

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, December 03, 1993*

The House met at 10.15 a.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES BILL**

Bill to provide for the establishment of Regional Health Authorities and for connected matters [*The Minister of Health*]; read the first time.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the debate on the second reading of the Appropriation Bill (Budget) be continued at this time and that the Motion that the Senate amend the Airports Authority Bill be deferred until after the budget debate.

*Question put and agreed to.***APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Fourth Day]

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

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate. Let me start off by saying that I am averse to using clichés, but that as life goes on, I have come to accept one; and that is, the constancy of change. Everything changes. Life is constant motion, constant growth or decline, depending on your experiences and how you handle your affairs. Even in death, there is really no finality, because the body itself returns to dust, which in turn serves to support new life and new growth.

I make that kind of philosophical beginning to underscore the point—and I think everybody accepts it—that we are living in an era of unprecedented change. Politically, in essence, we have moved from a state of bipolar rigidity and predictability to an era of upheaval and uncertainty, and at this time of uncertainty

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and upheaval, some countries are filled with the hopes that come from their new-found freedoms, while others are experiencing horrendous tragedy. That, in essence, is the massive political change that we have experienced as a world. On the international economic scenario as well, there is considerable change and I think we ought to look at what has been happening.

In the so-called bastions of prosperity and economic stability—the industrialized countries—there have been, for some time, recessionary trends to the extent that some people are feeling that it is endemic. We are having, as well, in countries of the developing world, continued contractionary trends, whilst at the same time in some parts of the developing world we have a return to growth, for example, in Latin America, Argentina and Chile. The United States of America has been experiencing some growth, and that growth, in a real way, is stymied by the weak markets of its traditional allies, to the extent that the United States is beginning to see itself, and very realistically, as a Pacific Rim country. It is not insignificant that the last meeting of APEC was held in the United States, and that President Clinton made a statement recently suggesting that the shift of American foreign policy focus is now to the Pacific Rim rather than to Europe.

There are some of the interesting, important economic changes taking place. In Asia, as a whole, there is continued growth. That part of the world, certainly, is the most economically dynamic area at the moment. There is hardly a country there that is not experiencing some measure of growth. Even Vietnam is poised for some measure of prosperity. Of course, I am sure it is important to Trinidad and Tobago that there is the prospect of India emerging as the fourth industrialized nation of the world, and China, formerly a command economy having moved to a measure of authoritarian capitalism, as it were, is moving to the point where it is emerging as the other super power in the world. That is just the tip of the iceberg as far as changes go.

10.25 a.m.

We in Trinidad and Tobago are also in the throes of change. If one was to look at the debate that is taking place nationally, and the concerns of our people, essentially one would see that it has to do with the role of Government. That, to my mind, is what the debate is all about. Is government the facilitator, the regulator, the provider, the investor, or the intervener? What is the role of Government? This is part of the change that we are undergoing as a nation. I am sure when we come finally to a conclusion on this matter—when the whole matter is crystalized and concretized into the new thinking that is emerging—we would have defined the role of government in these times.

The fact of the matter is, however one looks at it, the Government must continue to be multifaceted and multidimensional. That, essentially, is our position as far as the role of Government is concerned. I think if one looks at this budget presentation of the Minister of Finance, one would see Government playing its various roles. We, on this side have been accused of something approaching laissez-faire government. We have probably been accused of abdicating our responsibility, but I think if one looks at the budget presentation, one would see a different picture emerging.

In this budget we are providing a \$1 billion safety net, which tells you of the kind of government that we are. It is a government with a soul; one that is caring; a government that continues to see itself as a protector of the less fortunate, and as a provider of a measure of security for those who need it in the society. That, really, is in the best traditions of caring, benevolent governments in any civilized society. I emphasize the point. The fact that we do have this \$1 billion safety net absolves us, in a way, of any criticism of being a government that is taking its hands out of the system and allowing market forces to play and run and create havoc with people's lives.

We have made the point before that whilst we are liberalizing our economy and moving towards the market-oriented economy, we are not going to allow the soullessness of the market place to overcome and overwhelm us. We are going to ensure that we are appropriately interventionist to ensure that there is justice, security and provision for the needy in the society.

Look at our *Public Sector Investment Programme*. We are being accused of moving out of the economy. We are being accused of leaving everything to the private sector, but the main economic stimulus in the budget where we are hoping to encourage economic growth is through the *Public Sector Investment Programme*.

Government is investing millions of dollars in health, housing, national security, and public utilities. It is investing hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money in the upgrading of our infrastructure in these various sectors and we are sure that through this mechanism we would be helping to return the country to economic growth. We see this role for Government at this level of economic activity. We see the role for the private sector, as we have said before, but Government must also intervene in the economy in certain ways.

I am sure that after this kind of consideration, people might be a little wary of accusing this Government of not participating as it ought to in the economic

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revival of Trinidad and Tobago, and of leaving everything up to the private sector. The fact of the matter is, as I said before, the main economic stimulus that we foresee through this budget comes from the *Public Sector Investment Programme*.

In fact, if one looks at all other areas, whether it be in national security, housing, education, agriculture, or the plans we have for tourism, one would see an activist government, rather than a government with a laissez-faire approach. I think it is important that we understand that this is a definition that is emerging; activism in government, as opposed to statism. Excessive statism can lead to suffocation, and it has been proved in many of the command economies of the world. Throughout the world there are countries which—right in our own hemisphere, for example, Argentina, Chile having gone through policies of deregulation and divestment, are moving towards growth, as I said before, having decreased the measure of state intervention and participation in the economy.

This budget is a very clear indication that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is activist, participating fully in national activity fully in charge, providing service, taking care of the needy, stimulating the economy, multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and ensuring that the society improves at various levels. That is not to say that we are without problems. We do have problems. We have accepted what they are and are facing the challenge of dealing with them in spite of the severe economic constraints under which we operate.

Our budget presentation gives a very clear idea of the kind of government we are, and any objective analysis would give that picture of a government that is sober, a government that has a plan, a government that knows where it is going, a government that operates on policies, understands the new realities of the world, and constantly seeks to make itself relevant to those new realities and face the challenges that we do.

10.35 p.m.

The budget also tells us about Trinidad and Tobago, much of which we do know. The budget clearly reveals that we are a fragile, vulnerable economy, heavily dependent on the energy sector. Look at the decline in the energy sector which has come about as a result of the soft oil prices and the drop in production, which, in a way really have stymied our return to growth. That is something that we need to tackle. We have been saying that we need to diversify the economy. We have made attempts to diversify it into natural gas with the establishment of Point Lisas but we have not gone as far as we ought to have gone, but we in the Government have come to terms with that.

The budget also tells us that our manufacturing sector is an increasingly strong sector of our economy, and that is a very positive sign indeed. This is the non-oil sector, traditionally weak and dependent. It is an area of economic activity where there has been growth. I am sure that has come about as a result of the policies we have put in place.

When we talk about a measure of reliance on our private sector, there is hope, and that reliance is based on certain foundations. There is that aspect of it. The budget also reveals that as a national community we have made errors of considerable significance in not emphasizing and pushing the tourism and the agricultural sectors enough, but this Government is poised to move in those directions.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, I am sure in his contribution would be dealing with the growth in that sector and the developments that we do have planned. The Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism talked yesterday about plans for the tourism sector and you would have heard over and over about our plans for development of event-tourism.

The Member for Couva North made the point that these are things that have been said before. That is true. This budget points out very clearly to us that we have no alternative but to go in these directions, the direction of agricultural development, agro-processing and the growth of the tourism sector. It also emphasizes that we need to develop the small business sector to ensure that the internal mechanism of our economy is properly driven and properly lubricated and that the long-term growth that we are looking for will be achieved through the development of the small business. It is through the small business sector that we hope to create the employment. As you have heard, many of the mega-projects that do come in are capital intensive. It is the small business sector that is labour intensive and is consequently sorely needed at this time.

These things we have known before; these things we have said before. The question remains: Why did we not go in those directions as vigorously and as comprehensively as we ought to have done? The answer remains in the fact that at the time of our development, we ran into the oil boom and the petro dollar era, and as a result we moved into certain kinds of development. Even though there was waste and there was mismanagement, I am sure that there is no doubt in anybody's mind that during that time Trinidad and tobacco underwent massive transformation.

Look at the schools that were built; look at the highways that were built; look at the upgrading of the public utilities, the very public utilities that, today, are

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deteriorating to a certain extent. Look at the development of Point Lisas, the purchase of BWIA and Caroni and all of the other state enterprises. Look at the growth of the state sector during that period, the very state sector that we are seeking today to divest to a certain extent. There was the development that took place at that point at the height of nationalistic fervour in controlling the commanding heights of the economy. That was the era. There were high wages, high consumerism, free spending, building of new houses, administrative facilities, industrial estates, and general growth in the society.

We neglected to go into the agricultural sector at that time as fully as we ought to have gone, and to develop tourism as we ought to have developed it. But what this budget tells us, and what the reality tells us, is that we do not now have a choice.

The oil revenue has declined and Government is no longer in a position to provide certain goods and services, as it did before. It is no longer in a position to operate in a certain way. It is no longer in a position to make the kinds of investments on behalf of the people in a certain way, and we have passed that era, in any case. The post-colonial period is behind us now. We have to look at those areas to ensure the creation of wealth that we have not yet looked at. I am referring to those same three areas I spoke about and, I am sure as we go along my other colleagues would deal with them.

Through the budget we got a picture, not only of the kind of Government that we are, but of the society that we live in. We have got a picture of our economic realities and we also have a very clear picture of what we ought to do as a Government, and very important, it has been clearly underlined to us that we have no choice in the matter here.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs is not just a person who goes to meetings, goes abroad, poses and gives speeches. He is also a manager and he has to ensure the development and growth of the outfit under his command. I want to point out to this honourable House that that is an important priority for this Minister at this time.

If the price of oil plummets tomorrow, that would be problematic and that is a reality that we have to face in Trinidad and Tobago.

10.45 a.m.

As is customary during budget debates, I now turn to the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and some of our plans for 1994. Like all other ministries, the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs operates under severe budgetary constraints. You would ask for a certain sum of money; sometimes you get less than half of it but you put your shoulder to the wheel and try to achieve your objectives.

May I say that in spite of our budgetary constraints, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs I am very pleased with the way we have been operating so far. Of course, we would like to have the kind of funds for developmental work, such as the opening of new missions in strategic parts of the world, but we are sure that would come at the right time, when we return to full economic growth.

We continue to operate and maintain our missions. May I say as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I am pleased with how things are going. As we said before, we have placed heavy emphasis on the commercial component of our foreign policy and from many of our embassies and High Commissions such as those in Brazil, Venezuela, Ottawa, trade missions have been assisted from Trinidad and Tobago. From these missions, trade missions have emanated to other parts of the country, for example Venezuela—our Ambassador to Venezuela was part of a trade mission coming to Trinidad and Tobago.

Missions in Brussels and London played very key roles in the prime ministerial visits to Europe: Germany, France and London. We have been functioning at that level as well. The missions continue to be not only a source of trade, the generation of trade and the provision of information, but also continue to be a source of gifts—scientific and technical co-operation benefits. This has happened throughout all our missions which are really too numerous to mention.

There is one particular success that we have had and our mission in Brussels played a very key role in that regard. I refer to our improved ability to access funds under the National Indicative Programme of the Lomé Convention amounting to TT \$235 million which has gone into projects that have been outlined in this budget.

Under this item as well it is noteworthy that this year we signed a cultural co-operation agreement with the Government of Japan which saw Trinidad and Tobago being in receipt of a gift of TT \$2.2 million for the development of museum facilities.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, one of the things I have sought to maintain, develop and place some measure of emphasis on, is the human resource of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The intellectual resource of all ministries is very important, but I have found that in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs human

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resource is particularly important. We have developed in-house training programmes. We ensure that our people take maximum advantage of whatever opportunities there are for training abroad, and visits to other countries on short-term scholarships.

This year we have ensured that there is an injection of new blood into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as it were. We were in a position to hire 12 new foreign service officers. The young bright people, who are performing quite well had their introduction into the foreign service and are already fully integrated. That is something that I am very pleased about. It has helped the efficiency of the ministry. I am sure that these young people would go on to have very successful careers in the foreign service. We are constantly bringing in new people into the system.

One of the things that I discovered—and which I found very disheartening as the Minister of Foreign Affairs—was the fact that in terms of the career path of people in the Ministry, there was a measure of stagnation. Of course, this has been helped very considerably by the fact that we have professionalized the leadership of our missions by a heavy reliance on career diplomats. This has created a measure of mobility in the system. As Minister, I have ensured that recommendations for promotions have been made and we hope to effect these in the new year with the budgetary allocations.

An area of neglect—and this is something that has been happening for years—has to do with the transfer of people. What I have discovered in the ministry is that there are people at home base who have been there for between eight and 10 years, and there are people in missions abroad who have been there between eight and 12 years. If you know the foreign service, as I am sure you do, Madam Speaker, transfers to missions, mobility to missions and back to home base, are an important aspect of the development of a foreign service officer.

I have sought to correct this situation, and I intend to correct it completely. We are hoping to transfer five persons and with the new budgetary allocations, we should be able to do that. I am placing great emphasis on that because it is my conviction that the human/intellectual resource of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is its greatest strength. It is even more important than the infrastructure. I am committed to ensuring that there is this development and growth of our foreign service officers.

As we talk about development and the intellectual resource, I just want to mention that, in terms of the physical infrastructure, we have been able to effect

some repairs to our missions abroad. They had suffered years of neglect. This year, through the co-operation of the Minister of Works and Transport, we were able to repair the roof of the Knowsley building. We want to point out to you that there is management of the resources of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs taking place.

10.55 a.m.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the responsibility for Caricom matters and I would like to take this opportunity to give an idea of some of the activities that have been taking place and some of the successes that we have had with respect to this part of the portfolio.

Trinidad and Tobago had the chairmanship of the Bureau under the distinguished Prime Minister and this proved to be very, very successful for Caricom. Under the Prime Minister's leadership we experienced much growth and development in Caricom. Some of the measures have not come to full fruition but they are in process and, in many cases, Trinidad and Tobago has done its part in dealing with some of them. For example, the Bill for the Assembly of Community Parliamentarians has been passed in this House—and that has been ratified—and we have signed the agreement and we are waiting for other countries to come on board before that matter can come to full fruition.

The Common External Tariff has also been established. We have removed some of the hassle from travel within the region. There is now a common line at the Piarco airport and we have also determined the common embarkation/disembarkation card.

The Caribbean Investment Fund, which is an important development in Caricom, is on the way. Progress has been made on that and it is expected that by the next Heads of Government Conference, we would have made considerable progress on this item.

Similarly, the Double Taxation Agreement, which is a mechanism to encourage intra-Caricom investment. We have had a draft treaty looked at by our Government and that is a matter which is also in train and on which we expect considerable progress to be made in the future.

I am pointing out these things because many of us are victims of the propaganda that nothing much is happening in Caricom. And that is not true. Maybe things are not happening as fast as we would like them to happen, but they are, in fact, happening.

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We have had an operational plan for the Association of Caribbean States which, to my mind, is the future of Caricom. We have a programme of action in train which would see this body coming into being by the next Heads of Government Conference.

We in Trinidad and Tobago are awaiting the views of the legal fraternity with respect to the Caricom Supreme Court, and may I say that as far as the free movement of skills is concerned, a decision has been taken to let this apply to the graduates of the University of the West Indies and the University of Guyana. It is now incumbent upon member states to take legislative and regulatory steps to ensure that they implement this Heads of Government decision.

The Caricom Heads of Government have also decided on the Caricom/Cuba Joint Commission which will be signed in Guyana in a couple weeks' time. The Ambassador to Caricom will represent Trinidad and Tobago at this signing.

Another very important mandate that we have been given from the West Indian Commission Report is for the establishment of the Charter of Civil Society which, as you know, is a body of principles upon which we expect to establish civil and civilized society, and we are at the moment having the Government Printery prepare that document for public discussion and comment.

Very significantly, the Heads of Government did take this very important decision to restructure the Caricom Secretariat. We have found that the Secretariat is being given additional responsibilities without the manpower and financial resources to carry them out, and that is a very important exercise that is on the way.

I hope by these 13 items that I have pointed out here to you today, that I have given you the idea of the reality that in Caricom there is movement and development of the integration process. We would all like it to move faster, and, I am sure that the passage of the North-American Free Trade Agreement by the American Congress, would, in a way, give further energy and make it even more imperative for us to establish, for example, the Caricom Common Market in full. One expects that as events outside Caricom take place, they are going to impact favourably in some ways on the Caricom integration movement.

As far as our legislative programme is concerned, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was able to bring two important pieces of legislation to the Parliament this year, and I am pointing out these things to give Members an idea of the work we have been doing in the ministry.

We had the Transfer of Prisoners Bill which, as you know, now positions us to be a part of the European Convention for the Transfer of Convicted Persons and, as well, the Commonwealth Scheme for the Transfer of Convicted Persons. This Bill was passed in this Parliament as part of the legislative programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

11.05 p.m.

To ensure that we co-operate with the global community with respect to international crime, this year we passed the Taking of Hostages Bill in this House. These items of legislation are part of a whole package. The other elements, of course, are going to be brought to this honourable House in the new year as we continue with our legislative programme.

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*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. R. Maraj: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and hon. Members for the opportunity to continue my contribution.

One of the important things that we are doing in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at this time is a status report on the various bilateral relationships that we have as a nation. What I have found is that many of the agreements, many of the co-operation principles and much of the information pertaining to the various bilaterals that we have as a country, have either been forgotten or are outdated—they are not operational; they are languishing; they are cobwebs, as it were. This is what I have discovered as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and I have embarked on this tremendously important, time-consuming and research-filled exercise of updating the bilaterals of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I want to let you know that as the Minister of Foreign Affairs it is my conviction that whilst multilateral relationships are important, while we will operate at the global level in terms of agreements and so forth, it is my view that it is at the bilateral level that the fabric of the relationship and the strength of your international position is maintained and augmented. So we have embarked on this exercise with all of the countries. For example, we have finished our bilaterals on South Korea, Argentina, and we are doing our bilateral update with the United States of America, Canada, Japan, India, China and Nigeria. With all of the important relationships that we have, we are proceeding in this direction.

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The eventual goal will be a fully dynamized and rejuvenated relationship with the other countries of the world, and I just want to make that particular point.

I am convinced that as far as Europe goes, we have taken our relationship with our traditional partners in Europe too much for granted. We have allowed them to flow and I would be talking to our Ambassadors—in fact, I have already spoken to the Ambassador to Brussels about the need to emphasize our bilateral relationship to the countries through which we are accredited with that mission. Maybe we have placed too much emphasis on the multilateral aspect of that portfolio and I intend to pursue that kind of direction with the other ambassadors who are accredited to Europe. In that regard as well, we are going to be strengthening and updating our bilateral relationships, and I think that is an important enough development for me to mention it here today.

As I pointed out earlier in my contribution, the area of the world that is economically dynamic and growing is no doubt the Far East. We in Trinidad and Tobago through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are seeking to deal with that and to develop the relationships we have with the countries of the Far East. As a result of the update of our relationship with South Korea, we have only recently appointed an honorary Consul to Seoul. In fact I think it was on December 01, that the honorary Consul to Seoul opened an office in that city in South Korea. Trinidad and Tobago now has an actual, physical, presence in South Korea. That is very important.

The man whom we have appointed has been carefully chosen. He is a dynamic businessman. One of the first things he intends, for example, is to lead a group of Korean businessmen to Trinidad and Tobago to participate in and view the Trade Fair that we will be having in this country next year. He has invited our Miss World, Giselle La Ronde, to South Korea for the opening of the office and to highlight it. He is already moving with a measure of enthusiasm and one is very heartened by that.

We expect as well very soon to conclude with south Korea a visa waiver agreement which will ensure that there is greater and easier traffic between the people of South Korea and Trinidad and Tobago—and you know the implications of that for tourism and business, generally. We have decided, as a result of that update, to appoint a non-resident ambassador to South Korea. That appointment will be made soon and that non-resident ambassador will be stationed in Trinidad and Tobago with a specific mandate to look at South Korea's relations with Trinidad and Tobago, and to develop them in all aspects under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—right here at home.

May I say, that this technique of the non-resident ambassador is going to become increasingly effective, as the whole technology of telecommunications develops and we develop systems to easily communicate with countries that are far away. This is an important new dimension that we are bringing into our foreign policy initiative. We are confident that it will work for the future.

On the question of the honorary Consuls may I say that Cabinet took a decision recently, to give a new mandate to our honorary Consuls. Previously, they dealt mainly with consular activities, but the new mandate is to generate activity between Trinidad and Tobago and the countries to which they are accredited. They will soon be given the authority to issue visa, so that it is a beefed-up responsibility, and we are looking forward to having benefits accrue to our country from this particular mechanism. May I announce that with respect to the Far East we have already identified an honorary Consul for Japan and very soon we hope that we will be in a position to make that announcement. So we are in the process of ensuring that we do have a presence in the Far East and we are using this technique, of course, as a forerunner to the establishment of full-fledged missions.

11.15 a.m.

Whilst we are in the East, let me just mention a matter which pertains to our relationship with India. As hon. Members know, there has been an agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of India to establish the Mahatma Gandhi Cultural Institute. Let me put it on record that since the Government came into office it has been pursuing that matter vigorously and relentlessly.

We are at the point now where we hope to hear from the Government of India very soon, and one has clear intimation that their agreement is going to be had on amendments to the protocol and the deed of lease, to give an extended period in the first instance of this agreement. So that one expects that the Government would be in a position very soon to hand over the land to the Government of India for the construction of the Mahatma Gandhi Cultural Institute. I just wanted to put that on the record.

For me as the Foreign Affairs Minister, a major area of focus has been, of course, Latin America. The Government has made it clear that it sees Trinidad and Tobago as the "Gateway to the Americas". That is our goal and we have an integrated approach to achieving this. The Foreign Affairs Ministry has its part to play in this regard. May I take this opportunity to bring the honourable House up

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to date on what we have been doing with Latin America at the level of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Trinidad and Tobago.

There has been a movement to integrate the two subregions in the hemisphere—the Caricom region and the Central American region—and I have been privileged to be part of this historic process. We have had two meetings so far and we have identified the co-operation mechanisms that are to be put in place for the integration of our markets. We know what the problems are that militate against co-operation between these two regions and the countries of these two regions. We have decided, for example, to develop common strategies to deal with the emerging new international economic scenario. So that as far as Central America and Caricom at the multilateral level are concerned, there is movement towards co-operation and integration.

