinidad and Tobago, you are destroying that mind. You are saying to him or her, you are 17-18 years, do not worry with what you see in the advertisement; take this form and fill it in now. And that continues.

On the question of scholarships, many scholarships are given by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago annually but nobody knows how it is done. There are people attending universities in the United States—*[Interruption]* Correct, and the national community does not know. I am a representative of the national community; you must say to the national community how these scholarships are given, how one can apply for them. These games must stop. This is something that has been happening in the past; it is continuing. Under the previous administration there was a committee set up to look into the award of scholarships; when PNM came into power, that went down the road.

There are students out there who are paying their own money, going abroad at great sacrifice to their families, studying and returning here, and they are unable to get jobs. Not because jobs are not available—certainly, jobs cannot be had for everybody, but there is no fair system of distribution of jobs across the board. We see this from time to time; as Members of Parliament we discover this. For instance, as Members of Parliament, people would come to us for recommendations; they would come for assistance in filling in application forms. We note all the applications that pass through our office—applications for posts of teaching, nurses' aides, maids in the hospitals, in the general public service—and we follow up to find out when these jobs were filled. Very often these jobs are filled while applications are still going through the process. *[Interruption]* The Member is saying it does not happen? Is the national community not aware of this?

In some of the government primary schools there are two or three full-time cleaners, but under the URP programme they are sending 10 cleaners fortnightly. That is interrupting the school system. Can you imagine 10 people with nothing to

do? The Member for La Brea knows of it. *[Interruption]* All Members know of it. I want the Member to pick up the list and say how many URP cleaners there are in each government school and why they are there, when there are already three established cleaners?

Mr. Bereaux: Madam Speaker, just to correct the record. I do not know of any ten cleaners in any primary school.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, the Member for La Brea might be right. There is a school of thought that says that anything the PNM touches spoils. That is an example.

We are seeing this in the schools; the principals have communicated this to us. They say it was useless having so many additional cleaners when there is no work to do, and of course, they have to stay there for a certain number of hours and it disrupts normal school life. I can bring these letters, if Members opposite require them. The point is, we are seeing this happening all across the board.

On the URP projects, for instance, how do they decide on doing a project? It is done in consultation with the PNM party groups. I am the representative for Fyzabad; I am not consulted, but every PNM member on that side knows how many—*[Interruption]* You will have an opportunity—*[Interruption]* Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order, please, order. I cannot understand this. The Member does not seem to be able to get across his contribution and the reporters are having so much difficulty in getting what the Member is saying. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that these proceedings are being reported and the *Hansard* reporters in such circumstances have a difficulty getting down what the Member is saying.

Hon. Member: Madam Speaker, you must send them to the British Parliament for training, where there is plenty noise and action.

Madam Speaker: Unfortunately, they have not been, so we ought to sympathize and show greater love.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, under the Ministry of Health there is an allocation of \$97 million. What we are seeing in the constituency of Fyzabad is that a number of health centre—the Fyzabad Health Centre, the Oropouche Health Centre, the Siparia Health Centre—are without medication. I have drawn this to the attention of the Minister of Health but the situation is continuing. People go there at great sacrifice to receive attention but when they are given a prescription

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there is no medication and they are told to come back. *[Interruption]* It does not matter whose portfolio it is; it is a national problem.

8.30 p.m.

It is a problem that comes to the attention of all of us. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sudama: Do not take them on. You carry on; you are going well.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, there is another area I would like to touch on. What is the foreign policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago?

Dr. Rowley: Back to foreign policy?

Mr. C. Sharma: What exactly do they intend to achieve? One would recognize that this country, as was said by the Prime Minister recently, is running "hour by hour."

Hon. Member: Did he say that?

Mr. Maharaj: Yes.

Mr. C. Sharma: What is he saying to the national community? Here is my Prime Minister, in 1993, saying, they are running the country "hour by hour." It is because they lack policy and direction.

Mr. Mohammed: They lack foresight. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Maharaj: Read it!

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, this was not said at a political meeting where there are only PNM supporters. Listen very carefully. This does tremendous damage. Do you know where this was said? At the University of the West Indies—

Dr. Rowley: Read the whole thing.