At the bilateral level, may I say that from our embassy in Brazil, we have now received accreditation to Argentina and Chile. Indeed, our Ambassador to Brazil, Ambassador Moore, has already presented his credentials to the President of Argentina and is seeking an appointment to present his credentials to the authorities in Chile. As far as Argentina goes—I pointed out a while ago that we were updating our bilaterals—and, indeed, only this week Cabinet took the following decisions with respect to our relationship with Argentina:

1. That a scientific and technical co-operation agreement be signed with Argentina;
2. That a promotion and reciprocal protection of investments agreement be also signed with Argentina; and
3. That a double taxation agreement be signed between Trinidad and Tobago and that country.

I need not point out to this honourable House that when one is talking about Argentina and Brazil, one is talking about two important countries of the Mercosur Group, which is the megamarket on the southern cone of the South American continent. A market of millions of people and tremendous opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago. Incidentally—and I will talk about that in a while—only yesterday Cabinet took a decision for Trinidad and Tobago to establish relations with Paraguay; we already have relation with Uruguay. So it will be Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, four countries that make up the Mercosur group which, as I said, is a megamarket in South America.

Action with respect to Latin America—real hard-core action, not just symbols and speeches and posturing. Hard-core action.

From Venezuela we intend to have accreditation to Colombia. Our Ambassador to Venezuela is already taking steps in that regard.

As you know, Madam Speaker, this year we had a visit from a Venezuelan delegation to deal with a very exciting project, the Orinoco—Apure Project, which seeks to link Trinidad and Tobago by means of waterway with the heartland of Venezuela. This will give us access to the raw materials of Venezuela and will encourage joint ventures between our businessmen and the businessmen of Venezuela. This can see Trinidad and Tobago's ports being used as a transshipment point, not only to Caricom, but also to markets in Europe. That is the long-term vision of that particular project. Hard-core action, Madam Speaker, no posturing; no symbols and speeches.

I am sure hon. Members remember the exciting time we had recently when the Government of Trinidad and Tobago hosted that historic summit between Caricom and the Group of 3. Another example of action as we seek to integrate ourselves with Latin America, so that when we are talking about being the "Gateway to the Americas," it is not just words. Action! Out of that has come the signing of a Framework Co-operation Agreement, and that relationship between Caricom and the Group of 3 is going to be monitored at the ministerial and technical levels. May I say that the holding of that conference has gone a very long way towards expediting the action towards the formation of the Association of Caribbean States, which is one of the exciting dimensions taking place in the Caricom region.

Hard-core action, Madam Speaker!

11.25 a.m.

Mr. Sudama: If you keep saying it often, you will convince yourself.

Hon. R. Maraj: We are doing so many things with Latin America. Only yesterday Cabinet took the decision to establish diplomatic relations with Paraguay, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama. As a result of the decision, Trinidad and Tobago at the end of the process would have established relations with all of the countries of this hemisphere.

The opportunity is now there for putting the diplomatic infrastructure in place which will ensure deeper relations, economic activity and the creation of wealth as we are part, and continue to be part of this general hemispheric coalescence that is taking place in this part of the world. There is no doubt in my mind that as a result of the decision we would have considerably strengthened our position.

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At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whether it is establishing new relations, signing new agreements, or bringing legislation introducing innovative measures, we have been working. I have taken a deliberate approach to move away from the theatrics and garrulousness of the past and see myself as someone who has to achieve concrete things for the furtherance of the diplomatic relations of Trinidad and Tobago.

I have no doubt that at the end of our exercise we would have revitalized our position in the world and it is yet another sign, as I said before, of the policy of activism that permeates this Government at all levels. One sees it in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, as I said earlier, in all the measures that we have outlined in the Budget.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*): Madam Speaker, I wish I had the illustrious tone of my elder statesman to really deal with the language of the Member for San Fernando West this morning. I want to touch on a few areas that he should not have interfered with.

Mr. Manning: Inelegance.

Miss P. Nicholson: Safety net for caring, benevolent government—and later I will illustrate that they are not benevolent and caring. He said “Justice for the needy” and I immediately wrote by the side here, “What of Tobago?” Is Tobago needy? And where is the justice? Activists for tourism. I saw nothing about agriculture in their document. Very little—I should not say “nothing.” And as far as tourism goes, I will illustrate the lie of the Member for San Fernando East by the end of my discourse.

I recognize that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are becoming very mature and educated about their politics. They are now able to clearly compare efficiency and quality. So when the Member said that they wasted some of their money in the boom years, he gave the impression that it was forgivable. I am saying that it is not forgivable. The People’s National Movement can never be forgiven for that.

Mr. Manning: Are you a Christian?

Miss P. Nicholson: The Member boasted that they built endless schools and I wrote immediately “Schools of illiteracy” next to that—that we have to clean up today—and correct. My submission, in a nutshell, is that the Minister of Finance in this 1994 Budget has inflicted, in a way never before witnessed in this

country—to use the Minister of Finance’s choice of words in introducing changes to the used car transfer tax—the harshest measures on the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

This budget will not pave the way for growth and development in this critical period as we move into the year 2,000. In keeping with its deceptive and non-transparent way of transacting business, and relying on its infernal propaganda machine, this Government has embarked on a systematic train of events, led by none other than the hon. Prime Minister, to create expectations, tensions, anxieties and fears in the population as to the severity of the budget.

Mr. Casimire: That is not your language; Selby has passed that to you.

Miss P. Nicholson: I am not reading a statement; I am dealing with the budget.

Dr. Rowley: She is reading, yes. *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: Order please! Please let the Member continue.

Miss P. Nicholson: Protection please, Madam Speaker; I want every “inch” of my time here this morning. I have to “pong” these people so much that I need every “inch” of my time. I sat here very quietly and listened to them, so save my time, please.

Mr. Maharaj: I agree with that.

Dr. Rowley: Do your own thing. You do not need that.

Miss Bhaggan: Leave the lady alone.

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, this was not done in the manner that the public was led to believe it would have been done. The Government’s intention was that the population would breathe a sigh of relief and conclude that the budget is not so bad after all. But we have a lot of sensible, honest politicians out there to tell them it is very bad.

In reality, however, the Government has done even worse than it set out to have us believe and anticipate. It has taken such clever means to disguise and hide its doings and intentions, that there is a strong likelihood that both ordinary and not-so-ordinary persons would not understand the nature of the “con game” played on the majority of the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

That this plot did exist, was admitted by the Prime Minister in statements made at a public meeting at Piggott’s Corner. To emphasize his point that the

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economy of Trinidad and Tobago is beginning to ease, he said that the budget is far less onerous than expected. But the plot must have been in his head previously—and he does that every year. He himself was now squarely putting the conclusion in the minds of the people.

Let us recall the unfolding of this deliberate and deceptive plot conceived by the Government.

Mr. Manning: Take your time and read the thing, please.

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, the prelude to the 1994 Budget was full of suspense drama. The Prime Minister aided and abetted by the Minister of Finance—a drama designed to portray to the citizens [*Interruption*]

Miss Bhaggan: Continue, Pam, do not bother with them. You continue.

Miss P. Nicholson: Do not worry about me—particularly the small man. Members opposite said that the Government was faced with the most difficult circumstances in the preparation of the budget.

11.35 a.m.

Accordingly, the first scene of the drama was introduced by the Prime Minister some two months ago when he declared that the budget deficit for 1994 would be some \$800,000 million. Is that what the hon. Prime Minister said? Or was it \$800 million? Something like that. Following his announcement, each of his Ministers, almost on a daily basis, was making statements to indicate that the budget would be tough, and calling upon the population to sacrifice.

When this Prime Minister was in Opposition and when the country was told, “We have to tighten our belts”, they organized and they said, “Crucify them! Crucify them!” But, today, I was pleased to hear the confessions of the Member for San Fernando West. He confessed here to everybody that they have to accept a number of things. There is no money. I could not write everything down, but he made his confessions.

I wondered how they could confess today, but they could not confess five years ago. They were on the streets, fooling the people of Trinidad and Tobago and saying that we were wicked. The Member for San Fernando East came to the House and said that the then Government was wicked, vindictive and malicious. Today, who is wicked, who is vindictive, and who is malicious? No one else but the People’s National Movement led by Prime Minister Patrick Manning.

It is a cloak of deception and I will always refer to him as General Mole. Today he has broken up the lieutenant who cannot even be here. I can never forget them, Madam Speaker.

We recognized the weaknesses in the public utilities and the problems of WASA—I was then Minister—we recognized that it was over-manned; we recognized that there was need for managerial training; we recognized that some removal of workers had to be done, but we decided that they could not be retrenched in any harsh way. We met with the union (NUGFW), the same union which turned its back—they are always plotting—and we decided on the voluntary retirement programme. It was the first time that something like that was going to be implemented in the country. It was supposed to be the senior manpower section to be removed and we agreed. We had the funds and we decided to act.

When three to four hundred workers accepted, and the others were on the go, they organized with the same union and they surrounded the Ministry of Public Utilities where I was located, led by Mr. Marshall, the representative for Laventille West and they said, “Not a man must go!” I have to be dramatic here today, joining the Member for San Fernando West. They said, “Not a man must go!”

Madam Speaker, if I did not have a very strong heart, I would have collapsed inside that building. They had equipment and all kinds of things around the ministry. Today, the same representatives for Laventille West and San Fernando East are telling the population they have to accept that WASA is over-manned, poorly managed and we have to privatize it—two faces, informing them inside quietly but he does not know that documents could always be gotten which they feel are private. He is telling them they have to privatize both WASA and T&TEC; then he goes to the union and he goes up to WASA and he says, “They are not involving me. It is the Minister of Planning and Mobilization and the Prime Minister who are running my ministry.”

Dr. Rowley: Is it Dookeran you are talking about?

Miss P. Nicholson: It is Minister Saith. He is sitting right there. I am going to deal with him a little later on. I have plenty business with him.

Madam Speaker, that is the action. What I am trying to do is to remind the people of Trinidad and Tobago that the NAR Government told the people of this country exactly what the Government is trying to tell them, and that it was fighting totally opposite to that. But today it is telling the people they have to recognize what is happening in the country because of what is happening in the developed countries. This is what we are confronted with.

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Every time I look at them, I just feel to pack up and walk out but it is because of the people of Trinidad and Tobago that I am here.

Dr. Rowley: Do not try that. Pack up and go.

Miss P. Nicholson: I do not have to waste time with the hon. Member.

I am reminding the people because our people have very short memories, but I notice that they are growing. As I go out on the streets, they are meeting me and telling me openly, "We made an error."

The Brutus of the plot is the so-called safety net. In this regard, I call upon the Government to submit to Parliament a detailed list of the social safety net programmes, showing moneys allocated, line item increases and reasons therefore with comparative figures with what happened in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

What is the social safety net? This is nothing new. There is nothing new in this document. It is in 1990; it is in 1991. Page 33—Employment, Self-Employment and Training Strategies. That is outlined. Then there is the Labour Intensive Development Programme; there is the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme. We were crucified in here for that and now they are hugging it up as their real friend. In 1988, it was implemented and, at that time—let me quote this:

"YTEPP has undertaken to train over 12,800 young persons (15 to 25) years with skills, knowledge, attitudes and values which would make them more employable or ready for self-employment."

The programme was looked at throughout the Caribbean. It goes on:

"In 1990, YTEPP will introduce a Post-Training Support Project which will cater for 6,000 trained and certified graduates of the programme. To accommodate this expansion, the budget allocation for YTEPP has been increased from \$6.6 million in 1989 to \$7.8 million in 1990."

By 1991, we were able to receive a loan for that programme.

11.45 a.m.

When the speeches of the Member for San Fernando East and the Member for Laventille West are looked at—I know if I use them today I would just use all my time so I did not bring them—they crucified the programme. They said it was wicked and a waste of time. This is one of the programmes which are playing one of the most crucial roles today for young people. That is in the safety net, "Small Business Development." Who implemented it? I am quoting from page 37 of the

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Budget Speech, 1990 which was done by the Hon. Selby O. Wilson, the then Minister of Finance.

“One of the newly created mechanisms to foster the implementation of the policy for the widest possible public participation in business enterprise is the Small Business Development Company. This company was incorporated in June 1989 and will become operational within the first quarter of 1990.”

This was when it was implemented, and it was expected as you went along from year to year, you would develop and strengthen the programme.

I am trying to point out that the safety net is nothing new. What they have done is just pull various sections from the different ministries and call it a safety net; and that is the decoy for the people. “Conman game!”

“Social policy”; it is here. “Social Assistance; School Feeding Programme.” When we came into Government in December 1986, there was no School Feeding Programme. It used to function when we had the oil boom, but with the recession we did not have the creative minds and the people with the vision to identify priority areas and to know that there were certain areas that must be kept. Immediately as we got in there, we saw the problems; we saw thousands of children not attending school because they could not get anything to eat. That programme was reintroduced on April 17, 1989, and some 29,000 children were fed by September 1989. There were 42,000 children from 440 primary schools, and by 1990, 53,000 children came into the programme.

What I am stressing is that this is nothing new. The social safety net is just another name. It has always been there. What the Minister did, was just take a number of these and pulled them together from the various ministries and probably may have increased some. When looked at some of the funds—I was not able to get all—I found that in 1990, 1991, some of the funding at that stage was more than that of some of the areas in this 1994 programme.

So he took Old age Pension, which has been an old aged thing; “Unemployment Relief Fund”, which has been around for quite some time; Food Subsidy; School Feeding Programme; Social Assistance; Free Medicine; Grants to Assisted Schools and Colleges; Apprenticeship Schemes; Orphanages, Civilian Corps”.

Civilian Corps is the same kind of programme as our National Service. *[Interruption]* Well, their own is different because theirs is a mongoose gang. They are taking the young people and giving them guns. Trying to organize a

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youth arm of the People's National Movement, and that is not what the programme should be. With the National Service, I cannot answer for the Trinidad area because I did not do the research, but I could tell you that a number of programmes were done in Tobago where the young people are organized. You have the Argyle Waterfalls; they cleaned it up; fixed the roads; constructed their building, and they are the tour guides at the waterfalls. That was done by the National Service Programme in Tobago.

You had Servol; Feeding programme for the Needy. What I am trying to clear up in the minds of Members and the people of Trinidad and Tobago is that this is nothing new that has been given here.

“Feeding the Needy and the Unemployed; Community Oriented Programmes.” It is here in the 1990 Budget. It was the same in 1991, and we added others, like the ECHO programme. I listened to the Member for San Juan/Barataria criticizing the programme and saying that it was politically interfered with. She has changed ECHO to SHARE, but it is the same programme. Many of their ideas came from the same kind of ministry.

I have a document here, entitled *Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee*—this was some function that was held on August 12, 1992, and paragraph one says:

“It describes and evaluates instituted Social Programmes in Trinidad and Tobago, against the background of prevailing macro-economic conditions, the unemployment situation and the Economic Restructuring Programme introduced in 1988.”

So when you hear about restructuring, it did not start in 1991. That was started by the NAR Government, and they crucified us. Guns were put to the ears of people and it is the Lord that made them survive. The Member for San Fernando East was a party to that behaviour.

“The Trinidad and Tobago case study is of particular interest in that the social component has accompanied the structural adjustment exercise and has not been an afterthought hastily formulated and implemented to offset the worst aspects of the social fallout of the adjustment of the economy. In most Caribbean countries that pursued a structural adjustment programme, the latter situation has been the norm.”

In that, they usually come after with their business. This was from ECLAC, in the same ministry where the Member for San Juan/Barataria belongs. It talks

about ECHO and all those programmes and the good work that was done by the NAR Government. But she did not open her mouth and speak of the good work which she met in her ministry. She behaves as if she is implementing a programme called SHARE. She just changed the name from ECHO to SHARE. They stole the said programme and are implementing it.

Let me return to the point I was making. I do not want the people to be misguided. There was always the social safety net under the NAR Government. It was well implemented and well taken care of. We also implemented programmes on the new housing projects that we met. What was happening is that the young people were exposed to the social evils of the country. We started with the people to put down the playgrounds, hard-courts, schools, and so on, for example, La Horquetta, Maloney and others which I cannot remember. Those were implemented and all that was started by the NAR Government.

11.55 a.m.

I would now go on to the fees and charges. Every citizen now has to pay substantially higher fees for all services provided by the Government. On property transactions, increase in fees ranges from 317 to 2,400 per cent. The Government is behaving as though the citizens are not already paying taxes for services. These increases are far in excess of VAT when it was introduced. This is a caring Government. I have to ask my self: Does the Government care?

When the NAR tried to simplify the tax system so that more revenues could be collected, we were crucified in this House, and told that we were wicked. They even conceded that if they agreed with the VAT programme, they would not have charged 15 per cent; they would have charged nine per cent; they would not have put VAT on books, but, today, the books are far more expensive than when the VAT was introduced.

Listen to what the then Leader of the Opposition and Member for San Fernando East, had to say on the Value Added Tax Bill on Friday, August 11, 1989:

“They could have been warned.”

He was referring to the NAR government—

“it is as if they have not done any research,…”

So he is saying that we are dotish and dunce—

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“or they have not read documentation on this question of value added tax; it is not without its pitfalls and there ought to be extreme caution in implementing any tax of this nature.”

He then went on to define VAT as a tax that a number of people would be happy to see abolished because of its many pitfalls.

He went on to state

“I fear that come January 1, 1990, this country is going to be plunged into so much chaos because of a Government that feels that it can implement a time schedule that is not realistic in nature.”

He said that there would have been so much chaos. Do you know that the tax this Government prefers most is this 15 per cent VAT? That is the saviour of this Government.

When this Government was preparing its budget, the Members knew what they had said, so they were ashamed to increase the VAT. Do you know what they did? Endless miscellaneous taxes were increased all over “our bodies,” so that when we are finished we would not have a penny for ourselves. They have no shame!

During the first 35 year’s of the People’s National Movement they had several committees working on tax reform, but the PNM was never successful and could not implement anything. That was one of their problems.

12.00 noon: *Sitting suspended.*

1.35 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, the point I was making about the numerous miscellaneous taxes that the Government has imposed on the poor people of this country is that it has just confused a system that internationally is not known to function like that. A Government that says it does not believe in ideology, but it cares and loves poor people has imposed a number of transferred taxes upon the poor people of this country particularly, the 15 per cent tax.

A poor man cannot buy a car. If he buys a second-hand or third-hand car, when he goes to see it, he has to give the Government all that he sold the car for. That is the most wicked, vindictive and malicious piece of action that the PNM has imposed. I am saying that this must be withdrawn totally. Not a piece—totally. If you love black people, and poor people, because everybody in Trinidad and Tobago black, withdraw it. If you care about poor people, withdraw it.

The five per cent on gasoline. We are already paying our taxes. But they are using a stratagem. It is not just that they are fixing the roads, but one has to see it as an imposition on the taxi drivers and truckers who haul our goods to the shops and groceries. It means that the prices of goods, at the groceries go up immediately. They always have a stratagem. A lot of that coming from Planning. Who will be fixing the roads? Contractors? I already feel nepotism. I am saying this because in Trinidad and Tobago today all civil contracts have a bearing on a Minister of the Government. I am making a very bold statement.

In Tobago on the access roads, one contractor has the contract to fix and to construct all the roads, and one contractor is the consultant. Sanco building the roads and a place called Trintoplan Consultants for every single project.

I noticed the thing and I did my homework, as I always do, on the business. There is a bridge that will be built in Tobago. Again, it is the same structure and you had contractors like Seereeram Brothers and others complaining vehemently, because, if you want a bonded contractor in Tobago to do something you cannot get one. All of them have moved out of Tobago. What we want is competition. We do not want monopolism in that area. I did some homework on Trinidad also. What I am getting coming out of the contractual situation as regards engineers is the same trend. I am saying that the five per cent for the roads must not just be looked at like that.

I would like to move on to severance pay. I have looked at the document and while they are saying \$1.1 billion for safety net, there is approximately \$168 million severance pay. The Minister of Planning and Development has only \$1.9 million. It is not very much. I do not know how many people—but probably it is everybody—he will send home. And then he will contract, because he loves contracting.

The Ministry of Health—\$7.3 million, an institution like that where today the people at the hospitals and health centres have received no pay. They are planning to march. I do not know if they have been paid since I am here. At the hospital in Scarborough, Tobago, the doctors are planning to go on strike because they are not getting their overtime, that is, to function in the night at the one hospital we have. I cannot see how moneys can be withdrawn from an institution like Health. As a matter of fact, the Ministry of Health wants far more money than what I have seen here.

The Ministry of Local Government. It is as if they are sending home all. These people that said “not a man must go,” and that we are trying to destroy unions. I

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could never forget. I am always quoting Mr. Marshall. We were debating the reduction of public sector emoluments; it was December 15, 1989; he was speaking around 7.20 p.m.:

“More than that too, what is happening here in terms of these measures that are being implemented, seems to give the impression that there is some sort of collusion between the international forces and the present administration to destroy and to dismantle the trade union movement in Trinidad and Tobago. Because what this would mean—and the evidence is also quite clear, Mr. Speaker—is that there is a dwindling in the membership of most of these unions, whether it is the Public Transport Service Corporation union, PSA, TTUTA; NUGE,…”

He attacked us. \$7.3 million, Ministry of Health; \$1.9 million—Ministry of Planning and Development; \$101.3 million—Ministry of Local Government; \$58.3 million—Ministry of Works and Transport; \$.3 million—Ministry of Sport and Culture; \$25 million—Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism.

I gave the Budget another read and on page 5, the people who yesterday were saying that the NAR was colluding with the international bodies to destroy the unions and to send workers home—This is the Minister of Finance, the hon. Wendell A. Mottley in the 1989 Budget Speech on page 5.

“Moreover, there were elements of the debate and subsequent vote on NAFTA in the US Congress that have other special significance for us. In that vote the American Labour Lobby suffered a humiliating defeat. That outcome tells us that inefficient or non-productive or overly expensive labour cannot be protected as the world economy becomes increasingly integrated. If the world’s largest economy can no longer afford to pamper such workers in sectors where they have no competitive edge, it is even more critical for a small vulnerable economy like ours to determine quickly how to prepare our workforce, at T&TEC, at Caroni, at WASA, at PETROTRIN, or wherever, for the next century.”