Mr. C. Sharma: —where we have students from Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana and elsewhere. Imagine, this is getting out all over the Caribbean; it will end up elsewhere. What will international investors think? What will Nucor, for instance, think when they see this? The Prime Minister is saying—

"The Ministry of Finance is running the country virtually on an hour by hour basis."

Can you imagine the impact this would have on the international community?

Mr. Imbert: I do not understand—what impact?

Mr. C. Sharma: The Minister does not understand it. No wonder. Anything the PNM touches, goes. It touches the drains and the whole country floods. This is the second part of it:

"In the first open forum..."

So the Member had a lot of time to think. He went on a number of visits, travelled all over the world. This is the first forum ever held between a local Prime Minister and students, and this is what he had to say. The Member as a former student of the University is going to inspire these students of the West Indies—a role model for these students—

"Manning also disclosed that Friday's Budget will make provisions for employment"

Where is it?

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. K. Jurai*]

Dr. Rowley: Division! [*Interruption*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Sharma: While the Member for Diego Martin West wants it to appear comical, if the Government could have divided this issue too, it would have done so.

I go on to the construction sector. We saw last year where provisions were made for people who build their homes to be given tax rebates. But the Minister of Housing must indicate how many people benefited from that and who they were. Were there any lower-income families? The answer is, no. Again, it is extended to 1994. Who is benefiting from this particular incentive?

Dr. Lasse: Madam Speaker, I will be making my contribution to the debate at which time the Member will hear it all.

Mr. C. Sharma: I can save him replying to this matter. The answer is that the majority of people of Trinidad and Tobago are not benefiting from this particular incentive."

Mr. Manning continued:

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The said Government is pursuing divestment, the need for flexibility in a world of changing ideology. The country is facing serious economic constraints which make it a virtual puppet to the international community.

This is what the Prime Minister is saying?

Mr. Maharaj: Repeat that part loudly.

Mr. C. Sharma: The UNC proposes to continue encouraging people to do business in our country. As shadow foreign affairs minister in 1994, I propose to travel elsewhere to invite investors to Trinidad and Tobago; and when they draw this article to my attention, how would I reply to them? *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker, I am being disturbed badly.

Mr. Sudama: That is the cut and thrust of debate!

Mr. C. Sharma: He went on to refer to the North American Free Trade Agreement. He expressed faith that it can help improve the country's economic situation saying "the country cannot go it alone." What provisions has he made? Absolutely none. So if we are going to benefit—and certainly we can benefit from NAFTA, the world is on the NAFTA trail now. We are all heading in that direction. Why have we not seen a single release from the Ministry of Information, or from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, inviting the population, and the business community of Trinidad and Tobago to get on the NAFTA bandwagon? Saying this and not presenting any directions is useless, and this is what has been happening with this Government. It has been saying a number of things with absolutely no direction.

Another area that I touch on is the Caribbean Programme for Commonwealth Caribbean Trade Investment and Industrial Co-operation. Again, Trinidad and Tobago can benefit from this. Again, we have seen absolutely no advice, no assistance to the business community wanting to get involved in this venture. What is happening is that there are a number of established organizations and trade practices that we can get involved in. If we cannot provide jobs or markets locally, there are established markets outside, but to get into those markets the Government has to play its role.

As I have indicated, the UNC has done some work. We have been able to bring investors to Trinidad and to assist people. You your good self, Madam Speaker, have been able to reach out to people in Canada through a women's organization you head here, exporting pepper sauce.

8.40 p.m.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for giving way again. I wonder if he would be kind enough to suggest how the Government might go about attracting these investors.

Mr. C. Sharma: Certainly, Madam Speaker. That is what we are here for, but the Government has indicated that there is going to be consultation. It is only when we raise it that it wants to consult. Can the Government not hold a session? Let us adjourn the House and consult tomorrow or for the rest of the week, so that you can cut this budget debate in half.

Today must be a very significant day for Trinidad and Tobago. The Member for Couva North made his contribution with the highest degree of brilliance and with a vision. He indicated clearly to the national community that he is very much interested in what is happening, that the PNM has failed, is failing, and the UNC has answers. The answers are not within the UNC itself. The answers are within the people, for we are in consultation with the people.

When we come and say that people are living in poverty, we do not dream these things. When we say that Central is flooding and the Government is pretending that it is spending 60 to 70 per cent—doing what? What amount of that money goes into corruption?

Madam Speaker, I want to indicate something. During the summer vacation—

Mr. Imbert: We do not have summer here.

Mr. C. Sharma: Beautiful! The hon. Member went to university. He knows what summer is. I hope so.

During the summer vacation, we repaired Avocat Vedic School. We changed the entire roof. We painted the entire school.

Dr. Rowley: Who is “we”?

Mr. C. Sharma: Listen and the “we” will come after. We changed the ceiling. We spent \$53,000 less—

Mr. Narine: Jagmohan did that.

Mr. C. Sharma: You would not even know Jagmohan. Madam Speaker, the Member for Arouca North keeps disturbing me and I will have to shut him up. I will tell you how, and the Member for Caroni East will agree with me. In Hindi,

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there is a loose term, “jhaat” which represents dead hair and that is what the Member is, a certified “jhaat.”

Madam Speaker, Oropouche Government School and Pepper Village Government School—

Madam Speaker: I am seeing a trend in this Parliament with which I am really not happy. I have been seeing it all today, and I think I ought to bring it to the attention of Members. I ask Members to observe Standing Order 36(4) which says:

"It shall be out of order to use offensive or insulting language about Members of either Chamber of the Legislature."

I have been noticing that on both sides of the House there is this trend developing where insults are being flung left, right and centre. I ask the hon. Member to withdraw that statement. He insulted the Member for Arouca North.

Mr. C. Sharma: I withdraw it immediately.

Madam Speaker, on Avocat Vedic School we spent \$53,000.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I do not see the need for you to be insulting one another. Contributions can be made without that.

Mr. C. Sharma: We got the roof changed. We got the entire school painted, but more than that, it was done through community effort. At two other schools—Oropouche Government School and Pepper Village Government School—less work is being done, and more than \$160,000 has been spent to date.

Mr. Imbert: It is not true.

Mr. C. Sharma: The hon. Minister of Works and Transport can verify that. It is his ministry. Be sure to give the information.

We see the Siparia Road retaining wall—\$171,301.31. This wall is approximately 58 feet long and between 5 and 6 feet high. They are spending over \$171,000 on that wall. Before that wall was constructed, the community—

Mr. Manning: We were talking about foreign affairs.

Mr. C. Sharma: We will come back to that. The Government does not have local policy; how can it have foreign policy? It has nothing for local investors; how can there be anything for foreign investors? I will tie it into foreign investment.

When a foreign investor sees a government erecting a wall 60 feet long by 5 feet high and spending \$100,000, do you think he would want to come to invest here? That is the story. That is what we see.

We are seeing the Ramatali box drain built in 1993 at a cost of \$179,648. Would you believe that of this \$179,648 more than \$100,000 was paid in wages?

Mr. Imbert: It is a labour intensive programme.

Mr. C. Sharma: Beautiful! You see what is happening, because it is labour intensive, the Government does everything to waste money on labour. It is spending more than \$100,000 on labour to build a wall 60 feet long by 5 feet high, and the Government it is happy with that.

Mr. Imbert: The hon. Member is making that up.

Mr. C. Sharma: First, the hon. Minister said it was labour intensive and now he is saying we are making it up.

This Government continues telling the national community: "Listen, things are bad. We are going through a very difficult period." Yes, we agree that we are going through a difficult period, but a family going through difficult periods, what does it do? When a husband loses his job, or he is given fewer days to work, or his salary is reduced, he sits with his family and speaks with them. He says, "Listen, wife and children, this is my situation. I have moved from \$3,000 to \$2,000 a month; now we will need the same amount of food; we will need money for travelling and personal effects, but we have to reduce. We have to go on a strict budget. We have to commit ourselves so there must be less waste".

The problem, as indicated by the Member for Couva North, in WASA and T&TEC, is waste. We recognized and under who *[Interruption]* The Member for Diego Martin East agrees, waste. How did we arrive at this? I will tell the House how.

Every time the PNM win an election, soon after they create employment for a number of their supporters. Right now, for instance, in T&TEC, the Government is on this trail to collect money. In San Fernando there are six T&TEC trucks disconnecting consumers for non-payment of their electricity bills, and only one truck reconnecting. Why is this happening?

Mr. Imbert: Where does the Member get these figures from?