But five years ago, when the NAR was running the country, they said that what we were doing—I want to tie it up for the population. Where is the press? They are always in hiding when people are talking sound—was dismantling the trade unions but, today the Member for San Fernando West comes and in his confession exhorts us to recognize those problems. This is serious business in this place.

1.45 p.m.

You look also at the utilities and they would be at them again; PTSC, Port Authority and WASA: \$44 million for severance pay; \$8.1 million for Port Authority; \$18.5 for PTSC and \$17.6 for WASA. I am just making certain things clear to the population. I am just saying that these people are not doing anything new. They are fooling the people. It is the con-game I am trying to expose.

Five years ago, when certain decisions were taken to help our country, it was “Crucify them, kill them,” that was July, 1990. Today they are saying, “Love us, bear with us, take care.” There is a cushion between 12.30 p.m. and 2.00 p.m. on Prime.

I would now move on to tourism and the lie again. What did the Minister say in the budget? The Minister said that they would be doing some work; they would get \$50 million from the Inter-American Bank to finance tourism and related infrastructure. He said that there would be a 250-room hotel that they would be building at a particular place. Tobagonians want to know what is this “particular” site. Is it Rocky Point? Tell us! Speak the truth. Do not play hide and seek. *[Interruption]* We do not have drug money in Tobago. It would only be if he took some there. The Minister also said the lowlands project would continue. I do not know anything about any drug money. I can tell you that.

The Government recognizes the inability of the energy sector alone to deal positively with the high unemployment level. All of us recognize that. We have been saying that all the time. We are saying that the Government must modernize and use tourism. That is why there was the upgrading of Crown Point; the deep water harbour and the grant—

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 Nicholson: Thank you, Madam Speaker and hon. Members for giving me the opportunity.

The NAR Government recognized that Tobago must be modernized and upgraded and should be the hub of tourism in Trinidad and Tobago, with Trinidad playing the secondary role. We were at the stage where we received—through the Prime Minister at the time, when, I think that they went to France—a grant of

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\$107 million to build a road from L'Anse Fourmi to Speyside, which would have been an alternative to a section of the Windward Road. That would have opened up one of the most beautiful parts of Tobago to tourism and also agriculture.

What did they do? Devious again! Dishonourable fellows! No government that comes into power will just hold on to that money and say that it is not giving it to Tobago. It is a grant given to Tobago and the "Christian" Prime Minister takes it away. He said that they would not give all. They would give \$17 million. I have looked so hard through this Development Programme. There is not a penny for any serious development works in Tobago.

I concur very strenuously with my colleague on the points he made yesterday and we are not going to sit down and take that. I only hope that they are looking at the St. Kitts/Nevis scenario. It is serious. *[Interruption]* I am not finished yet. They took every penny and there was not a cent for Tobago.

I support the Minister when he says that there must be tourism because that makes the most money, not only in the country, but also in the world. That is the point I am making. When they took the decision to give 25 per cent for tourism investments, that was a good decision, but it cannot be a decision in isolation. There must be a holistic approach to what is being done. In isolation, the Government may find few investors responding, and again, the problem lies with the recognition that the Government is prepared to give tourism.

The Prime Minister went to a little corner street and told the people that he is giving Tobago 5,000 rooms in 1994, 15,000 jobs and they would have to come to Trinidad to get people to work there. The planning has to be done. Any contractor who comes and takes money to build a hotel without seeing the Richmond Waterworks in Tobago, would be crazy. Any contractor investor who comes would want to see the south-west Sewer System Works in place to control the waste from the hotels, because we are not going to entertain having the waste going into our beautiful sea, where people would come to Tobago and cannot bathe in the waters. We are not going to entertain that at all. Those things must be done first.

When we were in Government we were working on it. I believe, based on some of the statements made by the Minister that he is working on it. He must be honest. He should not tell the people he is doing it this year. He cannot do it this year. Since we were there we got about \$15 million for some waterworks from the Caribbean Development Bank. Because of the sluggishness of the public servants it has not been done as yet. It is over two years since we have left and it has not

been put down. That can tell us what would be taking place. It is dishonest of the Prime Minister to say that he would be building 5,000 rooms in 1994 when he cannot build 250 rooms in 1994, as the budget said.

Another thing that I want to say is that for the development of tourism we need to have serious discussions, because it just cannot be large hotels. What about the bed and breakfast, the guest house scenario involving the people of Tobago in a serious way. I articulated that last year to show that if that was done how advantageous it could be to the people of Tobago and how many jobs it would create. I discussed that here already.

I am seeing the movement of the people. The people are moving from the south-west into the north-eastern corner. The north-eastern corner must be developed and the people must be educated as to the advantages they can get from tourism. I am talking about Charlotteville, Speyside, L'Anse Fourmi, Bloody Bay and Delaford. The people are doing that. If they go into those areas for one day, they are begging private citizens to spend time in their homes. We must organize it in that particular way.

If the Government is serious about tourism, then it must pay attention to the airline scenario. When we left, things were at the stage of tender with regard to a shuttle service to Tobago. Always behind our backs they are trying to tell the population that we left a problem. We left a problem with the airline, but we did not leave a problem with the \$1.7 million grant that should have been for Tobago. That was the position at the technical level. It was not a governmental position as yet. It was at the technical level; then the people made their decision and we had a new government.

1.55 p.m.

I just want to read some documents which I got from Bon Accord Airways. What are they saying about the plane? I am saying this because I spoke about the planes already in this House.

“The YS-11, when new, made no impression in Europe as at that time F27 and 748 aircrafts were already available and the market preferred 44 seats as against the 60 seats of the YS-11...

Market intelligence reveals the YS-11 as an adequate performer suitable for high density shorthaul operations. However, serious doubts are expressed regarding the very high level of maintenance which will now be required and the likely poor availability of spare parts.”

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The suitability of the aircraft to Trinidad and Tobago was also questioned:

“In order for these engines to provide the required horsepower for takeoff in conditions of high ambient temperatures, high humidity (as in the Caribbean). And/or high altitude, water methanol must be injected into the gas generator section to keep the engine temperature at a reasonably safe level. This water methanol is highly corrosive and because of this corrosive factor and the high temperature generated on take off, Air Aruba’s YS-11 aircraft engines never reach their stipulated time between overhauls.”

I want to go further.

“Of the three aircraft purchased, one was cannibalized during operations to supply parts to the remaining two; airframe and engine parts were costly, difficult to acquire. The aircraft have subsequently been replaced by more modern type aircraft over two years now.”

Madam Speaker, we have a problem with the tender. The tender document states:

“BWIA and the selected domestic operator (if not BWIA) will be required to negotiate, *inter alia*, a harmonized schedule that gives full consideration to the requirements.”

So that, whoever gets the contract should discuss in a harmonious way what should take place. We only know of a tender. No contract was given. However, there is a letter, dated January 5, 1993, from the Ministry of Works and Transport:

“Mr. Leslie Lucky Samaroo,
Director,
Air Caribbean Ltd.
P.O.Box 1021, Port of Spain.

Dear Mr. Lucky-Samaroo,

Re: Domestic Airbridge Service between Trinidad and Tobago

Further to your proposal of July 15, 1991 for the above service, Air Caribbean Limited is hereby designated as the carrier for domestically generated cargo and passenger traffic between Piarco International Airport and Crown Point International Airport for a period of seven years, i.e. from March 9, 1993 to March 8, 2000.

Yours faithfully,

Colm Imbert,
Minister of Works and Transport”

We have been questioning the weakness and the problems. The representative for Diego Martin East, Mr. Colm Imbert, has been saying all kinds of things, but the people have no contract. If there is a contract, I am calling on Mr. Colm Imbert, the Member for Diego Martin East, to lay it on the Table in Parliament.

I talk about those planes. They are very, very noisy. One develops a phobia when one has to travel in them. On two occasions I went on that plane and it took 10-15 minutes to close the front door. There might even have been flax on the door because it is old and rusty. We are dealing with lives. This is very, very critical and we need to have a serious government. This is not a matter now between Samaroo and BWIA; it is the Central Government which must take a position in this matter. When I say that we have a crisis position regarding air transport, that is the crisis.

We have the situation now where tourists are unable to travel with their big bags and surf equipment. The plane cannot carry the fish for the fish processors. Fish processors who used to send their fresh fish to Toronto and Miami are losing their markets, and we have a Government here talking about employment and wanting to develop industry. Because of the time frame, I have to leave the airline and move on to another topic.

Air and sea transport between Trinidad and Tobago is very critical to the unity of Trinidad and Tobago. What I feel from day to day is an imposition of separation by this Government. The man who heads this Government today was one of the worst parliamentarians ever put to do work with us in 1980. I think he still believes that he is in 1980. I recognize that he has a dictatorial approach. One just has to read the newspapers and one can see that many people are under pressure. One is sick right now.

We have two boats—the *mf Panorama* and the *mv Tobago*. What is the situation? The *mf Panorama* is working beautifully. It is a boat which was designed for that course and for the people, and the people were very satisfied with it. It took much pressure when it operated alone. It was taken off the route over three months now and it is just parked at the dock. The boat must be fixed. If it is one boat we must have running, it must be the *mf Panorama*, but it is parked up and the man who can handle money so well is not fixing something which is compulsory if we must have the twin island state of Trinidad and Tobago.

The other boat, the *mv Tobago* can carry only one-third of the cargo of the *mf Panorama*, so one should know the impact it is having on the lives of the people of Tobago. Food, hardware, everything is affected. So, if the Minister was a

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Minister of substance, he would have had the boat in Curaçao already because that was recommended, but with his authoritative attitude he is refusing to take action because certain decisions were taken because of relatives of persons in the Government, but after an explosion on a boat there people realized that they cannot go there again.

2.05 p.m.

What is the situation? One boat is trouble prone. Right now there is no airconditioning. Everyone is under pressure. I do not know if it was fixed this week. If it was, well, hail to him. The problem is that there is one boat; if anything goes wrong, there will be no ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago. That is why I am saying that they are just forcing disunity and division between Trinidad and Tobago. That is why people have to speak out. I talked about it here about two weeks ago. But when anyone wants to speak about it, those opposite want to shut you up. They are not going to shut my mouth, I can tell you.

I must tell them that tourists like to use the ferry, yet they want to boast and say, "You see Minister?" He did not invite me; I walked into a meeting. I deliberately walked into that meeting. I did not agree with what he was saying, as he knows. I asked him if the ferry he was speaking about could handle a Toco to Tobago route, because I wanted to know if he knew that it was not like the Gulf of Paria. We have to get information to satisfy us that that is the right kind of boat.

Regardless of the decision he is taking, the people are saying, "We want the *Panorama*. Fix the *Panorama*!" There must be loss at certain stages, and if there must be loss, it must be between Trinidad and Tobago; it has to be that one. It is absolutely necessary that he address that. From a tourism perspective, I only hope that I have made myself absolutely clear about the deplorable situation.

There is a point that was raised by some hoteliers with respect to the Airports Authority Act. I do not know if the Minister can do anything, but I have to raise the point. What the people were saying is that there is a departure tax down here and they would like to know if they travel to Trinidad daily if they would have to pay the user charge. That is a concern of the people. Hon. Minister of Finance, I should be very happy if you could deal with that. They want to know if that new tax will impact upon the domestic service between Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Imbert: The passenger service charge will be for outgoing passengers on international destinations.

Miss P. Nicholson: Thank you.

Let us move on to other things in Tobago. I looked at the *Development Programme* and there is not one serious developmental project for Tobago. You ask yourself: Are these people serious? Do they really understand what is meant by Trinidad “and” Tobago? When the Prime Minister talks about modernizing, and puffs his chest, is it just to modernize Trinidad? Or modernize Trinidad “and” Tobago.

Under “Education” we have only \$3 million for Bishop’s High School; that is a school on which some extension work is being done. The most important piece of work needed to be done—I spoke about it last year—is the Signal Hill Tech/Voc Extension. It was also argued that Signal Hill should be extended also to cope with the intake of more children because of the lower level of acceptance from the common entrance perspective. *[Interruption]*.

We cannot wait. The Government has to find money for that. As a matter of fact there is no project. The Government took our \$107 million and did not give us Signal Hill, or anything for the roads, nothing at all. We want to hear something. It is Trinidad “and” Tobago. We want to know what is taking place because the people are questioning. They cannot see any jobs because there will be retrenchment over there in the same way that they will be doing in Trinidad. Nobody is creating any jobs there. The Government is destroying tourism, “licking up” the new fish processing industry and sending home people from the only institution which employs people in Tobago, which is the Tobago House of Assembly, and then there are no developmental works. None!

There is a landslip at Scarborough Secondary—I thought they had been given some money; not a penny. The Government is waiting for the school to collapse. If Scarborough Secondary is lost we would be left with Roxborough Composite and Signal Hill, which would make the situation so much worse.

I am appealing to this team of confused people to have another look, and if they are serious about the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago it is very critical that they look at education in a serious way. Do not tell me “next year” every time I ask.

There is another situation with the schools. I made the point several times here and I see again not a penny for education to do anything, to buy any equipment for the schools. Tobagonians are not working, where will they get chalk, toilet paper? Where will they get all the equipment—benches, tables and so forth—for the schools? I have not seen a cent in the estimates.

When they complete the post-primary centres in January, are the children going to sit on the floors of those schools? No money!

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I have argued that in education, generally in Trinidad and Tobago, as far as the senior comprehensive schools are concerned, they are mainly used as holding bays. Everybody is crying out in Trinidad and Tobago today, about the state of education. If one is dealing with priorities, one of the areas which must be given funds, must be education to take care of certain things.

From a Tobago perspective, when there are conferences, seminars, or anything on education at the Couva Learning Centre, the principals or teachers cannot come here because there is no money. We want action in that area. Up to now they have not been given the million dollars for school feeding.

The areas under sport that should be given help were left out, all because there are certain people in Planning dictating a new policy—which is the wrong policy. What they should be doing for the Tobago House of Assembly is giving them their money for sport and letting them dictate and prioritize. They were given a list and asked to shorten it. The area they said they did want is what they see here. Lowlands Regional Recreation Ground—everybody would like to know where that is located and what it is about—the Roxborough ground was already handled.

What they wanted to see, was the hard-courts for Goodwood, Speyside, Whim—that is a village with no recreational facilities at all, and many young people are exposed to the social ills. That is one of our problem villages. Another depressed area is the Golden Lane Les Coteaux Culloden area and Table Piece. Those areas are not here and I hope that when I move my amendment those areas would be included. I also hope that it would be recognised that it is not the Minister of Planning that dictates—he must recognize what is meant by the Tobago House of Assembly, and what is meant by devolution of power, because we are having a difficulty with that.

2.15 p.m.

Yesterday, I had a great problem with another “Visiting Minister” here, the Minister for Community Development, Culture and Women’s Affairs, Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams, who comes to Tobago and imposes programmes on Tobago without speaking with the Tobago House of Assembly. If a decision is taken, Central government must communicate with the Tobago House of Assembly; the funds are there and the Tobago House of Assembly will address the programme. That is devolution of power.

Conservation programme, same way. While the conservation programme was running in Trinidad for the whole year, it only started in Tobago in November.

That is why I know that there are many lies with this \$1 billion; it is not going to reach anywhere.

Madam Speaker: I am just giving some guidance. The hon. Member has 3 minutes to wind-up.

Miss P. Nicholson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will leave that because I really wanted to deal with housing in detail, but I think I shall have another day. Another “lied” area. Everything that is taking place in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements was started by the National Alliance for Reconstruction, the whole foundation works, everything, and I am very disappointed in that Minister, as well as at certain things I saw in the document, but I will deal with that comprehensively another time. If I were in that ministry, there would be something like 15,000—20,000 jobs going on now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to come to this House, the “House of Theatre”, to make a contribution—

Mr. Sudama: When the Member comes to this House he must behave himself. He must be grateful.

Sen. Dr. The Hon L. Saith: I am indeed grateful, to be able to make a contribution to this budget debate, basically to take the opportunity to deal with some aspects of the capital programme, as well as some of the work being done in the Ministry of Planning and Development. Before I do so, while it is still fresh in our memories, perhaps I need to respond to a few statements made by the Member for Tobago West, statements that obviously have arisen out of a lack of information and, therefore, need to be corrected.

For the benefit of the Member and this honourable House, may I say that the access roads programme is, in fact, administered by the Ministry of Works and Transport, not the Ministry of Planning and Development, and that as far as I am aware the contracts with respect to those works are awarded by the Central Tenders Board. I say no more, Madam Speaker.

I listened to the Member for Tobago West, who still does not seem to understand why her party lost the election. She keeps saying “we were doing good things for the country” and “we were doing this and we were doing that and the people threw us out”. I do not think she has got over that. The fact remains, however, that it is how you do things, how you communicate with the population;

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and whether your sincerity and caring come through. This is why they lost the election and we won it.

The Member for Tobago West sought to go through the budget documents and indicate provisions for severance pay and retirement benefits, and seems to suggest that these were put there because we were going to send people home.

Miss Nicholson: Minister Mottley has already accepted that; so do not tie up yourself.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: No, if you give me a chance. I gave you a chance.

Mr. Humphrey: You gave her a chance?

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: Yes, to speak without interruption.

Mr. Humphrey: Are you the one who gave her a chance?

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: Would you like to make your contribution now?

Mr. Humphrey: I will be making my contribution. I hope you would be here when I do so, because you would be a star in my contribution.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: Thank you. If you let me know, I will come especially for that.

The Government has provided moneys, not on the basis of any unilateral decision, as was taken previously—cutting people's salary by 10 per cent, do this, do that—but in consultation with the trade union movement. We propose to introduce an early retirement programme; we propose to reduce the retirement age of daily-paid workers from 65 to 60—all that in consultation and in agreement with the union. The provisions made in the budget are in that context.

I will deal with some of the matters raised in respect of the famous L'anse Fourmi-Charlotteville Road later in my contribution, because the misinformation continues. Perhaps, I can just touch on some of the points raised by the Member for Tobago West in respect of the development programme.

Requests come from every ministry, including the Tobago House of Assembly, for projects to be placed in the Development Programme. This year I think requests totalled over \$1.2 billion. After doing our sums, it was recognized that Government would be able to fund approximately \$600 million of that programme, and extensive consultation took place between the Ministry of Planning and Development and other ministries and the Tobago House of

Assembly, as to how to set priorities. We all want a lot, but somewhere in the process one has to look at the total number of projects and try to set some priorities on the basis of the needs of Trinidad and Tobago. It has to be on that basis; it cannot be on the basis of Trinidad or on the basis of Tobago only.

Within that context, let me quote some figures of allocations made:

Drainage works Tobago	\$1.3 million
Drainage works Trinidad	\$1.2 million
Drainage improvements, Trinidad	\$4.0 million

So out of a total allocation of what is \$6.5 million, \$5.2 million has been allocated to Trinidad and \$1.3 million to Tobago.

Electricity programme,
such as street lighting and other programmes:

Trinidad	\$850,000
Tobago	\$250,000

roughly one-third of the allocation for Trinidad.

Roads and Bridges:

Upgrading and improving local
roads and bridges, out of the general revenue:

Trinidad	\$10.3 million
Tobago	\$2 million,

roughly 20 per cent of the allocation to Trinidad.

If one goes through the document one will see that kind of allocation in this budget. We look at the projects; we look at the need; we look at priorities, and we then try to fund them, on the basis, as I say, of Trinidad and Tobago.

2.25 p.m.

Despite the challenges that we still face, I think we can derive some satisfaction from the fact that in 1993 we reached some milestones which are critical to our economic development. I refer to the fact that we liberalized the foreign exchange regime in April. We passed the Financial Institutions Act this

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year, and we have presented to parliament a new Companies Bill. We finalized an Investment Sector Reform Programme as part of our Investment Sector loan. We have made progress in the divestment of some of our state-owned enterprises; and we have seen a resurgence in investment in the energy sector.

What we are trying to do is create an economy that is capable of generating economic opportunities, creating jobs, enhancing the well-being of our population—all to be done on a sustainable basis. In order to do this it means that Trinidad and Tobago must become more competitive, innovative, adaptable and competent. Unless we restructure our economy and institutions, those who are doing that would leave us behind, and if we are left behind, then there would be no hope.

In that context, we are trying to use the Public Sector Investment Programme as an important lever of our policy. We have laid in the Parliament a PSIP policy for 1994, which reviewed our performance in 1993 and has set out the projects for 1994. It is important that we use the Public Sector Investment Programme not only to improve our infrastructure, but also to create the kind of economic activity which will stimulate growth in the economy.

For 1994 we are hoping to spend, I think it is \$1.5 billion, of which \$647 million is to be spent by government agencies, the rest to be spent by state enterprises. This year we looked at what happened to the PSIP in 1992 and 1993 where, each year, there has been under-utilization of the resources provided. In other words, we were not able to carry out the capital development programme to the extent that we should, given the resources that we have provided; and this has implications for us.

Firstly, of course, the country is being denied the use of the infrastructure projects which are funded. Secondly, since most of the funding for these projects is, in fact, coming from external agencies, we are depriving ourselves of the foreign exchange that we would get by having them done. But more than that, all these loans have commitment fees, which we are paying and it is in our interest to use them as quickly as possible.

My Ministry, therefore, undertook an analysis of why this was happening and what we could do to improve it. We found that there are really two sets of problems. One set which I could say are project related and are one-off. It may be that a particular loan has a set of conditionalities which have to be met, and there is difficulty of some kind in meeting them.

There are other types of difficulties which are generic to the programme and which, basically, relate to the capacity of ministries to implement programmes.

The difficulties may range from the inability to get contracts going, or to procure goods, the shortage of staff at the ministry, so that they are unable to dedicate resources in a full amount to those projects; it may be related to matters of the implementation and organizational framework.

As a result, the Ministry of Planning and Development, in a Note to Cabinet, has proposed some measures which it will seek to implement in 1994 in the hope that we can begin to improve our performance in the capital programme. Cabinet has agreed that in respect of externally financed projects, ministries should now designate an appropriate officer in the ministry full-time to ensure that the conditions necessary for disbursement of funds take place. In other words, instead of having this as part of what one person does, in addition to everything else, we will now designate an officer in the Ministry to handle the matter.

Where projects exceed \$5 million, we will put a dedicated Project Execution Unit for that purpose, so that we can focus a group of people on getting a project done. In staffing that unit, if resources are not available in the ministry, we will use contracts as a means of recruiting people to help ministries staff the unit.

Where inter-agency approvals are required, for instance, you may have a project in housing that requires approval by WASA, we will set up an inter-agency team to look at projects well in advance and ensure that approvals are obtained in time for work to take place.

Using the Chief State Solicitor, we will seek to do some typical contracts—standard forms of contracts—which we can use from contract to contract and not have to “reinvent the wheel” each time we want to award a contract.

We will set up in the Ministry of Planning and Development a central co-ordinating and monitoring committee responsible to the Minister of Planning and Development to oversee this co-ordination and monitoring. It is my hope that after six months we will do a thorough review of the performance of the capital programme and where there are still problems, it would be early enough to catch them and make the necessary adjustments to ensure that we meet the requirements of the 1994 capital programme.

As the 1994 programme indicates, we are seeking to intensify our expenditure on the capital programme. We have to do this for two reasons. One is, as I indicated, that if we can get it going, it will create jobs and demand for goods and services in the economy and therefore help growth. Secondly, it has to do with the state of our infrastructure.

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While generally we have fairly good basic infrastructure in the country, it is quite clear that over the last 10 years there has been a deterioration of it, largely because of the inability to maintain it. What this does is create a situation where if we continue the neglect, it will be more costly to either rebuild it or replace it. The time has come where we have to give priority to increasing our expenditure on maintaining, rebuilding, and replacing our infrastructure. Because, if we do not, if we continue to have poor infrastructure, we put an added burden on manufacturers upon whom we are depending to create goods and services for export. We make them uncompetitive for use of the infrastructure is an important element of their cost of production.

2.35 p.m.

If we want to attract investment, whether it is local or foreign, we must realize that one of the items that an investor would look at is the level and reliability of our infrastructure—roads, ports, airports, telephones, water and electricity. Therefore, if we are to move the country forward and create sustainable jobs, we cannot afford to neglect the infrastructure.

Last, but by no means least, if we continue to have these major deficiencies in our infrastructure, we create social problems. They do create problems and hardship for our people, whether it is with water, whether it is with schools, whatever it is. What we are, in fact, doing is creating severe hardship for our people.

It is in this context that we have tried to cast the 1994 PSIP. A perusal of the document would indicate that in addition to the ongoing programmes, we have some new programmes. We have the access roads and bridges programme; the first phase is the rehabilitation of 24 kilometres of access roads and replacement of 12 bridges and for which we have provided \$40 million. We have the road rehabilitation programme where we will be designing 81 kilometres of roads and for which \$8 million has been provided.

The Minister of Finance has indicated that we will have a road improvement programme funded by the Road Improvement Fund of \$50 million. We propose to continue rural electrification in the remote rural areas and for this we have provided \$6 million.

The Member for Tobago West should note that we have provided \$1 million for the feasibility study and to commence the design work for the Richmond Water Supply Project. We have provided \$6 million this year to begin the design and preparation of documents for a programme of rehabilitation of water and

sewerage facilities estimated to cost \$340 million. Eight million dollars is provided for construction of container stripping facilities at Point Lisas and Port of Spain.

Under “Urban Renewal” we have provided \$6 million to commence design on several projects—National Library, National Performing Arts Centre, the Judicial and Legal Complex, the Chancery Lane Complex.

At the present time much of the resources coming to the capital programme have been accessed through the multi-lateral funding agencies simply because we are not generating enough surpluses on our current account to fund it. The year 1994 is no exception. A large portion of the funding is coming from the multi-lateral funding agencies.

The *Medium-Term Policy Framework* is projecting an increase of our surplus in 1994 to 2.8 per cent of the GDP and to 5 per cent in 1995. As we do this, I think we will feel a little more comfortable with our ability to fund our capital programme without what seems to be a very high recourse to multi-lateral funding agencies. But, given where we are, it is important that we continue to source our funding from these agencies.

In September of this year, the Minister of Finance and I, through our attendance at the IMF and world Bank meetings, met with a number of agencies—the IADB and World Bank. We indicated quite clearly, and I think we had a very good reception, that we wished to move away from what has been the traditional lending pattern over the last few years, from policy loans to project loans. We felt that we had put in place the policy measures and reforms that were necessary for the country, and that we would now wish to concentrate on loans which could be tied to specific infrastructure projects.

As I said, the reception was quite positive, because I think everybody recognized that we have made rapid progress in respect of policy reforms. This year we signed a policy loan in respect of the investment sector for US \$80 million with the IADB, and that loan, which we will drawdown in three tranches, is targetted towards reform of the policy and institutional areas necessary for investment.

The areas under this loan include financial sector reform, establishment of a securities exchange commission and a more satisfactory framework for bond and equity trading, the restructuring of existing mechanism for providing credit support to agriculture, a rationalization of the framework for incentives in agriculture, the advancement of our divestment programme, improving our land

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administration. I think it is quite clear to everyone that land administration, land tenure and distribution are key to our economic development and to the strengthening of the protection of intellectual property rights.

As part of this loan, we were able to access US \$15 million concessional funding for our social programmes and part of that funding is going into the social safety net in respect of the School Feeding Programme, poverty relief programmes and retraining.

We are in discussions with the IADB about another policy loan which will probably be our last policy loan for a little while, and that is an agricultural sector reform loan. This loan which is now set at US \$60 million, again to be fast disbursing, is in the process of negotiations. Some of the issues which we are tackling through that loan included pricing, trade policy, agricultural land use, public administration, and incentives.

I also wish to advise the House that the board of the IADB has recently approved a US \$10.5 million (TT \$62 million) loan to assist the Ministry of Planning and Development and line ministries in identifying and developing projects for the capital programme. That loan agreement was signed in September.

We have also agreed with them for a US \$3 million revolving facility to assist us in developing projects and programmes, both for funding abroad and internally, so that even where they are funded internally, we ensure that those projects reach the proper standards of economic viability, financial feasibility and are well thought out and well prepared. Whether one borrows of funds projects oneself, one has to ensure that projects are properly thought out. Under the \$62 million loan, we will include a feasibility study for the new hospital in Tobago and for some work on an expansion of the major road network in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.45 p.m.

In addition, we are talking to the IADB about a number of loans for capital programmes, which we hope to finalize in 1994—1995. These loans include a programme of support for small business activity. We are talking about getting some resources which we can place for small business, either through the Small Business Development Company or through other agencies which impact on small business. We are talking about a loan for improving our vocational and technical education and training. It is clear that if we are to take advantage of what is being done by liberalizing our economy and by seeking to become a manufacturing and service sector, we must train our people.

I indicated quite clearly that given our resources and the fact that we are unable to generate surpluses to the extent that we require them, if we are to have a capital programme we need to get the resources elsewhere. The alternative would be to do nothing.

Loans for priority investments in the health sector, including reform which would include a national health insurance scheme, a national highway rehabilitation and maintenance programme, will support the rehabilitation of approximately 200 kilometres of road, and to some extent urban re-development and renewal activity.

That is the programme with the IADB. We have also been in discussions with the World Bank, and in the context of our decision not to proceed with policy loans, the programmes we are discussing with the World Bank are for four project-oriented loans, one, to deal with water and sewerage rehabilitation. We are looking at a loan for the Water and Sewerage Authority of approximately US \$50 million. It is quite clear in our discussions that the loan, if it comes for WASA, is predicated on significant improvements in the managerial, financial and technical capability of the Authority. We are looking for a loan in respect of forestry. We are talking to the World Bank about a major school building programme, especially primary schools. Finally, we are talking to them and we started discussions in September, when I was there, on a drainage and flood control loan. A World Bank team is scheduled to visit Trinidad and Tobago next week in respect of the discussions for the drainage and flood control programme.

In addition to some of the work that we are doing with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, we have also targeted the Richmond Water Supply Project as one which has to be done. Local resources are not available. We are in discussions with the European Investment Bank. All these loans are from multilateral agencies which are on concessional terms and are absolutely essential to deal with some of our problems.

It would, perhaps, be appropriate at this time to deal with the L'anse Fourmi/Charlotteville Road in Tobago. Let me correct, for the umpteenth time, this question of the road. I heard the Member for Tobago West say that the EEC had granted money to Tobago for the road. I am not aware that the EEC makes loans or grants to a portion of Trinidad and Tobago. The EEC deals with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and it grants resources to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I am going to take a little time on this because the mischief has to be corrected.

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In 1984 a study was done by Trinidad Engineering and Research. The consultants at that time did a preliminary study and said that to build the road would cost \$50 million and that the rate of return would be 12 per cent. In 1990 the Government of Trinidad and Tobago got from the EEC a grant of ECU \$17 million—an ECU is about TT \$6.50—for Trinidad and Tobago. The then Government allocated 95 per cent of that \$17 million, some ECU \$16 million, to this road. You had \$17 million for the country and somebody capriciously allocated 95 per cent to a road in Tobago.

When we attempted to access the money the EEC said, “Let us see the project.” The Government sent the report of 1984 and said, “On this basis we want to access this money and build the road.” The EEC looked at the report and said, “First of all, this thing is dated; it was done in 1984. Secondly, it does not take into account A, B, C, D, E—you have to do another study.”

Mr. ANR Robinson: Madam Speaker, since the hon. Minister is making reference to this matter, obviously, from his memory, would he undertake to lay all the documents relating to this matter on the Table so that the House and the country could have the full facts? It is a characteristic of that side to suppress information and give a distorted picture.

2.55 p.m.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: Madam Speaker, I am not quoting from memory; I am quoting from a briefing paper which I have at the ministry. As far as information can be made available, I am willing to do so.

In the meantime the EEC said that we could not use this study. In 1990 new terms of reference were prepared and a contract was awarded to Development Planning Associates and Alpha Engineering and Research Limited to do a new study.

When we came into Government, I was reviewing the Lomé allocations, and it was clear to me that we had now sterilized 95 per cent of the funds because they could not be used until the study was completed; it was not available for anywhere else, and the study would take some time. As a result we asked the EEC to reprogramme it for rural electrification, road rehabilitation, and assistance to farmers under the ADB.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, can the Minister say why he had to ask the EEC to reprogramme? Since he said that the Government of the day, or some person, capriciously allocated, why did he not reallocate? Why did he have to go

to the EEC? The point is that this was done with the agreement of the EEC at every stage.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: Madam Speaker, since the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in 1990 had indicated to the EEC that it wanted to allocate 95 per cent of the money to the road in Tobago, if this Government wanted to reprogramme, we needed to advise the EEC that we were reprogramming. The money was grant money coming from the EEC.

The report of the consultants that were hired by the government of 1991, under the new terms of reference, has now come to the ministry and in that report the project is now estimated to cost between \$12 and \$17 million. The report is being studied by a group, including the Tobago House of Assembly, and as soon as that is completed and we have a report that can stand the scrutiny of being a bankable project, we intend to seek funding for it. That is the status of the L'anse Fourmi/Charlotteville Programme.

Mr. Robinson: Every time they make a statement they say something different.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, if a Member of this side is saying one thing, and they are saying another, and it can be established by the documentation so the people would know the truth, would the Government not undertake to lay the documents in the Parliament?

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: Madam Speaker, I have no problem. In fact, I would make the documents available at the library; the feasibility study of 1984, the feasibility study of today, the correspondence with the EEC on this study. I have no problem with it. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Robinson: Lay all of them and do not doctor any of them.

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

Sen. Dr. the Hon. L. Saith: Madam Speaker, I can assure you that when I lay the documents, I do not intend to come and say that I lost one of them.

Mr. Sudama: Are you a doctor of doctoring documents?

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: No; I am not a doctor of doctoring documents.

Mr. Sudama: What are you a doctor of?

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: I am a doctor of engineering. *[Interruption]* No, just engineering.

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Basically, that is the status of the capital programme and of our attempts to mobilize resources to ensure that it takes place.

I wish to take a few minutes to talk about some of the other developments in the Ministry of Planning and Development.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: Madam Speaker, during the budget debate last year, I indicated that we were working towards the establishment of an environmental management agency. I am pleased to advise the House that the legislation has been prepared, and is now with the Legislative Review Committee which I believe is the last administrative step before it is presented to Parliament.

In this legislation we are seeking to put the institutional arrangements, and to give the regulatory muscle to an entity able to deal effectively with the environment. As Members know, unless there is a strong agency with regulations and laws that can be enforced, there would be the continued degradation of the environment.

We are considering in this legislation to develop standards; to monitor them; to promote public education; to work with the business community, labour and NGOs; to mobilize technical and financial resources internally and externally—all towards the aim of enhancing environmental management in Trinidad and Tobago.

Two innovative ideas are the creation of an environmental trust fund to be administered by the agency which will seek funding from external donors in respect of the environment, and a national environmental information system for the dissemination of environmental information. As part of the legislation, we are also seeking to create an environmental court so that matters dealing with the environment are dealt with speedily. We also set up a committee this year to look at the whole question of urban development and the creation of an authority for urban development.

The Government has much valuable commercial land in the urban areas lying fallow for years. We are seeking to find a mechanism where, in collaboration with investors, we can bring this land to use. We set up a team to look at what would be the best mechanism for doing this; they have reported, and we are about to

create an urban development corporation. The policy brief has been approved by Cabinet and early in the year we are going to begin work on the legislation.

3.05 p.m.

Objectives of the corporation include proposing areas for development, doing the layout, designing and developing selected land areas and buildings, redeveloping designated areas, mobilizing financial resources for the implementation of projects including, where appropriate, joint venture arrangements.

The Government will put some seed money into the corporation and assets in terms of its land base. After that, the corporation is expected to operate on a commercial basis and generate its own revenue as part of its development plan. The Town and Country Planning Division is always an area of concern to Members and to the general public. We continue to give priority to improving the workings of the Division.

This year, for instance, the Town and Country Planning Division was able to determine 80 per cent of all applications within eight weeks. Last year the figure was 70 per cent in eight weeks. And while we are still striving for a higher figure, the trend is a more realistic and rapid response to applications coming in to the Division.

We have also put in internal arrangements to accelerate processing of applications for single family units. Again, the objective is to shorten the time for approval. For large development projects there were considerable delays in the Town and Country Planning Division, they having to seek advice from the Highways Division and WASA: it was a long cumbersome procedure. We have set up an intersectoral committee of persons from the Town and Country Planning Division, the Construction Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Highways Division, and WASA so that they can meet as a group and look at the plans and come to some decision. That is working and I am beginning to see a speed-up of approval of plans for major development.

Mr. Humphrey: That was promised in the last budget.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith: But we are doing it. A committee that had been set-up has reported on outdoor advertising. As you know, this is becoming a problem. We are looking at some of the recommendations, and where they do not need a change in legislation, we will proceed to implement them. Where they need legislative changes, we will have to take the necessary steps.

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Finally, as indicated by the Minister of Finance, we have been participating with the IADB in an experimental programme to develop innovative social programmes in the region. A team headed by Sir Allister McIntyre, was in Trinidad to work on the project. We have the report from the Bank. We are studying it. We have decided, even while we are studying it, that the concept of a community development enterprises fund is a good one. We will accept it. We will fund it in the initial stages from our own modest resources, and we are talking to the IADB about concessional assistance for such a fund. If we are able to put it together we would then have a vehicle for targetting those most in need, and have an assured source of funding for the programme.

As part of our responsibility as a ministry for the pre-investment programme, we are setting up a group in the ministry to co-ordinate all our pre-investment activities and to ensure all our projects are developed. We are looking at the way we operate as a ministry. I have asked the Town and Country Planning Division, the Lands and Surveys Division and the Valuation Division to see themselves as part of a ministry, to look at the way they now operate and see whether by coming together and maximizing their human resource, equipment, and space, we could more effectively serve the public, while at the same time reducing some of the expenditures.

I will give an example. In San Fernando we have one office for Town and Country Planning; one for Valuation, one for Lands and Surveys, with telephones, clerks, receptionists and equipment in all of them. Can we look at this and have one office properly staffed and equipped and, therefore, provide better service to the public? They have looked at it and in 1994, I am hoping to be able to implement some of these changes.

I trust I have been able to convey some sense of what we are doing in the ministry, what our programmes are, and to assure the House and, by extension, the population, that as far as the ministry is concerned, we are well on the way to "going down the road and getting the job done."

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Shamsuddin Mohammed (*Caroni East*): Madam Speaker, I join this debate at this time, but it is a very long time I have not felt so sleepy. I was trying to understand what was really taking place having regard to the presentation of the Ministers who have spoken.

The Minister of Planning and Development in his opening remarks said that he is glad of the opportunity to come to the House of theatre. If that is the view

that he holds of this House, I must say I feel very disappointed, having regard to the fact that his colleague had earlier indicated to the other House that he is doing away with theatrics as well. Perhaps, they have some form of communication between them, as far as this is concerned.

3.15 p.m.

This is the House of the elected people and the hon. Minister ought to know and ought to appreciate what that means. The House of the elected people means that we represent the sovereign will of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is a constitutional definition, but it is also in the practical way a proper definition. I feel very disappointed in the sense that as the hon. Minister of Planning and Development, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been unable to analyze the impact and effects of all the various loans that the Minister has put forward to this House. I am afraid that with the number of loans we have heard about, this country would be mortgaged in perpetuity, and the population would be similarly saddled with repaying these loans. We have not had a single, proper and objective analysis of how the loans would impact on Trinidad and Tobago.

I say so especially in the sphere of agriculture. We have heard ad nauseam pronouncements from Government Ministers and seen publications in various forms about agriculture. I thought I would have felt very good when it comes to agriculture after listening to the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism, who controls customs duty and to the Minister of Planning and Development, but I am disappointed. We have not really heard anything. It is a very sorry state of affairs.

Imagine, even at the level of the budget speech, 45 pages, made by the Minister of Finance, we barely had 10 lines of reference to agriculture. that, in my respectful view, is certainly indicative of the fact that the Government cares very little, if at all, about the advancement of agriculture in this country. I am very disappointed.

If we go back to the manifesto that was put to the electorate in the 1991 general election we would see that it is there proclaimed that the PNM is committed to the development of our agricultural sector as a major generator of employment, economic production and foreign exchange. What has been put into that budget? What has the Government done in order to further that and effect some growth in agriculture?

In my respectful submission, I am saying that agriculture can be readily construed to mean "the throes of death" in Trinidad and Tobago. There is nothing positive or tangible indicating any concern with agriculture.

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The *Medium-Term Policy Framework From Stabilization to Growth 1993 – 1995* was laid in this House. Again, there were very nice pronouncements. Page 35 states:

“...the agricultural sector will also generate increased job opportunities. The State accepts responsibility for the creation of an environment that will foster development of a vibrant and competitive agricultural sector...reduction in the current levels of dependence on imported food, and increasing...private sector investment in agriculture,...land use and distribution, improving agricultural marketing and agro-processing...”

Another document was laid in the House. As I said, there are words, but we are not being provided with evidence of growth in agriculture. I am sorry that the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has not made submissions to this House. I hope that when the time comes he would respond and indicate the steps to effect such growth.

This document, the *Medium-Term Policy Framework 1994—1996* again says that the Government remains committed to the development of the agricultural sector as a primary source of economic activity and a major generator of employment opportunities. What is this? This is nice writing. It is not difficult to write this or to write a manifesto. What we want to see is perspicuous evidence of action being taken. Where is it? We do not have it.

I think we are now two years in the life of this Parliament. I am submitting to this honourable House that to date we have not had an agricultural policy. Let us look at what has happened. No policy has been put forward. What has been done? We have had statements. It is a confusing situation. I believe in the other place one Minister said that as far as he is concerned, we should import all our food. He was saying inferentially, agriculture is not important. He said that. I am trying to see whether we could say there is anything like a policy in the sphere of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. To date that has not been disputed or denied. That was the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism.

We are trying to see what is going on. There is a document, *Inter-American Development Bank Investment Sector Reform Programme*. Some of these loan contracts have been going through. I see the name of the Minister of Planning and Development on some of the documents. There was a whole scenario. All these things have gone on. Parliament was not brought into any consultation. The population was not taken into account in entering into these loans with the international financial agencies. I am searching for the policy, or what the steps have been in respect of the formulation of a policy.

This document, Loan 759/OCTT between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank—I am sure my friend the Member for St. Augustine would deal in some more details with this. I am submitting to this honourable House that it seems to me that the Government has to toe the line insofar as these financial institutions are concerned.

“Letter of sector policy.

The borrower and the bank have agreed that the content of the letter of sector policy of May 4, 1993 from the borrower to the bank which describes a plan of action objectives and policy designed to improve incentives and opportunities for private investment and which states the borrower’s commitment to the execution of the programme and to the implementation of complementary macro economic policies is an integral part of the programme and that substantial non-modification of the policies described which in the opinion of the bank may affect achievement of the objectives of the programme shall give the bank the right to withhold initiation or suspend disbursements of the resources of the financing.”

Comply! If you do not comply, we would use this big stick. That is the extent, I am submitting, in respect of which this Government has committed Trinidad and Tobago to the conditionalities of the lending institutions. They are all here. Later on. I would show how this has impacted on the agricultural sector. It is important that we know and understand what is taking place.

There was an effort in July, 1993. The hon. Minister came to the House and presented us with what is called a Green Paper. If I am wrong let him stand and correct me. He told this House that he was giving eight weeks for comments on it. That was in July. August, September, October, November, December have passed and this House has not been informed up to this time about the status of that paper, because it has to turn white. We are not hearing anything. He should tell us what is going on with regard to that Green Paper, which is intended to crystallize a policy.

Listen to the trouble with this. It was reported in the newspapers. Maybe the Minister saw it and he would respond to it. The Chairman of that committee, Prof. Wilson, has indicated in a public statement that the language of that Green Paper is imprecise. While there may be certain policy objectives, it is difficult to chart a definite policy in agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The hon. Member is misleading the House. I ask him to reflect and correct what he has just said.

Mr. S. Mohammed: Madam Speaker, that is a bold statement to say I am misleading the House and that I must correct it. The hon. Minister must bring the contradicted evidence to show that what I am saying is misleading. To what extent is it misleading?

3.25 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Prof. Wilson did not chair any committee to do any draft policy for the Government.

Mr. S. Mohammed: Was he a member of the committee? This is the Report of the Team appointed by Cabinet to prepare a Draft National Policy for Food and Agriculture. I want to see whether, in fact, he was a member. Even if he was not the chairman, he was a member of the committee which signed the report and said that the language is imprecise. That is what you should deny, not whether or not he was chairman. I want to see whether he was a member of the committee at all. I will tell you in a while whether he was. He was a member!