Mr. C. Sharma: I do my work; the Minister should do his work. Every figure that we present on this side is not correct, according to them. The figures that they

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present are the only correct figures. They are scared of the truth. That is why we are here today. They keep evading issues and facts. If I were to ask the question, what percentage of the moneys that this country has seen been wasted by the PNM Government, would it be able to say? I want to say it is more than 50 per cent. Here we are talking about billions of dollars.

How do we arrive at this? It is now public information that there is waste all across—in T&TEC, in WASA, and all around. We saw in *Time for Action*, a publication of the West Indian Commission, certain proposals but not a single one has been implemented to date. The Government spent a large sum of money hosting this meeting in Trinidad, and, again, we are seeing absolutely no implementation of anything. This is what happens all the time. Many brilliant ideas were put forward.

The Member for Couva North identified some of them with the five-year PNM plan. Plan after plan. In housing, the same thing; in planning, the same thing. The time has now come—and the Prime Minister indicated—how can we arrive at meaningful solutions?

Let us agree that there must be consultation with the people of Trinidad and Tobago. There must be consultation on both sides. There must be consultation with the people through their representatives, for instance. The people certainly have the answers. They are the ones who are suffering. I do not know if the Government has really seen the kind of suffering we are seeing. There is certainly an opportunity to change the situation.

8.50 p.m.

We cannot be coming here Friday after Friday, budget after budget, and just going through the debates and not arriving at any meaningful solutions. The Government has agreed that we need to expand the School Feeding Programme and intends to spend \$80 million. How much of it is tied into local agriculture? Absolutely nothing. Have we indicated to the farmers of this country that we need *x* amount of cucumbers, rice [*Interruption*] Okay, now that you know the cucumber requirement, have you indicated to the farmers to go out and plant it?

The Prime Minister seems to be excited about NAFTA. Has the Government identified what we are going to export to them? Was this told to the national community? Is it getting them involved? The answer is, no.

Madam Speaker, as you are aware, over the years, Fyzabad has played a very meaningful and significant role in the life of the national community, and it has

produced noble souls like the Member for Port of Spain South, the Member for Port-of-Spain North, St. Ann's West and yours truly. What we are seeing in Fyzabad, moreso in the oil industry, is that very few jobs are given to the people of Fyzabad. Many of the people who work in the oil industry live outside Fyzabad. So it is very painful to see a large part of the oil operations pouring large sums of money into the Treasury and very little is spent on Fyzabad.

Fyzabad, for instance, is without a library. We are seeing where a project is going to La Brea, and I am happy for the Member for La Brea and the people there, but there is no infrastructure in La Brea to receive that and the Member is in agreement with that. What are we doing about that?

We are seeing, for instance, the schools—and this has been drawn to the attention of the relevant authorities—several roofs are leaking. Again, with community effort we have repaired some. At a particular school in Fyzabad—I do not want to call the name because I know the school's administration would be put under pressure—through its PTA and its community effort—the Member for Port of Spain South is a past student—has raised \$360,000.00. They built the business studies unit but to date that school does not have teachers to teach the subject. The school is short of six teachers.

So we are telling the national community that they have a role to play, that the Government cannot do everything, and we go out there with the limited resources, build an entire block costing close to \$500,000, having raised \$360,000 in these difficult times, and the ministry refuses to provide the teachers. At another school, where we should have 92 teachers, we have 71. There are students who come from all over to attend these schools and the provisions are not there. It must be taken into consideration also that these schools are not receiving the services of PTSC; no buses are available. There are children coming to Fyzabad, for instance, from La Brea, Pt. Fortin, having to hustle rides through the oilfields, both boys and girls and when they get to the schools the roofs are leaking.

Having taken an oath to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago and in particular, the people of Fyzabad—

Mr. Manning: And to uphold the Constitution and the law.

Mr. C. Sharma: That is correct. I hope he is doing the same. I have had cause to journey to Cedros—and I know Cedros would be close to your heart—well, the Cedros Government Primary School was 100 years old last year. The building was in a terrible condition. The Ministry of Works and Transport condemned the building. Nevertheless, there were no other schools in the area to facilitate the

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students so they continued attending that school. A couple weeks ago, the school burnt down. The community got together and said, "Give us the materials, and we will build the school." Among the Cedros community there are carpenters, masons, plumbers, everyone. What more can you ask of the community? To date, they have not received a reply. The children are now housed in the Cedros Composite School.