I am saying that that person who was a member of the committee signed the report, and if he signed the report without a dissenting view, one has to say that he accepts the report. I am telling hon. Members that there was a report in the *Trinidad Guardian* some days ago in which this same Prof. Wilson said that the language of the report is imprecise and it is difficult to crystallize a policy on agriculture. The Minister must make a statement to that effect when his time comes to reply. I conclude that my point is adequately substantiated in that regard.

I have been trying to indicate to this honourable House that it is difficult to find a policy of the Government. When it thinks it has a policy, there are doubts about the same policy and its imprecise language. It goes back to what I am saying about the different pronouncements of Ministers of Government. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources says one thing; the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism says something else and the Green Paper says something further. What is the policy? Agriculture is in a state of chaos. That is my submission to this honourable House.

Here are extracts of these agreements on loan contract.

“Additionally the Government will undertake a rationalization of the support provided to the agricultural sector with a view to facilitating improvements in targetting ...”

and this is the operating and emphatic word I want to use—

“and containment of fiscal support in agriculture. Further, within the context of containment, of the current level of protection and subsidies for agriculture,

as a whole, the Government will monitor the level of protection and subsidies provided and maintain the openness of markets for beef, lamb, veal and mutton.”

This is what they agreed to. This reflects on agriculture.

“The Government has stated its commitment to contain and rationalize government and consumer subsidies to agricultural producers and increase import competition in a managed fashion.”

This is what has gone on. I have never heard those things in this Parliament. I have never seen the document before, but the whole nation of Trinidad and Tobago has been committed to these. I am doing all of this to indicate that there is no serious concern on the part of the Government in respect of the advancement of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago.

One readily looks at the table of the GDP and seeks to make comparison, and say, “Oh, GDP in agriculture is only 2.5 per cent.” I would like to indicate what it is in some of the other countries, the developed countries. Notwithstanding that the GDP is relatively low, agriculture is considered to be very, very important and they give all the support to it.

Trinidad and Tobago	2.5%
United States of America	2.5—3%

In the mighty USA, agriculture on the chart of GDP is 3 per cent

Canada	6%
France	4%
Australia	4%
New Zealand	9%

These percentages are relatively small, and these are very developed countries. Let us look at the areas of subsidies which are the things that hinge on agricultural growth—tariffs, subsidies and all these mechanisms—let us see what is happening.

In the United States of America rice is subsidized by 49 per cent, milk by 62 per cent; sugar—47 per cent. Canada: milk—79 per cent. In Switzerland, for example, milk is subsidized by 84 per cent; sugar—85 per cent; beef—84 per cent; poultry—81 per cent. EEC: rice—60 per cent; sugar—57 per cent; milk—69 per cent; beef—54 per cent. Japan: rice—87 per cent; sugar—62 per cent; milk—

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55 per cent. And the source of this information is the *Unctad Trade and Development Report, 1991*.

When you move around the areas and hear the trepidation of the farmers of Trinidad and Tobago—that they are hearing this and that, that subsidies will stop in this and that—you will understand the stage that we have reached in respect of our agriculture.

In addition to the subsidies, incentives are given for export, and there is full development of the infrastructural facilities in these countries. In other words, they encourage agriculture, and that is something that we need to take into account. We have to come to the realization that agriculture holds hope for us. Oil is a wasting asset. Our oil production has actually dropped and we seem not to be making any positive effort to boost agriculture.

Some years ago, agriculture was virtually 10 per cent of the GDP. In 1964, for example, we were able to pay for 64 per cent of the food imported into Trinidad and Tobago; now it pays for only 10 per cent, and the food bill, at the present time, stands at some \$800 million. So that we are becoming more and more dependent on imports to sustain ourselves. In this era we have to ask, what is going on? What are we doing?

We must look at it in this dimension as well: Agriculture employs approximately 13 per cent of our labour force [*Interruption*] Does the Member for Toco/Manzanilla wish to make a point? He comes from an agricultural area. All the coconuts are dying down there; he should be supporting me. All the fishing in the area has gone to the dogs; he should be supporting me. I am saying that agriculture employs 13 per cent of the labour force and we must take that into account. [*Interruption*] What? Ten per cent? Statistics! No, no. I stand by my point. The point is that it generates more employment than that which is so heavily capitalized.

3.35 p.m.

We are not disputing that because it earns a tremendous amount of revenue for Trinidad and Tobago. What I am referring to is the capacity of agriculture to assist in the generation of employment in our country. I am submitting that we are not doing all that we should do with regard to the advancement of agriculture, because we are not treating agriculture as a priority in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the whole scenario, agriculture has been making inputs into various industries in the country. We cannot afford to lose an important mechanism for

propelling this country, by not giving it the right attention that it needs. Agriculture is not just planting, reaping and selling something; it is all that goes on in the periphery of agriculture. Do you know how many garden shops that are all over this country, all employing people, all dealing in chemicals and fertilizers, in machinery, spraying equipment? Agriculture is able to generate and to do all of these things, and we are not giving it the recognition that it ought to get.

Another reason why we must consider agriculture very important. I had cause some time ago in this honourable House to quote from a document from India. India was in a terrible state some years ago, but it was able to embark on a programme of food self-sufficiency, and it was able to accomplish that. Whatever may have happened at that time—opposition from international agencies—the population was mobilized towards self-sufficiency in agriculture in India, a vast country like that, one billion people, and now they can say that they have self-sufficiency in agriculture.

What are we going to do now? We have what it takes to become self-sufficient in terms of what is basic, but I do not think we have that commitment and dedication to make it work. Agriculture in itself has been an earner of foreign exchange and that is something we have to take into account. If we are able, as I have said before, to produce something that we would not import, we would be saving foreign exchange. The slogan: “foreign exchange saved is foreign exchange earned.” That is what we have to try to understand and accept.

If we look at what is going on in some of the sectors of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago, if we take the case of the dairy industry, well, I believe that the farmers would have felt happy that some relief came in the imposition of the customs duty of five per cent.

There was also the imposition of 15 per cent on imported beef. I have had the opportunity to speak to some of the people who are engaged in the beef industry. While they are grateful for whatever was given in that regard, it is still a case where even that 15 per cent will not materially help them in terms of competition with the imported product. Irish beef, I am instructed, comes to this country and—I am subject to correction; the Minister can find the facts, do some research—the Irish Government pays to the farmer \$1.40 for live beef. Cows are slaughtered, packaged and exported and beef reaches Trinidad and Tobago at 75 cents a pound. I mention this because while they appreciate the help, we must not feel because we do “X”, that all the problems will be solved.

The farmers are happy for the increase in the duties, but I am drawing to the attention of the honourable House, because it does show the lack of action on the

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part of Government in having an appropriate consultative mechanism with the farmers of the country. All of this IADB, all of this imposition, why do you not have an ongoing committee? We are in such a critical position; we have had symposia and all these things in the past. Has the Government ever considered meeting with all the farmers in this country, in this age of liberalization and IADB affairs to discuss with them, find out what is the situation? No, it is not being done. A fly-by-night business, they sit in a committee room, take a decision and go and negotiate, sign and commit the people of Trinidad and Tobago to different loans. There is need to have an ongoing mechanism in place in order to get the views of the farmers. It is fundamental; agriculture has been our history. Why are we so slow in action? Why are we so “non-care” in the sphere of agriculture, as you may call it. This is the position with regard to that customs duty.

With respect to dairy milk, I am told that Puerto Rico embarked on a programme a couple years ago—“wow” big advertisement—to mobilize the population to drink pasteurized milk, and everybody went crazy about it. So if the government could spend \$400,000 to “let’s go down the road,” why not give thought to mobilizing the population towards agriculture and the consumption of the commodities that come from agriculture? The area of milk—I am told by reliable authority—we could sensitize. There have been some small people in various parts of the country producing this milk in the small packets. We need to take a look at that.

The coconut industry—my Friends the Members for point Fortin and Fyzabad should know; they are there regularly—is in a very critical situation and I am informed that there are people who are now cutting down the coconut trees and planting other crops because of the problems they have with Coconut Growers Association with respect to the purchase of copra. There is great uncertainty in the coconut industry. I think I may have made the point last year in this honourable House that if you cut down a coconut tree, it is not easy to get another. If you cut down a coconut field, quite apart from the fact that it takes another 10 years to produce coconuts, you cannot have a field of 10 acres of coconuts again. The reason is that there is a cancer in the coconut industry, “red-ring” disease, which will destroy all the young coconut trees.

What is happening, without our valuable resources in the sphere of agriculture being managed, people are going willy nilly and cutting down coconut trees, apart from the fact that large acreages have now gone to green coconuts instead of copra. Different crops are being planted. We must take that into account, because one of the things that we have with the coconut industry is competition from

outside. Soya is coming into Trinidad and Tobago, and we have to do a study of this, for we do not want to lose a resource as valuable as the coconut industry. Do you know why? With the way things are going—our dollar is floating now, but I do not know what would happen soon—our rate of exchange could be anything like TT \$10 to US \$1, and if that happens, the cost of soya would, in effect, become more expensive than oil from the coconuts we grow in this country. We need to give some kind of consideration to this. We are not told what is going on with the coconut industry, but it is in a very critical state.

3.45 p.m.

The same thing with the citrus industry. Some years ago we exported grapefruit, up to a million pounds per year. Has any consideration been given to that? The citrus industry is in a state of virtual abandon. Within recent times Caroni Limited has been able to produce some citrus, yet we continue to import the concentrates when there are abandoned estates all over the country. It is something that can open up new vistas for Trinidad and Tobago; we are neglecting that.

Tell me, what attention is Government giving? I want to know; I am trying to find out what the policy is. From what I have been told about the Green Paper we may never get that policy. Two years has gone since it was laid on the Table, and we were told eight weeks: we have not seen the White Paper as yet.

Take the question of floriculture, which is a pet subject, I am sure, of the Member for St. Ann's East. We must understand that there is a limit to the advancement of floriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. My Friend the Member for St. Ann's East grows flowers, and he knows it costs about \$400,000 to bring one acre of flowers under cultivation.

There is another point we have to look at when we talk about floriculture. My information is that the officials who are the consultants and advisers to the IADB will tell farmers to go into cut flowers, import the other things, that is their attitude. But there is a saturation point in regard to absorption of cut flowers in the external market. I am informed—and the hon. Minister of Finance would know, because this is a field that is close the him—that apart from costing \$400,000 to bring out one acre under cultivation, the situation is that if we were to have four or five hundred acres of cut flowers there would be saturation in the international market.

More than that, right now there is a move in the United States of America to ban the import of cut flowers. My Friend would know that. A Member of the

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Parliament in Hawaii, a Senator, has put up a bill to restrict the import of cut flowers. So, while we could make some progress, we must not depend on floriculture to advance agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. Firstly, it is too costly and it cannot be met by the small man; secondly, there is a limit to the amount the country can produce; and thirdly, there is the question of intent, and steps being taken to limit the import of cut flowers abroad.

Our cocoa and coffee fields; what about them? The document may show that there was an increase last year, but it is not realistic when one is considering agriculture and what concrete proposals will emanate for its advancement.

The poultry industry—now this is very fundamental. We consume almost 80 million pounds of chicken in Trinidad and Tobago, and there is concern as well in the poultry fraternity about what is going to happen, what is going on with trade liberalization, and I feel that I could represent the feelings of the people in the industry if I were to quote an extract that appeared in the *Guardian* last week Friday. I crave your leave, Madam Speaker to do that.

There is a fear—the mind is a very, very important thing in the make-up of a human being and the wind can create a disturbance of the mind, much more printings in the newspapers or pronouncements from Ministers; people can begin to perceive that something could go wrong. I quote from the *Trinidad Guardian* of November 26, 1993. The author of this article is Dr. F. O. Gonzales, BSc, MRCVS, DICTA, St. Joseph. Since I was a little boy I have been hearing that name, Dr. Gonzalez, very familiar with agriculture. I wish to quote what he said to demonstrate to hon. Members that this air of uncertainty exists in the poultry industry. He says:

“Importing poultry would be disastrous

Reference is made to the suggestion that import licences will be issued for the importation of poultry products from the USA.”

This is how he premised his article—

“If true, then this policy should be condemned if only on health grounds.

The reported incidence of infected birds with bacterial contaminants is exceedingly high. The incidence of *Salmonella Sp*—

I think we have heard that expression in another context already—

“on birds exposed for sale in supermarkets in the USA is about 40 per cent, whilst other contaminants could be well over 60 per cent. *Salmonella Sp* is a danger to human health.

Most of the poultry exported to the Caribbean—

I emphasize this—

“Most of the poultry exported to the Caribbean is made mainly of wings, necks and backs, as the most profitable parts of the birds, that is the breasts and the thighs are removed and sold at good prices in the US markets.

In addition, poultry has been subsidized in the USA as follows: 1979-1986—8 per cent; 1987-1988—3.5 per cent; 1989-1990—10 per cent. A further 25 per cent export subsidy is also paid. All this amounts to dumping surplus products in the Caribbean.”

This is the fundamental point, and this is something we have talked about in this House: anti-dumping legislation, countervailing duties. But Dr. Gonzalez is demonstrating here that what comes to us is the neck and the back; the nice parts are sold in the USA. He also talks about salmonella. He continues:

“A further 25 per cent export subsidy is also paid.”

The United States Government pays an export subsidy as well. The issue of subsidy is paramount to our discussion about agriculture. Dr. Gonzalez concludes his article by demonstrating the importance of the poultry industry in Trinidad and Tobago. He says:

“On the contrary, the damage to the economy could be quite severe, as follows:

(1) Loss of some 8,000 jobs”

That has already been computed, and if you think in terms of dependants and family, you are talking about some 50,000 persons in the poultry industry.

(2) Loss of revenue to the National Flour Mills;

(3) Loss of revenue to other support industries;

(4) Loss of fresh meat;

(5) Loss of foreign exchange;

(6) Loss of utilization of capital stock—buildings, plant, equipment and technology.

At this time just about 78 million pounds of chicken is consumed in Trinidad and Tobago annually or an average of 70 pounds per person, per year. The price paid by the local consumer can be favourably compared to prices prevailing in the region, as well as for selected chicken parts, of the USA.

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That is the fear about having to compete with this commodity coming from outside.

Apart from that, the 78 million pounds of chicken referred to in this article, much of that is produced by contract farmers. I had cause to raise that issue in this House last year or the year before the last. There is some effort to restructure the ADB at this present time, and the ADB is still down the throats of these farmers. One of the conditions agreed to is that the ADB must become a commercial entity. We must consider that. There are scores of farmers who have loans with the ADB and they have been complaining bitterly; they paraded around the Parliament, and I do not know what has been done. I am told that virtually nothing has been done in that regard.

The Minister had given certain assurances—well of course, they say they are facilitators. It is a contract between the farmer and the processing plant, but they are still contending that they do not know what is the price of feed, what is the quality of the feed; they do not know the price of the chemicals, they do not know the quality of the chemicals, no mechanism is in place to check these things. They sign these contracts and the birds are delivered, they are taken away at a certain time. I have demonstrated already that 15,000 birds are delivered and when it is time for payment they get \$3,000 for a period of eight weeks. They have to see about waterers, maintenance of the pens, all the labour; they have to wake up nights; it is not paying.

I am reporting to the House now, as opposed to raising the issue *de nouveau*, that the contract poultry farmers are still very upset about the situation that exists in their industry. What is their ray of hope? Where is the light in that tunnel for those people in agriculture? They are not seeing any; it is all dark. Just as I hear the people in France are afraid to travel in the tunnel from London to Paris; they are frightened, they suffer claustrophobia; the farmers are in a state of claustrophobic hysteria in Trinidad and Tobago.

When we look at the situation with the poultry farmers, where they are hearing reports that the ADB is going to operate as a commercial entity, they are terrified. What is going to happen to their holdings? I wish to draw this to the attention of the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources; I want him to understand. I have visited some of these places in the early days when the leases were granted to these poultry farmers; in some instances it was about five acres of land; it varied according to the holding, but in the process, they built their homes on these parcels of land.

So when you talk about using commercial criteria with regard to the poultry farmers, you are talking about selling out the whole property, including their homes. So that there is a social consideration that comes into play, and this is where I have to appeal to the Minister on their behalf. It is not just the question of pen or the stock; they have families. So there is a whole social consideration.

Government talked about the social safety net—the Member for San Juan/Barataria gave all the details about the social safety net. These people who are concerned with producing in the country, what is their position with respect to the social safety net? Of course, they are excluded from that package. What kind of net will they have?

This is a very serious point; we are talking about families—

3.55 p.m.

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.

Mr. S. Mohammed: Time moves with such rapidity! I re-emphasize that last point to my Friend the Member for Diego Martin West. I observed on the last few occasions I spoke in this honourable House that he was a bit receptive. I hope it would penetrate right through and we would see some benefit for the poultry farmers. Do something, please, I beg, for the poultry farmers and their families.

This document that has been signed by Trinidad and Tobago with the ADB is their greatest fear at this point—that they are going to be sold out. Not the pen alone, which they built in any case. They do not even have the money to refurbish a pen. They are thinking about their homes. I hope the San Juan/Barataria Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services will put in a plug for them as well.

What is happening in the rice industry? Ten years ago we produced five million pounds of rice. At the last count it was 45 million. That is an astronomic rise in rice production. Who did it?

Mr. Haniff: Not the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Affairs!

Mr. S. Mohammed: They talk about private people getting into agriculture. Fine! We know they had a problem in the Nariva Swamp. Nobody is condoning

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what they claim was done, but they have to look at the capabilities of what private, ordinary people can do, without dependence on Government.

So, from five million pounds of rice to 45 million pounds—in ten years and our consumption of rice may be 100 million pounds. They are still importing. So what can we do to advance the production of rice in Trinidad and Tobago?

Now, as far as the rice is concerned, we are hearing talk that the subsidies will be stopped. The Minister may deny that when his turn comes to speak. I wish to make the point that years ago we had reports on the Nariva Swamp from the Dutch and the Japanese, but nothing has been implemented. It is not that they do not know.

I submit to this honourable House it is quite likely that Nariva Swamp alone can produce enough rice for Trinidad and Tobago. There are some 50,000 acres of land. What are we doing about it? We are persecuting, prosecuting, harassing, but we are not encouraging people—whether you take Oropouche or Felicity with the rice. We are grateful for the advance that Caroni Limited has made in the production of rice, but the important point is that if we are serious, we can produce enough rice to supply the nation. We have to come to the assistance of the people.

If there are small farmers, one cannot talk about 400 acres—that would not do the trick. They can encourage the formation of co-operatives to acquire harvesters and tractors and the necessary equipment—a small man with five acres will not be able to do that. But if co-operatives are encouraged, with the existing facilities and lands that we have now, we can go a long way.

Miss Bhaggan: Shared vision.

Mr. S. Mohammed: So when people tell you, “I am going into cut flower,” they can go only up to 100 acres in that, but there are thousands of acres of arable land still available in Trinidad and Tobago, and we will not tap those lands. But that is what we have to do.

The hon. Minister needs to clear the air because I feel that when we come to calculate this year’s local rice production, will drop because of what went on in the Nariva Swamp.

Miss Bhaggan: And flooding.

Mr. S. Mohammed: We have not heard anything about regularization and so forth.

The production of vegetables in our country has been very successful from the point of view of ability to produce. It has been bad from the point of view of lack of adequate infrastructure and marketing facilities.

4.05 p.m.

If one is embarking on the School Feeding Programme, it should be mandatory that all the elements that go into the meal are completely local. We have a strong vegetable know-how population which could produce all the vegetables, but there are things that go with that, which we have to try to encourage.

The question of the price of chemicals, fertilizers and so forth, nobody looks at that. It is very expensive now to produce. The weather—we have put forward proposals here with regard to how flooding can be controlled and what can be done in drought situations. That is important. *[Interruption]* The hon. Member never even planted a bundle of bhaji but he is making noise. Does he know what bhaji is? What is he seeking to do, belittle a fundamental point which I am making about the lack of infrastructure for agriculture? That is the point. Is it not an important point?

Mr. Valley: He is talking about controlling the weather.

Mr. S. Mohammed: Madam Speaker, I am saying that it is important that we take into account what is happening in our industries at the present time. I wish to state, as an example, within my own constituency of Caroni East, agriculture is important. Places like Las Lomas, Kelly Village, the Madras area, Warrenville, Longdenville and Caparo are very important as are other areas that adjoin my constituency in the constituencies of my Friends the Members for Caroni Central and Chaguanas.

We must understand that there is a serious situation when it comes to flooding. I am dealing with it from the point of view of agriculture. We have had the decimation of crops with this last flooding. A young man about 30 years of age came to me and said that he lost 10 acres of pumpkin and five acres of water melon. He brought a water melon for me to see in my constituency office—the royal sweet water melon, but nothing looked sweet in that water melon. Everything had been destroyed.

In the Herrera Trace area of Kelly Village a lady came and said that 12,000 chickens had drowned. Three days passed and there were dead chickens all over the place. She was begging for assistance to clean up the dead chickens. At

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Warrenville, there were one or two farmers who were completely flooded out. So this is a problem, and when it is raised here, my Friend the Minister of Works and Transport comes up with an explanation and I am yet to get one farmer convinced about what the Minister said about the area being below sea level and it being high tide. Nobody accepted that. Nobody brought that.

I think that Guyana is below sea level, too. I think that Holland is below sea level. I remember when I went to Holland that instead of driving in swanky cars, I was taking boats going all about through the canals. But they are managing all right. The best flowers and agriculture could be found in these places. We call that a “bahana” when he comes here to tell us about low tides. We never had these problems.

I want to know if the Minister and his officers ever made an investigation along that Uriah Butler Highway to see what existed before, whether it was the same. Because they raised that highway and, according to the member for St. Augustine—I saw it myself—the south carriageway was water. It was like a dam. But I know that long ago—because we used to catch cascadura down there also—there were many box drains and smaller outlets taking the water into the lower areas and that could take any amount of water.

But what happened? Did the Minister and his team in the dry weather, inspect those box drains and the outflows before the rainy season? Did they do that? Did they clean them? Have they determined, on the basis of a study, that the existing outlets are sufficient to take the water lower down? Because we could have the same problem again. He has not said anything about that. He came here to make excuses, talking about low tides. I genuinely believe that there is no proper examination. When he jumps in a helicopter, and runs all about, telling this House, “Well, a helicopter gives you a quick insight into everything.” How valid is that?

I know when the Mississippi River overflowed its banks the President of the United States went to look at the flooding. I was hoping to see the Member for San Fernando East in Central making a visit whether by plane, helicopter, car or whatever. That is what we would have called “going down the road”. That is going down the sky. I do not mind if he came in a helicopter. That has to be looked at.