You can imagine the difficulty parents are experiencing in having their five-year olds in this large school, having to share the washrooms with older students. Sometimes the girls get mixed up and end up in the boys' washroom and vice versa. This is very unfortunate. The point is that when the community responds to the call of the Government to assist in building a better Trinidad and Tobago, and the community is ready, the Government does absolutely nothing.

We saw a similar situation with Vessigny Government School. Of course, something is being done now. But before that, the community again indicated their willingness to participate. When a school is built for \$2 million and \$3 million, have they looked at what percentage of the total moneys allocated goes for labour? So if the parents come together and are willing to provide some of this labour in the interest of getting a larger school or more facilities, could we not adopt that approach? It has worked elsewhere. It has worked in Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica.

So the Government is inviting the national community to get involved but it is not assisting them in the least bit. If we are to get involved in building a better Trinidad and Tobago, we all need to play our role. We need to agree to have consultation, to agree even to disagree when it is necessary, but more than that, we have to agree that whatever we do, must be in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

So I have presented here much food for thought. I have also agreed to make myself and my team of experts available for any consultation, on NAFTA or anything else. Members of this House must recognize the great disadvantage Members on this side are at. In preparing for a debate, we have to get all this information and the different agencies of the Government make absolutely nothing available to us. You go to a ministry and say, you want 'x', 'y', 'z'. I should have thought that the debate would be in the interest of the people of our country. I have here the *Washington Economic Report*, October 20, 1993. This was faxed to me and I have to pay for it. We get absolutely no assistance. For instance, the office of the Opposition is without a fax. I received information from

America, the November/December *Foreign Affairs*. This magazine cost US \$150 per year. It is a monthly magazine. I had 23 pages faxed to me.

The point is that if we are going to serve the national community as we are elected to do, the Government has to be much more understanding and maintain its part of the agreement. When the Member for San Fernando East sat on this side not too long ago in his capacity as Opposition Leader, he indicated that the office he occupied then was not adequate. Of course, at that time, it was he and two other Members. Today, we are much larger in terms of numbers, and the facilities are still lacking.

9.00 p.m.

If we have to continue to serve in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago; it is only fair—you control the resources. For instance, as Members of Parliament we of the Opposition get limited stationery, no typewriters, envelopes and other minor things, but Members on the other side get everything. *[Interruption]* I am making a case for both sides, please sit. We both need it. This is in the spirit of keeping my oath; I represent the front side and the other side too.

Madam Speaker, can you tell me how much more time I have?

Madam Speaker: You have three minutes more.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, I observe that every time a Member of this side asks how much time he has, you always say three minutes. Next time give us three and one half minutes, please.

Madam Speaker: Your minute started at 8.35 p.m.

Mr. C. Sharma: Yes, Madam Speaker. In closing, I trust that we have come in the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and that the Government would treat us with the respect that we deserve and co-operate with us. Members on this side represent people with problems just as Members on that side do. For instance, when people who are not receiving old age pension come to us, what recourse do we have? Very little. There is no system in place.

All religions agree on one thing—that the truth will always surface. The point is that there are a number of people who are denied what is rightfully theirs, and as their representatives, they come to us. For instance, the Fyzabad Health Centre is located next to the building I occupy, and when people go there and cannot get a prescription filled and have to go back five times, what do we do? It continues this way.

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My appeal is that we get all involved in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I wish us all well. Thank you.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, before I move the adjournment, I want to tell my Friend that the Government is willing to assist him at any time in dealing with his constituents at that level. I thought we were to have some kind of seminar at some time for parliamentarians with respect to that.

At the request of the Member for Couva South, Madam Speaker, I seek the leave of the House to have Motion No. 2, listed under "Private Business" on the Order Paper, standing in his name, replaced by Motion No. 5, which was circulated on the Order Paper dated November 29, 1993, and Motion No. 2 renumbered as Motion No. 5.

Question put and agreed to.

**STANDING ORDERS
(Suspension of)**

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, following discussions and agreement between the Government and Opposition Benches, and in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 90(1), I beg to move the suspension of Standing Order 63(5) which provides that the debate on the second reading of an appropriation bill should extend over a period not exceeding four days. This is to permit this debate to continue for an additional period of two days.

Leave granted.

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Thursday, December 2, 1993 at 1.30 p.m. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.06 p.m.