Flooding will take place again. Further to that, I was in the company of the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, on the invitation of the Member for Chaguanas. I heard the

hon. Member say it and I endorse it: when the rain started, they jumped in the vehicle and “dugged” out. They said, “too much rain.” I was on that tour and I want to make the point here again.

We visited the Felicity area. I know that area. We used to catch crabs down there. One of the biggest sluice gates is the one that was in the Felicity area many years ago. There were large sheds along the Madam Español River which leads into the sea a few hundred feet away. It was a picnic area for people. When we went with the Minister, he saw it. A very wide road some 30 to 40 feet when I knew it, was contracted. It was barely enough to accommodate the jeep. It is sinking on both sides with the mangrove growing, and if someone did not know of the existence of a sluice gate, it could not be imagined that an efficient sluice gate existed in that Felicity area. There are some old boards and a few pieces of iron. River and sea became one.

This is fundamental because it is the eventual outcome for some of the other rivers which decimate central Trinidad, and the Government needs to take serious account of that. Do you know what happened in that process? When the sluice gate was demolished through lack of maintenance and what not, salt water started to seep into the area, it went into the Felicity area and destroyed thousands of acres of arable land. Nothing has been done in order to improve and repair that.

I make this point again because I am speaking for my constituents as well. This is down by the seaside. My constituency extends from Mundo Nuevo going down to Caparo, Longdenville, Kelly Village and all these areas. We have one or two rivers there and they all end in the same place. I already made the point that the Caparo River is the one which affects the people of Longdenville, Caparo, Todd’s Road, Montrose and Lange Park.

The river starts up there—they did some dredging work some years ago—and when it reaches the Chaguanas area, it starts to narrow, but that river eventually goes into the Felicity area and it becomes a canal with some small cylinders to take the volume of water. It empties into the Cunupia River and that river takes the route of Madam Español River into the sea. If the outfall is narrow and does not have the capacity to cope with that water, there is going to be a back-up in the other areas.

When we talk about it here, we are wont to hear from the Minister of Works and Transport about a feasibility study. I appeal to the Prime Minister to appoint him Minister of Feasibility. We always get that excuse, but something needs to be done. It is going to happen again. People have been enquiring about what help

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they are going to get with all the poultry and crops that have been lost. How are they to start again? What is the help that is forthcoming to them? Any pronouncement about that? The nearest we got is the Minister yesterday in her contribution to the House, talking about a \$1,500 grant, and that is for household items. Nothing is said about agriculture.

We have proposed on this side that the time has come to look for insurance that could help in that situation. One young man came to me—it is \$2,000 a pound for a hybrid type of melon seeds. Where is he going to get money? Now I know that there has been flooding in other areas. We sympathize with all the people. I know that my Friend the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has been able to mobilize some help to fix people's homes. I am talking about thousands of acres of land flooded in central Trinidad.

4.15 p.m.

I am saying that the kind of response we are getting from the Government with this problem is not satisfactory at all, totally unproductive. Agriculture is a productive base for the advancement of the economy. It is not a social welfare relief programme. It generates employment. You get food from it. That is what we have to do. But when are we going to treat this with even a modicum of priority in Trinidad and Tobago? We are not. We are going to have nice writings and nice documentation. There is nothing adversarial in this issue. I wish they would consider it in that way. We need to do something to boost agriculture, and if we do not do it, we are going to be in very serious trouble.

We on this side have proposed what we believe to be some areas that we can deal with to improve this situation. Our manifesto contains a proposal with regard to retention reservoirs. When we say that, the Minister of Works and Transport laughs. But the more you move around and see the decimation caused by flooding, and the more you think about solutions, the more you will appreciate the validity of that argument. For if today there were retention reservoirs on the hillside and in Central to catch the water, there would not be that volume of water going down into the lower areas where people live and have their crops.

Maybe they will say that is a lot of money. But they are doing feasibility studies for everything, so make a start in that and examine the proposals. Not because they come from the Opposition, you are going to reject them [*Interruption*] The Prime Minister said he is prepared to consider. Well, let me see the Prime Minister in extending that hand, consider proposals that emanate from this side. Do not believe that because the politics are adversarial that

everything is adversarial. The problems of this country will only be solved by a getting together of the minds and goodwill of Members on both sides. Do not go and wave and believe that euphoria will solve the problem. We need the productive skills, the know-how, the savvy, of all the population, whatever sector they belong to.

I hope that will be taken into consideration. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition pointed out, we want to point out to the Government that they cannot depend on the manufacturing sector to save us from the dilemma that we are in, at least, not in the short term. Many of the inputs in manufacturing still have to come from outside. What we need to do is to try to diversify, but we are not getting any pronouncements from the Government, or any serious attempt. Do not tell me you are going to diversify manufacturing.

We have to hold manufacturing, because of the possibilities it will have for the country. But you cannot compete with those big countries with the kind of technology that exists now. There were cassette tapes. We are now into the disc. Every day something is changing. The number of cellulars that side has—I do not even know how to use one as yet. But you are advancing in technology and those things are not being produced here. There are countries such as Japan, the United States of America—we have to see how we can produce a commodity that can become competitive in the international world. The plant that we have at this present time is outmoded and should be changed. We need to educate our people.

So we are not opposing manufacturing as an important plank on which we will develop our economy. We say you will have to give some time for that to develop in the manner that we would like. In the meantime, go the way of agriculture. We are making big investments in oil, but we must bear in mind that very little employment is generated by it. That is a fundamental point that we have to appreciate. We must bear that in mind. We have to do it, because we see that if we can do well in that area, our fortunes can change.

But we are putting all our eggs in one basket, and when you think of the other things, it is all very shaky. Whether you go gas or oil, it is the same thing. I am treating agriculture as a separate entity for the attention of the Government on a priority basis. That is what I am trying to get the Government to agree to. It is important.

Right now, without the help of the Government, do you know what my neighbour does? Three times a week he is getting pumpkin, ochroes, bandhania—

Hon. Member: What is that?

Mr. S. Mohammed: You do not know what that is? That is to be added to our compendium of vernacular which will become part of the appendages of Parliament. That is shadon beni. He also gets blue crab and coconuts. That is being exported three times a week. That is being done right now, together with other spices, and so on.

I know one young man from the area of Arouca, in the constituency of my Friend over there, who alone exported 500,000 pounds of pumpkin with no help from the Government. But are we lending an ear to the pleas of the people? What help are we giving them? They have problems in transport, in shipping. We need to see how we could augment the efforts of these private people in the sphere of agriculture and help them with regard to export. I am talking about the productive capacity of the people.

I think that needs to be attended to. There are several commodities that we can export. We remember years ago they talked about canning “topi Tambu”. So when my friend spoke about “sici yea” fig, why must everybody feel it is something funny?

Hon. Member: “Sucrier.”

Mr. S. Mohammed: That is the technical word. Do not come with that language. I know it is “sucrier.” In common parlance is it “sici yea”. Go to the market and ask for two pounds of “sucrier,” and see if they will give you.

The point that was made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition yesterday about the ethnic market is very valid. In my student days abroad, I used to look for the West Indian market. Those Members who studied abroad will know. In my time there was one. Now I hear where I used to live in England, there are about 12. That is why the former High Commissioner, Mr. Ulric Cross, made reference to the fact that we lost a good opportunity, because we are not mobilizing anything here to develop and export to these areas, and it really does not need very much. You do not need any big capital. That is a point that we have to take into account. There are many small things that we can do that will help to improve the productive base, but there is no encouragement.

All of these things which are exported at the present time are done by private people. They complain to me that the problem they have is packaging and transport. Are we going to devote some attention to that? Is the Government going to have a consultation now on agriculture and call all the people and see how it could formulate something? Is it going to take the Green Paper and invite the national community of farmers to discuss it? Or is it going to decide in some

small room, where some Members whose feet never touched water yet—walking on rosy carpets and using their cellars—are going to put a policy on agriculture for the people of this country without consulting them? Does it intend to do that?

That is something that should be given consideration. So one has to be very careful about this IADB business, and what is intended for us in Trinidad and Tobago. If there is fear in the minds of people, one has to take that into account.

We dealt with the question of access roads. Well, we are happy that some expenditure is beginning to take place with regard to that. It is a very sore point in the Las Lomas area. All over my constituency and everywhere else, people are vying for proper roads. The cost of transport now—with the increase in the price of fuel and the tax on vehicles—is going to complicate matters.

Madam Speaker: Just to give you some guidance. You have four more minutes to wind-up.

4.25 p.m.

Mr. S. Mohammed: One has to consider that the infrastructure in agriculture is very bad. I make the appeal and, perhaps, I can close my submission—I had about two hours more to go, but the rules of the House constrict my time, and I would have been glad if the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources could have given me his time so that I would have been able to deal with some other issues.

Very often hon. Members on the other side would say what we say and what we do not say, but I think the words of George Bovell, Frank Barsotti, Dennis Pantin, Prof. John Spence, Frank Rampersad and Lloyd Best, ought to mean something to us. *[Interruption]* If you do not like the man, you do not like him, but I am talking about his ability. The Member gets so upset.

The following is a quote from a report compiled by the gentlemen I have just mentioned, and I hope the Member for Diego Martin Central would listen:

“The agricultural sector is in even deeper crisis than the rest of the economy.”

I would like the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to listen to this, please. Can he do me that favour?

“The present crisis will be exacerbated and could turn into a catastrophe if the full effect of the declaration of unilateral trade liberalization, which the Government has espoused, is allowed to descend on the sector. Already farms are being abandoned. Farmers are resigning themselves to inevitable

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bankruptcy. In their perception, the official machinery has singled them out for the harshest treatment. The moneys which Government owes to them are not being paid; the official institutions to which they owe money are foreclosing on them; the markets for their products are being preempted by subsidized imports which Government policy encourages; the quality of the infrastructure which supports their activities is derisory; and the Government is unable to respond to the other concerns that are eating out the heart of the sector—praedial larceny, flash floods, droughts and forays into the local market by marketers of dumped goods.”

Those are the words of people who sat together and formulated something with regard to agriculture. That is their point of view. This is not our view alone. We endorse those views that there is fear, there is concern on the part of the farmers of this country with regard to agriculture. Imagine 45 pages in a budget and just 10 lines on agriculture. What kind of priority and consideration is that?

We are happy for the social safety net and all the things that are put there, but when is the Government going to get serious about agriculture? The term would run out and neither the Green Paper nor the White Paper would come, and there would be no policy. We are going from bad to worse in the area of agriculture.

I appeal to the other side to give some serious thought to agriculture because it is the only single sector of the economy, in my respectful submission to this honourable House, that can save this country, if it is properly managed and handled; if it is encouraged to develop. There is no other hope. Agriculture and tourism are the lifeblood and the saviour of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Desmond Allum (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the pleasure which I have in joining the debate at this stage is heightened by the fact that I speak after my legal and political colleague, the Member for Caroni East. Even though, by following him, it seems that we have broken the pattern which has been set in this debate, in that you have one Member from the Government side speaking, followed by a Member of the Opposition, it seems that what has happened here is that we have had a Member of the old PNM being followed by a Member of the new PNM.

I congratulate the Member for Caroni East on a very high calibre contribution. If he continues in this vein, I think that he will begin to feel ill at ease on the Opposition Benches, and perhaps, we could expect an application from him to rejoin the PNM.

My status in this House as a humble Backbencher on the Government side provides me with some opportunities and also with some incapacities. I enjoy one of the few privileges of a Backbencher, that is, the opportunity to criticize constructively and in good faith the work of Members of the Government side, as well as to ensure that in so doing, one is always constructive.

Clearly, a healthy democracy, a healthy Parliament and a robust and healthy political party will not only suffer the criticisms but, in fact, will actively encourage them. I am sure that my party is in that vein.

If, in the course of my modest contribution, I do not appear to support blindly and uncritically the presentation of the Minister of Finance, I hope that that is not construed in any manner that, as I say, will not befit a democratic society. Having said that, I do not wish the Members on the other side to feel that the Minister of Finance does not have my support on the 1994 Budget. He knows that he has it and he can confidently rely on that.

One of the incapacities of the Backbencher is that he is not privy to the myriad policy considerations which inform the budget. One is not able to participate in the tuning and fine tuning of all the various components that go into the preparation of the budget. Clearly, that is a disadvantage to anyone who wishes to criticize intelligently. But that is the price which one has to pay for being on the back benches.

I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate. I consider this budget to be, perhaps, the most significant Budget that will be presented in the life of this Parliament.

I say that, because I think our country stands at the crossroads, and the turn we take today, and the way in which we conduct ourselves over the next 12 months, will determine whether this nation moves forward to a bright new future or, whether it would wallow in the quagmire of poverty and destitution; poverty and destitution which would befit a nation which does not have the courage to take the difficult decisions which have to be taken at this time. But, I feel certain that we shall conduct ourselves, both Members of Parliament and the national community, in such a way as to ensure that we do not deny the generations to come the bright new future which the new world order presents.

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It is fortuitous that this austere budget comes when it does, because I consider it fortuitous that my constituency, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, has recently been presented with an opportunity to show the rest of the nation how it is possible to respond in a time of crisis. In times of crisis and adversity, in this "guava" season, we are once more called upon to tighten our belts and to pull together. We are required to make further sacrifices to ensure that the national interest is advanced. It is in times of adversity that the true mettle of a people and a nation is demonstrated.

The opportunity, of which I speak, was the floods on October 5, 1993. We had a flood of unprecedented proportions which wrought severe havoc upon property and claimed the lives of six members of our constituency.

I take this opportunity publicly to express condolences to the bereaved relatives, as well as those persons who lost their livelihood as a consequence of the flood. This event would have broken the morale of a weaker community, a community with less coherence than the one which I have the honour to represent.

5.20 p.m.

Perhaps, one of the more rewarding experiences of my political life so far, was to be involved in the work of the aftermath of the flood to see that community spirit which was demonstrated right across the spectrum of our constituency. Young people, old people, rich people, poor people coming together to see what they could do to help those less fortunate, in the particular circumstances, than they were. That was a particularly rewarding experience. We are grateful for the help which the various agencies of Government gave. Against the background of very scarce resources, they rendered yeoman service. We thank the government agencies for that. In particular, I would like to single out the defence force and the fire service who gave tremendous assistance to the constituents who suffered loss and damage.

This has brought together the entire community. Very strong bonds have been formed and it has demonstrated the qualities which we now as a nation have to demonstrate during the season of hardship; this season of further austerity which this 1994 Budget heralds; this budget which imposes upon us, constraints which cannot be avoided. Providence has designed for us the opportunity to show the rest of the nation how it has to respond to difficult times.

In my constituency we have been given the opportunity to heighten the national consciousness. The support which our constituents gave to one another cut across all those perceived barriers in the society; those barriers of race and

colour; rich and poor; black and white; Indian and African. The rainbow was truly seen in all its rich diversity.

If I may digress, perhaps, to draw to the attention of the hon. Member for Diego Martin East the Minister of Works and Transport, and to remind him about matters which I raised with him in the aftermath of the flood, and in respect of which I have not seen any action. When I say that, clearly I am aware of the constraints under which the Minister is operating, having so many emergencies arising at more or less the same time.

The matters which I drew to his attention were very articulately expressed in an editorial in the *Trinidad Guardian* dated Monday, October, 18, 1993. In the fashion of my colleague the Member for Caroni Central, I would like to read that editorial into the record. It is on page 8 and states:

“Firm action is need”

“So they have started building once more on the banks of the St. Ann’s River. The evidence of the October 5 disaster in which lives were lost, homes destroyed or damaged and possessions washed away is still visible in the area.

But even before the victims are adequately rehabilitated and measures adopted to ensure that it does not happen again next year or 30 years from today, the scenario is being repeated.

The plot is a simple one. We build at peril to ourselves homes and business places on hillsides denuded of vegetation and, even more alarming, on the banks of water courses. We are setting ourselves up for disaster when we permit farmers to engage in slash and burn agriculture on hillsides as they have been doing with impunity on the Northern Range.

We are looking for trouble when citizens are allowed to break the regulations relating to house-building and they set up their structures wherever they feel like and without considering the damage they may cause to the environment and the danger fellow citizens face as a result.”

I have read sufficient so that those who are interested in reading the rest of it have a sufficient reference.

I think this is something we must keep in the forefront of our minds, because at one stage, the Member for Caroni East seemed to be getting carried away. It seemed as though he was advocating that the whole of the Nariva Swamp should be turned into rice cultivation. Clearly, that is something which cannot be

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tolerated because that would have such an impact on the entire environment, and whilst it is important that we grow more rice, whatever we do in the society, we cannot do it without considering the overall impact that it could have.

Life is about striking balances. We must do that because we are holding the environment in trust for future generations. I congratulated my Friend, because as I said, he made good points, but there are occasions when the applause seemed to go to his head, and he got slightly carried away.

The constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is one which in many ways is a microcosm of our nation; of its economy, culture and its ethnology. It is a constituency, for example, which has more than its fair share of poverty and unemployment. This exists side by side with a fair share of wealth and privilege. It is the latter which has supported the myth that the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is a constituency of rich people.

Mine is a constituency which suffers from urban city type degradation, which is as intractable as you would find anywhere else in the nation. At the same time, we can boast of more residential urban breathing space, than most other communities. After all, we have the Savannah which represents the lungs of the city right in the heart of the constituency. There is rural under-development in the upper reaches of St. Ann's and Cascade, and small business and grass roots commerce and seminal industries requiring nurturing in Belmont, Gonzales and Ariapita.

I am constantly taunted by Members on both sides who suggest that because there are wealth and poverty co-existing side by side, the problems can be very easily solved. They suggest, let the wealth be redistributed, or let it filter down to the lower economic levels, but both these proposals are facile and inapplicable, for the wealthy do not belong to the constituency; they belong to the nation if they belong to anybody at all, but on the other hand, the poor and underprivileged do very much belong to the constituency. Certainly they turn to their parliamentary representative for help and relief, and he has not yet found a way to pass the buck to the Minister of Finance or whoever else is responsible for the control of the national economy.

5.30 p.m.

So, the critical problems of unemployment, crime and social instability, the vicious chain of negative sociological interaction—unemployment, poverty, crime, social instability—are aggravated rather than relieved by the all too conspicuous presence of those who are not underprivileged and who have and are

doing well, but whose success is unavailable, at the level of the constituency, to be utilized for the development of the constituency.

One of the initiatives which we have taken to help ourselves in my constituency is the establishment of a charitable, non-profit foundation called the Cotton Tree Foundation. This foundation will seek to achieve the overall aim of facilitating urban rehabilitation and development projects for these communities. *[Interruption]* It will be incorporated under the ordinary company legislation. I would not seek to burden this House by taking the route of a Private Member's Bill. I think that would be quite inappropriate. It will be administered by a board of trustees registered as a charitable non-profit organization, with tax exempt status for donations.

We believe that through business and work partnerships involving both private and public sector community development and self-help programmes, our communities will be enabled to liberate themselves from the psyche of decay and depression from which they suffer, and empower themselves to break the dependency patters which control their lives. I think there are lessons to be learnt from that for the entire nation, because against the background of very scarce resources, we cannot be turning to the central Government for everything.

The specific objectives of the foundation are:

- (1) To establish a data bank of the client communities which will be used as the basis for planning urban rehabilitation initiatives and a yardstick by which to gauge the effectiveness of the initiatives undertaken;
- (2) To assist in identifying funding with the establishment of a variety of viable light manufacturing, cottage and small business industries, and to provide ongoing advice on the management of these;
- (3) To provide and maintain a community development facility with the necessary infrastructure to deliver formal training programmes to meet identified education and skilled development needs, particularly displaced worker retraining and vocational schools and apprenticeship programmes;
- (4) To provide and maintain centres for infant care and nursery schooling;
- (5) To assist in building a network of community-based human resource facilities and support groups with links to mainstream social welfare agencies engaged in activities such as substance abuse rehabilitation, family planning, family life counselling, welfare and legal aid, sports and education.

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It is quite clear that the division that we have for this foundation will require us to work very closely with the Member for San Juan/Barataria and the Member for Port of Spain South.

- (6) To assist in funding and presenting cultural and sporting events which will strengthen the existing wealth of organizational skills and cultural talents.

I am pleased to let the Members of this honourable House know that, in fact, the first objective of the constituency has been realized in that we have received the first interim report of the survey which was carried on in the constituency, which now provides us with very precise information on our constituency about levels of unemployment, the distribution of heads of households, and I can say that certainly one of the areas, Belmont/Gonzales, which is really the heartland of the underprivileged—

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. D. Allum: Madam Speaker, I was indicating to the Members of this honourable House that against the background of the charitable foundation which has been set up in our constituency, we have now to hand the interim report on the Belmont/Gonzales area of the constituency, which is the heartland of the underprivileged sector of the constituency. This survey now provides us with very precise information on the demographic make-up of our constituency. It gives us the age groups. Levels of unemployment, educational levels, skills and what the constituents see as being their most pressing needs.

We wanted to be very careful that we were not going to be trying to help those less fortunate in our constituency by making certain assumptions. We found it necessary to go to them and get very precise information to form the background against which we will do the work we are proposing to do.

I turn now to an area of special interest in my own constituency, as revealed in the 1994 Budget. We have identified in the budget a number of projects which have a direct relevance to our constituency. Moneys are proposed to be spent in the following areas:

- (1) St. Ann's Hospital—Refurbishing of male wards B1 and B2, where the Government proposes to spend \$3,730,000.
- (2) St. Ann's Hospital—Relocation of the hardware stores—\$600,000
- (3) St. Ann's Hospital—Construction of a medical facility—\$2,923,000
- (4) Maraval River and Tributaries—Dredging operations—\$400,000

In fact, part of the Maraval River flows through the constituency of the Member for Diego Martin East and through part of mine, but I am sure that that is not the reason it is being given some priority in these allocations.

- (5) The dredging of the St. Ann's River and the construction of a silt trap—\$100,000.

The Minister of Finance indicated, that the Government proposed to spend money on the rehabilitation of the Queen's Park Savannah and the refurbishment of White Hall. We are particularly pleased to notice that the Minister of Finance has included provision for the rehabilitation of the Savannah because that was one of the projects we had identified for work under the Cotton Tree Foundation. I would wish to warn whoever is charged with the responsibility for the rehabilitation of the Queen's Park Savannah to be apprised of the fact that it constitutes a jurisdictional nightmare.

Our research has revealed, in relation to the Savannah, that a number of agencies have jurisdiction over certain parts of it. There are the Ministry of Works and Transport, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Port of Spain Corporation, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, the Commissioner of Police, WASA and the Trinidad Turf Club—all control different aspects of the Savannah.

The Ministry of Works is responsible for the roads around the Savannah up to and including the concrete drains on or under the pavements. The Port of Spain Corporation is responsible for the asphalt pavement or pitch walk and the grass verges either side thereof, up to and including the imaginary line demarcated by the former railings.

5.40 p.m.

The Port of Spain Corporation is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the toilets. The health officer of the Port of Spain Corporation grants health badges to Savannah vendors.

Park benches are owned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the Port of Spain Corporation, though nobody knows which belongs to each agency.

The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is responsible for three cricket nets; the Botanic Gardens Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is responsible for the allocation of sports grounds; various cricket clubs are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their groundsmen boxes.

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The Botanic Gardens Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is responsible for the grounds of the Savannah, inwards from the railings, and excluding the racecourse, sand track and the Turf Club buildings.

The Turf Club is not responsible for the grass that grows immediately under the racecourse railings, but is responsible for the maintenance of the race look-outs which are permanent structures.

WASA is responsible for the maintenance of two pumping stations and a number of turncocks and pipes which provide drinking water. Legal Authority for the erection of the pumping stations is unclear.

The Commissioner of Police is responsible for granting licences for vehicles to drive and park on the Savannah. This information is just to give you an indication of how difficult it would be to begin to disburse the money that the Minister of Finance has allocated to this.

Clearly, one of the first things that have to be done is that the Queen's Park Act has to be amended and regulations provided to vest the overall control of the Savannah in, perhaps, one agency. This is an area in which the members of our foundation will be very anxious to work together with whichever Minister is finally allocated the responsibility.

My constituents have now built a through organizational network, built up through the adversity of the flood, and the Cotton Tree Project. We intend to use that network to identify and scrutinize those projects which the budget has allocated to our constituency. Consistent with the Minister's invitation to participate, our constituency will set up an implementation committee to ensure that the projects which are earmarked, are indeed delivered.

The expenditure of the moneys as indicated by the Minister of Finance will create much needed employment in our constituency. We hope, not only that employment will be created there, but also, in fact, the younger members of our constituency will have some kind of priority for the work undertaken. It is against that background that I make, what I indicated would be, a very modest contribution to this debate.

In closing, I return to my earlier theme in relation to the diversity of the constituency, when I spoke about the juxtaposition of wealth and poverty. I wish to make it clear that I do not complain about the presence of the wealthy in my constituency. On the contrary, I rejoice in their success and comfort; I merely make the point that their wealth is of no avail at the level of the constituency for the relief of poverty within the constituency.

This can only be relieved at the national level. And it is for the sake of the rich as well as the poor in my constituency that I pray that the safety net which the hon. Minister has promised, not only is realized, but is realized in a form which consists of more safety than net. If it is not realized, or too imperfectly realized, then God help us. For if my constituency is truly a microcosm of the nation, then this nation is on a powder keg.

My purpose is not to strike a note of doom and gloom; there are steps that we can take if we have the self-confidence to be imaginative and creative to help ourselves at the constituency level and so help relieve the pressure on the budget at the national level. As far as we can, and much further than we have done in the past, we must strive to reduce our reliance on central Government. We must attempt to reduce the strain at the level of the community and at the level of the constituency. We must do it in traditional ways, and in novel ways. The Cotton Tree Foundation is one of those ways in which we can help ourselves. I have no doubt that there are and will always be the pessimists and nay-sayers who will deride our efforts and prophesy frustration and failure.

They may be right about the frustration, but I promise them that they would be wrong about the failure. For if this "Cotton Tree" which we have planted does not take root and grow, then we will plant another, and another, and another until growth occurs. I promise this confidently, Madam Speaker, as I have confidence in the strength and faith of the people of Trinidad and Tobago—the ordinary people and indeed, all the people of Trinidad and Tobago—that when we are called upon to serve we can serve, and when called upon to sacrifice we can sacrifice and when called upon to survive, we will most certainly survive. Because as a people and a nation, we are indestructible.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the 1994 Budget, but before I do so, I would like to congratulate my Friend—and we have been friends for a very long time—the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. I want to congratulate him on the fine contribution he has made here this afternoon. However, it is a pity that it was restricted to his constituency. I would urge him to keep a copy of that speech so that he can use it in his political campaign, wherever that may be, but I can assure him also that that will not serve him in obtaining a seat in this honourable House, ever again.

5.50 p.m.

The Member spoke about the Cotton Tree Foundation, and I notice that he deliberately left out the word 'silk.' The Member sat in this House for almost two

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years without uttering a single word, and suddenly, when a silky carrot was dangled before him, he stood up and spoke. At one time he had me very worried; I thought he was going to break the record of a former Member who occupied this seat, and never uttered a word for 15 years.

The hon. Prime Minister made a public statement that we live in exciting times, but the *Review of the Economy 1993*, paints a very grim picture—and the Member for Diego Martin West knows that—of Trinidad and Tobago. Five years after having implemented a structural adjustment programme, the economy has continued to contract. For the year 1993 output production is showing a decline in the following areas: petroleum, manufacturing, methanol and also in cement.

Unemployment and poverty continue to escalate uncontrollably. It is quite clear, therefore, that the policies are being implemented with great haste and with little consideration of the fallout. The PNM has now ceded to the external forces and powers, because we are up to our neck in debt. Trinidad and Tobago is now embracing the new liberal model of capitalism. This calls for a reduction in the role of the state and for the development of the private sector as the engine of growth. We believe that a market-oriented economy is part of the globalization process, and as such we have to move with the times. However, we have to define clearly the boundaries between the market and the state; if not the state will abdicate its responsibility to society.

On the issue of the role of the private sector, the Government has emphasized repeatedly the need for investment in Trinidad and Tobago. Basic economic theory suggests that domestic savings must, therefore, be enhanced in order to generate surplus that would be translated into investment. Recently the Prime Minister chastised the domestic private sector for not having taken advantage of investment opportunities available locally. As reported in the *Express* of November 11, 1993, at page 4, the Prime Minister stated:

“Foreign private sector investment in economic activity in Trinidad and Tobago is inescapable because the domestic private sector has not demonstrated a capacity to take advantage of all the investment opportunities.”

I wonder if this is the same Prime Minister who, in 1991, after being elected to office, stated at a meeting with leaders of business organizations that the business community has nothing to fear from the People’s National Movement. He stated that:

“Consultation is absolutely necessary and forms part of the PNM’s ideology.”

This was also reported in the *Express* of December 19, 1991, page 1.

Shortly afterwards, in typical PNM style, the Manning regime reneged—it increased corporation tax, introduced a business levy, and a highly ineffective rebate system and continued with a wide range of structural adjustment policies, which included trade liberalization and currency liberalization. By mid-1993, the manufacturing sector began feeling the effects of PNM Government policies.

“Small manufacturing companies are feeling the effects of trade liberalization and have been turning to the conglomerates to bail them out. The amount of companies that come our way is really something.”

This was stated by Mr. Patrick Ferreira, a director of Furness (T’dad) Limited. He went on to say:

“The failing companies, primarily manufacturers of plastics, building materials and electrical equipment usually need to purchase new equipment to compete with imported products. The problem is that new equipment requires a substantial amount of capital.”

On the other hand, in October, 1993, the organization representing manufacturers in this country, that is the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, declared its lack of confidence in the policies of the Government. The TTMA further revealed that

“The manufacturing sector had been holding back investment worth over \$300 million, until the Government displayed real commitment to the manufacturing sector.”

This disclosure was made by the President of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, Gordon Rauseo, at a special general meeting held by the organization to discuss the exchange rate and the ISO 9000 Quality Series.

6.00 p.m.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, a frustrated Rausco said the manufacturers were doing their part—they were exporting, they were mounting trade exhibitions, they were sending off trade missions and they were improving the quality standards of their products. However, Government through its policies was not showing that it considered the non-oil sector to be important. He charged that the Government was not committed to the manufacturing sector, despite all that is said, and was not suiting actions to words.

“The Government,” he said, ‘was hell-bent for trade liberalization but had not put in place the support systems, such as the computerized systems and the revenue protection agency, the ASYCUDA system.’ ”

Miss Bhaggan: You are impressed?

Mr. K. Jurai: The main bone of contention of the TTMA is the duty which manufacturers have to pay on imported raw materials. The problem is that unless the product has a 70 per cent value added content, the five per cent rebate that replaced the zero-based duty would not compensate. The Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association complain that even the 1.5 per cent rebate the Government is offering would not compensate them and manufacturers would, in fact, be subsidizing the country.

According to the TTMA, of the \$82 million which the Government calculated the manufacturers had paid in import duty, a mere \$42 million would be reimbursed in the form of the 1.5 per cent rebate. This means that manufacturers had lost about \$40 million to the state which they could have invested. We notice in the Budget Speech on page 37 that some amendments have been made to this and we hope that this would ease the plight of manufacturers somewhat.

The President of the TTMA felt that the Government was turning away from the development effort in favour of a short-sighted revenue raising measure that could jeopardize the 40,000 persons employed in the manufacturing sector, and the US\$35 million per month that was generated through export. This is a substantial contribution that the manufacturers in the non-oil sector are making to this economy.

I recall that in my two previous budget contributions I called on the Government to update the machinery at the Bureau of Standards and the Food and Drugs Division, and from time to time—as recently as yesterday—this call was echoed by the TTMA. I hope the Government has ears to hear. The Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism is not here but I hope the Prime Minister is listening and will convey the message to him; and will himself take steps to alleviate the problems that persist in those areas.

Although acknowledging that that Government was under severe financial duress, the TTMA submitted that revenues could be raised and the national interest served with the introduction of the promised Revenue Production Agency. A feasibility study has already been completed and the Ministry of Finance is aware of the cost of establishing the stripping stations, the purpose of which is to provide an effective mechanism for minimizing the incidence of smuggling and the avoidance of in proper payment of duties and charges on imports.

I have in my hand a copy of that feasibility study. It is left to the Government to implement it and if the Government is serious about assisting manufacturers in this country, it would seek to implement it as early as possible. This is clearly

desirable. It is a pre-condition to trade liberalization. However, although manufacturers are in support of the system, there has been no movement towards its implementation. Other pre-conditions also exist, which ought to be in place before trade liberalization takes place. But Government continues to put the cart before the horse.

Another example of Government's non-commitment to the manufacturing sector is that in 1995 duty free concessions will be removed and raw materials will carry the same tariffs as finished products. In addition, we are faced with high electricity and water rates which are factors inimical to the interests of manufacturers.

There are general problems which all manufacturers face. How has the Government dealt with specific problems facing certain exporters? For example, Nestlé is willing to export condensed milk to the United States of America, but needs a quota. Penta Paints, on the other hand, has complained about imported paint claiming to be manufactured in the region, but which they doubt very much is so. Willie's Ice Cream, also needs a quota to export to the United States. Manufacturers using cocoa and coffee have to pay higher than world prices. Exporters of ornamental fishes are not enjoying duty free concessions on feed. Companies using products like prunes or raisins have to pay for these products as finished goods—no duty free treatment, although they are used as raw materials.

Nothing has been accomplished on these matters although they have been brought to the attention of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism on several occasions. Further, despite the Government's commitment to the export thrust, all export promotional activities undertaken by the Export Development Corporation, namely attendance at trade fairs, foreign consultancy and technical services for various sectors were done through the support of international agencies.

I am beginning to wonder what is the role of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and the Export Development Corporation. This agency, in particular, was set up by the Government to promote export, and this agency is starved of finance. So how can the Export Development Corporation promote exports? Here again, it seems as though we are going cap in hand begging international agencies to assist us in promoting our products abroad.

Only today, I heard the "hardcore" Minister of Foreign Affairs stating that Government is now thinking about using our foreign missions to promote sales. The Prime Minister knows that I made a call for this last year and the year before in my budget contributions to use these agencies. At least the Government has

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listened. Undoubtedly, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism will be anxious to advise that the available data suggest that non-oil exports have improved and the figures for the first half of 1993 surpassed those for the same period in 1992 by \$75 million. This, however, cannot be looked at as sustainable growth since it represents a first phase when manufacturers have tapped existing production capacity, particularly in cases where companies were operating below full capacity.

6.10 p.m.

What is required for sustainable growth in the second phase of export development is new investment in the existing industries as well as in new export industries. But this is not forthcoming because the infrastructure is not in place. I need not say that this is shortsightedness on the part of the Government, which is a recipe for failure. Let me quote some figures for the capital development programme allocated to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Year	Allocation (million)
1984	6.4
1985	567.2
1986	362.6
1987	481.1
1988	245.9
1989	158.4
1990	96.4
1991	481.13
1992	4.7
1993	6.2
1994	11.9

I hope and expect that the Government will tell us where this money was invested and what sort of infrastructure was put in place to assist manufacturers. I will be waiting with bated breath to hear from the Government where these funds were expended.

The need for an export thrust is not something new and this has been the view of successive governments since the late 1950s. Indeed, mention of this was made

in the PNM's first five-year plan in 1958, to which my leader, the hon. Member for Couva North, alluded. I am certain that you would have read today's editorial in the *Express* which sang very high praises of our leader.

Again, in 1977, a report from the National Advisory Council specified that an export promotion department was required, and fiscal incentives to export should be introduced. It also recommended that an export trading company be set up, tax concessions simplified and that Government's role in the export and trade of certain products be strengthened. This was way back in 1977, a decade and a half ago.

I am giving this in sequence; I come now to 1981. The PNM Government appointed a committee to examine export development in the non-oil sector as a matter of national priority. The team reported in April 1982 on the constraints on the development of non-oil exports, and made recommendations for their removal.

In 1984, yet another team. It seems as we go along that the names get longer and longer. The 1984 team was called the Multi-Sectoral Planning Task Force. It was appointed by the Government and this task force also submitted recommendations. The strategies were outlined in the 1984 Budget and included a catalogue of the mix of goods to be produced for export, measures to make the economy more competitive while sharing the burden of adjustment equitably among various social and economic groups. It also stipulated the reforms needed in the public service to improve its functions.

We come now to 1991 when the Government received a tripartite committee report on the constraints on investments in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Valley: 1991.

Mr. K. Jurai: Yes, 1991. Today, some 30 years, almost 40 years later, all the recommendations submitted by these various studies are not implemented and the problems continue. Is this Government really serious about assisting manufacturers in this country, particularly the non-oil sector?

At present world oil prices are falling, so we need to develop a vibrant non-oil manufacturing sector export base. It is imperative that these and similar reports which I have just mentioned be laid on the Table by the Government so that we, the Members of Parliament, and the country, can see very clearly that the PNM is not interested in developing trade and manufacture, particularly in the non-oil sector in this country. *[Interruption]* There are 40 years of reports and absolutely

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nothing is done. If you intend to implement, I am sure you will go beyond 40 years before an export programme is implemented.

I shall now quote some investment figures for Trinidad and Tobago. For the period January to June, 1993, total private investment inflows amounted to US\$258.3 million. This was 91.2 per cent higher than the inflows for the corresponding period in 1992. This came about as a result of the sale of Fertrin and the Trinidad and Tobago Urea Company for approximately US\$169 million.

I am happy the Member for Tobago East is here. I want to support him in calling on the Government to show how it arrived at that sale figure. What sort of criteria did it use? What sort of valuation did it use? Who were the valuers? Were they really independent valuers? Tell us. We do not know what took place. All we get here is a figure showing that the sale was completed.

Dr. Rowley: You must read the papers that are laid in Parliament.

Mr. K. Jurai: Who were the valuers? Do you want to tell us?

Other factors accounting for this increase included the inflow of funds for the construction of a new steel plant—that is Nucor—a methanol plant and the beginning of an exploratory and drilling project by the Enron Gas Company.

Let me deal now with outflows of capital from Trinidad and Tobago. Total private sector outflows for the period January to June, 1993, were US\$197 million, which was close to 96 per cent more than the outflows recorded for a similar period in 1992. This came about as a result of increased trade financing and commercial bank activity. The point I am making is that there are investment funds lying about. However, it would appear that conditions in this country are not conducive to domestic investment. The PNM Government is to be blamed for this, no one else. If it provides the correct environment, people will come to invest, but people do not trust the PNM, so they are not coming.

6.20 p.m.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Member saying, therefore, that he sees the role of the Government as creating the climate for proper investment in the country? Is that what he is saying?

Mr. K. Jurai: He, as the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago ought to know better. If I were on the other side, I would know what to do. I do not have to tell him what he should do.

When we look at the *Review of the Economy, 1993*, in the very introduction it says:

“The relatively weak performance of the Manufacturing Sector mirrored the effect of reduced domestic demand as well as the initial impact of trade liberalisation.”

The index of domestic production and the real gross domestic product indicate that the manufacturing sector, excluding oil and sugar, contracted by some 3.2 per cent overall. This was rooted in contractions in the following areas: textiles, garment and footwear, 33.9 per cent; chemical and non-metallic, 9.4 per cent; food processing industries, 7.2 per cent, and drink and tobacco, 7.2 per cent.

There was significant improvement registered in wood and related products, 25.3 per cent, but this was due to increased domestic demand, given higher import prices; printing, publishing and paper converters, 11.3 per cent, and miscellaneous manufacturing, 8.7 per cent. These were mainly due to increased exports as domestic products became more competitive.

But these minor gains were offset by the contraction of the sector. One of the major problems cited in the Review, however, is the fact that although exports have increased, the corresponding growth in imports has resulted in an overall negative balance of visible trade. In fact, the value of imports for the first six months of 1993, was \$3,031 million, compared to an export figure of \$1,713 million, resulting in a minus balance of \$1,318 million.

To take the analysis further, it is assumed that for the second half of 1993, trade figures changed in the same proportion as in 1992. Then it can be estimated that by the end of 1993 the balance of visible trade, excluding fuel, would be a minus figure of \$2,984 million.

Extrapolation similarly estimates that the overall balance of visible trade for 1993 would also be a minus figures of \$216.6 million, compared to \$854.2 million in 1992. This represents a decrease of 125.3 per cent between 1992 and 1993. It is to be expected that imports will continue to increase with the growth of exports. Being based on existing capacity, it will peak and then fall, resulting in an even greater negative balance of visible trade.

The manufacturing sector recently had two indicators from the Government as to what to expect in 1994, and both placed further burdens on that sector. Firstly, the Prime Minister has announced that tariffs are to be further reduced and that as a result, prices will fall. This represents a continuation of the PNM's trade

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liberalization policy which will result in an increase in the demand for imported goods at the expense of the local manufacturing sector. This chain reaction will therefore be increased pressure on foreign exchange. What is noteworthy is that this will occur at a time when government is selling off our profitable foreign exchange earners, namely Fertrin and Urea, for mere peanuts. This will result in, firstly, an increase in unemployment, as manufacturers who cannot compete with large-scale foreign producers will be forced off the market; secondly, a decrease in domestic investment in the manufacturing sector, and thirdly, we will see the re-emergence of a sector that simply trades.

The second indicator is the \$800 million budget deficit projected for the 1994 financial year. Manufacturers already face weak demands and this will be further weakened by cuts in government expenditure and retrenchment.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. Member would repeat that figure. I thought I heard him say that there was an \$800 million deficit for 1994.

Mr. K. Jurai: He has the figures; he can refer to them.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I am sorry, but I really want to follow his argument. Can he simply repeat the figure that he said a while ago so that I can reply?

Mr. K. Jurai: Recently the Mayor of Port-of-Spain caused quite a furore when he intimated—

Mr. Valley: I do not want to disturb the Member, but it was merely two minutes ago. I simply want him to repeat the figure he just mentioned.

Mr. K. Jurai: Madam Speaker, the Mayor of Port-of-Spain intimated that taxes to Port-of-Spain businessmen were to be increased. Businessmen are presently complaining that they have to pay higher lands and buildings rates and taxes, increased water rates, higher sewerage rates, increased electricity rates and a high corporation tax rate. The list continues with higher import duties, stamp duties, and to this we also have to add, VAT, NIS, health surcharge and motor vehicle tax.

6.30 p.m.

These increases, it is reported, caused the chairman of one of the largest corporations to say that the enormous taxes levied on the private sector leave no resources available for investment.

I cannot help it, but I have to, again, refer to the prime Minister's address to the PNM's annual convention in 1993, when he said he recognized that:

“In major developed countries...”

and we are dealing with small business here—

“the small business sector accounted for some 80 per cent of all business and for a significant amount of employment.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago views this sector first and foremost as having the potential to increase economic activity and to contribute to export earnings.

Consequently, new approaches to the development of a vibrant small business sector are being put in place aimed at increasing employment and income levels as we harness the ideas and energies of our small entrepreneurs.”

He continues:

“These new approaches included a series of measures designed to facilitate the development of a modernized small business sector ready to cope with today's business realities, provide employment, generate income and be a critical part of Trinidad and Tobago, ready to face the challenges of the 21st century.”

This was reported in the *Trinidad Guardian* of October 7, 1993.

It is true that the 1994 Budget gave some tax exemption on interest on loans to approved small businesses—I am not sure how far this will go—but this however, represents only one small part of the major problems affecting the small business sector. The small business sector is in desperate need of further assistance from the Government, but instead, the Government has further burdened small business by its inclusion in the net covered in the business levy. Presumably, the system of tax credit will apply equally for income tax as for corporation tax.

However, this must be made explicit. Further, it is expected that there would be difficulties in defining the income on which the levy would apply and how it would apply to such situations as partnerships.

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.

Mr. K. Jurai: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank hon. Members on both sides for giving me this opportunity to continue.

With respect to Government's approach to the non-energy-based manufacturing sector in the 1994 budget, I can sum it up in one sentence. I would say that the 1994 Budget offers no real incentives to investment or to alleviate the multitude of problems confronting manufacturers.

Tourism: On page 17 of the Budget Speech, the Government has targeted the tourism sector as a generator of employment and growth. In a television appearance on AVM on the night of the budget, the Minister of Finance confessed that the country should not expect to see a drop in the unemployment rate. What a statement to be made by a Minister of Finance on the night of the budget! This is evidenced by the fact that plans and programmes continue to be declared to develop tourism, but no feasible strategy or project has been forwarded.

Only yesterday we heard the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism again outlining what the Government proposes to do. He did not say, "These are the measures we would undertake"; he came only with proposals that the Government has had for the past 35 to 40 years with respect to tourism. Today, in tourism, we are hearing the same thing, that this is the growth sector; this is what would take the country out of the doldrums. But, to date, there has been no action, only promises.

The tax credit for equity investment in approved hotel and tourism projects is inadequate to boost that sector, bearing in mind the gestation period between investing and returns.

A clear tourism policy including aggressive marketing, facility improvement, education and the removal of fiscal constraints to tourism is important to the development of this industry. This is a matter which I wanted to raise again, but with respect to yacht and pleasure craft visiting this country, the Minister only promised that he would look into it. I hope that he would look into it seriously and come up with some relief measures so that we can encourage tourists to visit with their yachts and pleasure craft.

Furthermore, the Act establishing the TDA needs to be re-examined as it gives the TDA no real authority over tourism. Again, yesterday, the Minister of Trade,

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Industry and Tourism came to the House and made statements which were mentioned in the *Trinidad Guardian* dated Friday, December 3, 1993 as follows:

“Regarding strides made in investment, Kuei Tung said as a result of Government’s Far East mission earlier this year, a number of projects have been identified.”

He went on:

“Consideration is also being given to the establishment of a Tourism Marketing Corporation as a vehicle for the promotion of TT as a destination.”

Further on we read:

“The Minister said Cabinet also was studying a proposal to create a Commission on National Parks and Tourism Sites...”

Plans are also in train for a master plan for the tourism sector, expected to be completed...”

sometime.

What we are seeing here is nothing concrete; only promises. I hope the Government would get serious, and if it cannot do the job, perhaps, it should resign, let us have an election and let the UNC form the government. We would willingly undertake the task.

The Government has been talking about “event tourism.” At this point, I am not too sure how well that would go down in Trinidad and Tobago, apart from carnival. When people come to this country for carnival, they also want to visit the beaches and so forth, and our beaches are in a totally dilapidated condition.

If the Government is thinking about encouraging “event tourism,” it needs to seriously look into these areas. The beaches are littered with garbage; no secure parking facilities—and my Friend the Member for Toco/Manzanilla would support me that we need security at Manzanilla beach because all those houses have been vandalized. The only way we can develop tourism in those areas is to have a proper water supply, a proper electricity supply and, most of all, proper security. Of course, we need to control vagrancy, crime, flooding, and remove garbage and dead animals from the roads. We need to look into all those things.

6.40 p.m.

I want to touch slightly on agriculture, and this relates to the five per cent duty on powdered milk and the 15 per cent duty on imported beef. My Friend the

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Member for Caroni East has delved into this already. We need protection for agriculture in this country. As you know, I represent a constituency which is, perhaps, 80 to 90 per cent agricultural and we need to protect the agricultural sector. Within recent times there have been several floods in that area. As a matter of fact, throughout the rainy season there is flooding in that area.

Two weeks ago I attempted to go into my constituency and when I reached Plum Mitan I could go no further, because the roads were flooded. When I went to Navet, the roads were flooded. The following day when I went to Cunaripo, the roads were flooded. What really touched my heart is while I was attempting to go through to a certain area, I could not do so, so I stopped. But what really touched my heart is that I saw a little boy about seven or eight years coming towards me, crying, with a bag on his shoulder. He was shouting "Mister, please wait" and I waited until he reached me. He was wet, trembling and crying.

The boy's problem was that he went to the grocery and bought a couple pounds of flour, sugar and salt. He fell, so he could not go home and he turned back. I asked him where he was going. He said he could not go home because his parents would beat him. He did not know what to do. So I took him and I got him some groceries and ensured that he went home. I do not know how he reached on the other side. Madam Speaker, that touched my heart and I am sure it would also touch yours.

When I represent people, I have to stand up for their rights. When I saw the headline, "Floods ravaged Central", I would have preferred to see "Floods ravaged Nariva." I was forced to take unprecedented action on the road only to draw the Government's attention, particularly the attention of the Members of Diego Martin East and Diego Martin West to the problem. For several years the rivers leading to the Nariva Swamp have not been drained. As a result flooding occurs regularly whenever it rains.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, this is for clarification. Is the Member advocating the draining of the Nariva Swamp? I heard him say that the Nariva Swamp has not been drained. I want him to be clear.

Mr. K. Jurai: Is the Member saying that we should not drain part of the Nariva Swamp? We need to develop the Nariva Swamp but we also need to protect the environment and any time he stands firm I am with him. He cannot neglect the swamp.

If he is serious about protecting the Nariva Swamp, I can tell him one thing. If he closes that Bush-Bush Canal, he will protect the environment and people will

not be able to go into the reserve. Because this water way is clear the water is running out and draining the swamp. Perhaps he does not know that. He should ask his advisers to advise him, that is, if they know anything about the Nariva Swamp.

I am telling the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources and the Minister of Works and Transport that they should take steps to ensure that we do not have flooding in that area. What has happened as a result of the flooding—Nariva is mainly agricultural—is that people have lost their cacao and coffee crops because when the water settles, it destroys the young pods.

To date, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has not said when he is going to pay the subsidy for the cacao and coffee farmers. The coffee subsidy was due since October. This is December and Christmas is approaching and people are not seeing it. I know he will tell us that the subsidy for cacao will be paid some time this year. That is important but, cacao has paid for itself more or less, because, it has fetched a fairly high price on the world market. The people are worried. They are not hearing from the Minister about the subsidy for coffee. I hope the Minister will tell us something about that when he makes his contribution.

I am sorry that the Member for Barataria/San Juan is not here, I need to make mention so that the message will be conveyed to her and her ministry. I was amazed when she said—

“...of life certification on which an old age pensioner on his or her birth anniversary will be required to go to his or her department so that officers there will know that he or she is still alive.”

Imagine the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Welfare is saying that old people will have to go to the office to say that they are alive in order to get a pension. *[Interruption]* That is as clear as daylight. It is from *Hansard*.

She seemed to be praising herself and her Government. I just want to read a communication I have here. It is about two letters I wrote to her; one deals with two handicapped children. I do not want to give any vivid description. When the second child was born the father apparently could not take it any more and he abandoned the home and the children. The children are limbless. The support the ministry has given is minimal, a grant of \$388.00. I wrote to the Minister since October 13, 1993 and have not had a reply.

The second letter is where doctors at the Port of Spain General Hospital have certified that this person is blind. *[Interruption]* You know that blindness means

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sight-less-ness—yet the Social Welfare Department of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services refuses to grant him the benefits that are due to him.

I move on. This has to do with both the Minister of Public Utilities and the Minister of Works and Transport. Since I came to this parliament I have been applying for a bus service for my constituency. My constituency has no bus service. I have been appealing, writing letters. I will read a few lines from one of the letters I received from the Minister of Public Utilities.

“A transport service as identified by you would require a service on those roads. Such a service was once operated by the Corporation several years ago but was discontinued since the 1980s.”

Since the 1980s my constituency does not have a bus service even for school children. Mr. Prime Minister, are you prepared to assist?

“The bus service was discontinued since the 1980s because of the unavailability of suitable units given the terrain and the road conditions.”

6.50 p.m.

I would like the Minister of Works and Transport to hear this. Now that the Government is collecting a five per cent duty on fuel, I hope that the Prime Minister and Minister of Works and Transport would take note of this letter which is signed by the Minister of Public Utilities, Mr. Morris Marshall dated, November 5, 1993.

Mr. Valley: The Member was very selective in quoting the letter. I wonder if he would be prepared to read the entire letter.

Mr. K. Jurai: If the Minister was on speaking terms with the Minister of Public Utilities he would have given him a copy.

Again, I refer to the Minister of Works and Transport. Apparently he knew that I was going to refer to him this afternoon, and he slipped out very quietly. However, I would make the point.

During his budget contribution the Minister of Works and Transport stated that some time next week the Prime Minister would be opening the Port of Spain Beautification Project. Is that so?

Mr. Manning: Yes.

Mr. K. Jurai: This project was completed without any cost to the Government.

Is that so?

Mr. Manning: Yes.

Mr. K. Jurai: It would be interesting to know how this project was financed and by whom. The question I ask is: Was it financed by state companies? Was it a grant or donations? The Government would tell us. If it was financed by state companies the Government would have to tell us. I would like to know how they are going to write this in their books. How is it going to be shown? Would it be shown as a loss when the Government is writing up its books?

Mr. Valley: Corporate account.

Mr. K. Jurai: Corporate account? The Government has found an easy way out—that is the point I am making—to get finance from these state agencies to finance its political campaign.

We on this side would be looking with hawk's eyes to see and corbeaux eyes, too. Corbeaux can see farther than hawks, in case you do not know. I think I have made my points. I have spoken about what this country needs in order—

Mr. Manning: Cogently.

Mr. K. Jurai: Certainly! Thank you for the compliment.

I have laid my case that there is need for the Government to take immediate action to develop the non-oil sector, to give them the incentives so they can produce both for the local and export markets.

I have also outlined very briefly some of the problems that affect my constituency. I should state that very soon the dry season will be here. I have already been affected by the rainy season. Now I do not want to be affected by the dry season, so I am calling on the Minister of Local Government to provide adequate funds so that we can receive a truck-borne water supply when there is need for it; early in the new year, if not right now. The Minister of Local Government has to release the funds.

Mr. Valley: Try to be friends with your corporation.

Mr. K. Jurai: You have to ensure that whatever is necessary must be in place. I am not too familiar with what is involved, but I think funding is the major issue there.

Before I go, we have all been referring to the Budget Speech of 1994. This document! I want the population to know that the real sting in this budget is this document which many people do now know about. This is where the Government puts all the taxes for the motor vehicles. This is the hidden budget. This document

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is called the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order 1993. This is the one which caused the gas price to increase overnight by the five per cent duty; \$2,000 for transfer of car ownership and \$500 for a passport. The list goes on and on. When this really hits the nation, the people would begin to bawl like 10 Tarzans, as is said. This is the sting in the tail of the budget.

I am calling on the media, the newspapers, in particular, to let the public know, and to illustrate this document page by page, article by article so that the public would know what burden this Government has placed on the public of Trinidad and Tobago. The Government read one document to them, but did not come out openly and say what this document has in store for them.

Madam Speaker: On both sides, you are addressing the press and the media generally. According to the Standing Orders, you ought to be addressing the Chair. Everything has been going so well. Let us maintain the dignity of the House. Address the Chair please! I does not become you to address the press.

Mr. K. Jurai: It was through you, Madam Speaker, I am sorry I turned the other way. I apologize.

Madam Speaker, I thank you and Members of this House for giving me the opportunity to make my contribution on the 1994 Budget of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources Mr. Andrew Casimire (Toco/Manzanilla): Madam Speaker, the first thing I should like to do this evening is to commend some of the better contributions I have heard earlier in this debate. I commend my Friend the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West on his short but very stimulating contribution. I also commend my ex-friend the Member for Caroni East—

Mr. Mohammed: Do you really mean I am your ex-friend?

Mr. Casimire: —on his contribution this evening. I always enjoy the contribution made by my neighbour, the Member for Nariva, for his delivery and his comedy.

7.00 p.m.

Let me at this stage correct certain misinformation and certain requests made by the Member for Nariva. First of all he spoke about loss of cacao and coffee crops during flooding. Apparently, this Member does not represent Nariva, an agricultural area, because flooding never ever destroys cacao and coffee trees. I say this because I, too, represent an agricultural area, and I live in that area. He must not come to this House and mislead Members like that.

Mr. Jurai: Just for the record, I was born in Biche and lived there for the better part of 25 years. Heavy rains destroy the cacao crop. If it floods, it is even worse.

Mr. A. Casimire: I would like the Member to tell me, if he has lived for 25 years in Biche, which part floods when it rains? Biche is a hilly area. How can it flood? The low areas are the swamp.

Madam Speaker, I hope you will understand why I did not want to give way—because I anticipated what would come. *[Interruption]* Hills have to do with flooding. There is a direct correlation.

I was moved by the act of sympathy demonstrated by the member for Nariva by seeing this queasy wet little boy, but I suffered an anti-climax because I thought he was going to feed him to the corbeaux, in the first instance, rather than carry him up the road. It is that very Member who said in this House that corbeaux were attacking children.

The Member also spoke about accounting for funds for the Beautification of Port of Spain project. That is not a matter for this honourable House; that is a matter of corporate accounting. The board of directors will have to account for any expenditure by any company that is under their control. I would not have expected someone of this Member's standing to come in this House and display such—

I want to make another point. Early in his contribution the Member said that if he was on this side he would know what to do. I want to tell him that he will live in perpetual ignorance because he will never be on this side *[Interruption]* well, Boynes maybe on this side, but not he. *[Interruption]*

Mr. A. Casimire: Madam Speaker, I want to start my contribution by touching on the matter of tourism. Unlike the Members for La Brea and Tobago West, I do not own any shares in guest houses or hotels, but I know of their operations, and our budget allows for a rebate on expenditure in the hotel and hospitality industry. What the Member for Tobago West did not say but what she tried to do was to project Tobago as the hub of tourism in Trinidad and Tobago. I have no quarrel with that, but I want to remind this honourable House that there are two levels of tourism. There is local tourism and there is tourist tourism.

Local tourism is also very important in the development of tourism in this country. I speak for my own constituency of Toco/Manzanilla and I wish to

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remind the Member for Tobago West that the north-east is the nearest point to Tobago. In the north-east there are very good beaches, very good areas of interest and I refer to Fishing Pond, Matura, and Trincon Bay in Balandra. Those are the three areas where the leatherback turtles come to lay their eggs and the area is now ripe for development as a tourist attraction.

I had the opportunity to be at the Grafton Bay Hotel in Tobago on Saturday evening when news spread that a turtle had come ashore at Mount Irvine back bay. One could have seen the rush of tourists who were at dinner to see this rare spectacle. What we are saying is that the impact that we got from that experience was that tourists were willing to pay between \$20 and \$25 only to see a turtle of that type lay its eggs in the sand. That is an area that can be developed to be a money spinner in tourism. I want to commend this *[Interruption]* I am not a turtle expert.

Mr. Humphrey: Madam Speaker, is the Member aware that the presence of too many tourists and too many facilities in the traditional areas where the turtles lay their eggs will, in fact, drive them away?

Mr. A. Casimire: Madam speaker, as I said before, I am not a turtle expert, but we have been watching these turtles for about 30 years now and they continue to come at a specific time and lay their eggs. You can draw whatever inference you wish from that.

Local tourism encompasses other infrastructural development and while I am on this, I want to speak about road development, water, electricity and all the other infrastructure which will go to make the tourist comfortable and make his stay worthwhile. Also, the question of the road improvement tax will be brought to bear.

The people of my constituency are excited, because it represents the resolution of a problem which confronts us all.

7.10 p.m.

Mr. Sudama: Would the Member give way, please? I want a clarification of a matter. Are the Member's constituents excited about the motor fuel tax they now have to pay?

Mr. A. Casimire: Madam Speaker, the excitement I referred to was about the roads which would be repaired and the employment that will come about because of this tax. The road improvement tax, in my view, is a coup by the Minister of

Finance. It is really, as I see it, the high point of his budget presentation. We all know that the roads—especially in the rural areas—are under serious strain at this time. We are looking forward to the implementation of this facility for what will come out of it is that, perhaps, on a Sunday we can take our motor cars and drive down to Tabaquite, Princes Town or Fyzabad and visit our friends there without any hardship. I want to commend this as an extremely good measure.

Someone spoke about ‘event tourism’, and I think it was the Member for Nariva who tried to give the idea that “even tourism” will fail. I do not agree with him and I feel that “event tourism,” if well marketed, could be a great money spinner for this country.

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the Member is misleading the honourable House. What I did say was that we needed to develop the avenues for tourism in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. A. Casimire: Madam Speaker. While on the question of marketing, we must try to examine the product that we are about to sell to the tourist. It is necessary for us to try to identify the product, standardize it, put a reasonable price on it and then market it to the tourist. Because we are now competing with places a little more advanced than we are in this business, for instance, Barbados, Bahamas, Jamaica and other areas in the Caribbean. I want to challenge those people who are in the tourist industry to get their act together, because Trinidad and Tobago can be a major attraction to would-be tourists from North America, Canada and Europe.

Another problem is the attitudes of some people in the tourist industry, and this requires training of some sort, because some people like the tourist dollars, but they do not like the tourist. Some people are not properly trained and are sometimes not as friendly to tourists as they ought to be. The best advertisement Trinidad and Tobago can get is a contented, happy, returning tourist. All the advertisements on television or other media could never offset what a contented, happy, returning tourist can do for one’s country. That is why I am emphasizing the point this evening, that we have to be careful in our dealings, and that tourists to Trinidad and Tobago should be exposed, in the main, to persons trained in the area of tourism.

The question of crime is brought to bear on tourism as well, because we must be accommodating. If our country is riddled with crime, tourists will shy away from it. We have to do something, especially with respect to crimes against the person. We have to be careful how we deal with that.

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One other factor that the tourist looks at is political stability in a country. The easiest way to chase away a tourist is when there are rumours of upheavals or political instability in a country. They do not like unrest: they have come for peace and quiet and we have to be careful about how we deal with that.

It has been said that in most countries where tourism plays a dominant role, there is the introduction of drugs, casino, gambling et cetera. We in Trinidad and Tobago have always tried to shy away from casino gambling because we know what that brings with it. So that we ought to look at all these aspects of tourism before we rush blindly into it saying that is our only saviour.

Trinidad and Tobago and other islands in the Caribbean are exposed to small epidemics and I want to warn those people who say that tourism is our saviour that, firstly, the rumour of an outbreak of dengue or typhoid fever, or any of those feared diseases, will destroy the entire tourist season. We see what has happened to our neighbours in Barbados—just a few crimes against a few tourists and there was a marked drop in the number of tourist arrivals, and Barbados was listed at one time in North America as a place of which to be careful. If we are to move into the area of tourism, I am saying that we have got to develop all these areas and aspects of the matter.

I want to come back to the road improvement fund. I have major interest in this fund because I see that very soon the fund is likely to realize \$50 million, \$40 million of which will be spent on access roads and bridge repairs. My constituency is crying out loud for these repairs and I have a good feeling today that we may be one of the first beneficiaries of that scheme.

7.20 p.m.

With respect to the access roads programme, I want to inform this honourable House that our access roads have not been maintained over the past five or six years, and are in a terrible state of disrepair. That is why we greet the news of this facility for repair to access roads and bridges with excitement. We see places like Anglais Road, Toco, Naranjo Road, Sahadeen Trace and Flemming Road qualifying for immediate attention under this scheme.

I want to draw the attention of the Minister of Works and Transport to the lack of drainage facilities on the Toco Main Road. We are thankful for the work done by the ministry on those roads, but the lack of drainage causes water to flow on the road itself and damage all the repairs. I am asking, as a special favour, that consideration be given to the drainage situation in that area.

I do not want to touch too much on the portfolio of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, but I represent a mainly agricultural area, and I would like to make a few comments to clear certain matters raised by the Member for Caroni East. Six per cent of the labour force is employed in agriculture, not 13 per cent as stated by the Member for Caroni East. I am satisfied that all efforts are being made to alleviate the problems of the agricultural community in Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to inform this honourable House that as part of Government's legislative programme, action is being taken to amend the Praedial Larceny Act, the Agricultural Small Holdings Act, and also to address the question of non-functioning agricultural tribunals. Government recognizes that these pieces of legislation are impediments to agriculture in their present form.

The People's National Movement in its 1991 General Election manifesto, reiterated its commitment of the vision of transforming Trinidad and Tobago from a colonial backwater to a modern, thriving democracy. In this connection, the party emphasized that every citizen be made to feel a part of the mainstream of the society. I make this point because the Member for Caroni North spoke about alienation—

Madam Speaker: There is no representative for Caroni North, Member.

Mr. A. Casimire: I am sorry Madam Speaker, I meant Couva North. The Member raised the question of alienation and I was particularly disturbed by that comment, because I know that the Government, my party is making every effort to integrate all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

History will show that successive PNM Governments have shown that their socio-economic programmes have always regarded the welfare of the people as the cornerstone of fostering political and economic development. Many of the social, economic, political and commercial institutions which are very much in evidence today, and which have contributed enormously to the development of the economic and social fabric of Trinidad and Tobago, have emerged from this broad-based philosophy.

I say this because I want to move to a very important measure in the budget which many persons have not touched in their contributions so far; that is, the discontinuation of the tax credit of up to \$625 given to purchasers of units in the Second Scheme of the Unit Trust. A brief history of the development of the Unit Trust Corporation will show why this measure had to be put in place. The Unit Trust Corporation was formed in 1982, and successive governments including the last NAR Government, have recognized and appreciated the role played by that institution.

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At this point the Unit trust has about 65,000 customers. What is most interesting is that most of the unit-holding population are people of modest means, with an average investment of less than \$5,000.00. The mission statement of the Unit Trust when it was conceived was to encourage and mobilize savings in the community, thereby fostering the savings and investment consciousness among our people and to channel those resources towards productive investment, creating in the process, a wider shareholding democracy.

On the media and on the streets, because the population did not have the required information, citizens were querying the removal of the tax credit of \$625.00. I just want to give this honourable House information which will show the growth and development of the Unit Trust, because I feel it is one of the major success stories of a people institution in Trinidad and Tobago.

7.30 p.m.

Over the last 11 years, the Unit Trust corporation has devised numerous facilities to cater for the wide and varied preferences of individuals. The following have been some of the plans that the Unit Trust has brought on stream—Monthly Investment Plan, Re-investment Plan, Guarantee Pricing Mechanism, Children's Investment Starter Plan, Gift Plan, Second Unit Scheme, Individual Retirement Unit Account, Chaconia Income and Growth Fund and Investment Game. All these are different types of activities which the Trust has entered into to bring the people of Trinidad and Tobago a certain attraction to savings.

By the end of September 1993 the total fund size under management amounted to \$550 million with the First and Second Unit Schemes accounting for \$183 and \$367 million respectively. It is only that the tax credit has been removed but all the their benefits of the scheme remain. The Minister of Finance in his budget presentation said that it was necessary to level the playing field at this time; and I wish to support him in that view, because I feel that the Unit Trust has come of age. It can now stand on its own and compete with any other mutual fund established in the country.

The Executive Director and staff of the Unit Trust Corporation have shown that they have the necessary foresight, expertise and the will to be creative and imaginative in bringing new forms of investment to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and I think they ought to be commended on that. It is like a child that is born and nurtured, cajoled and fed, and when it has come of age you leave it on its own to travel along. And that is what we have done to the Unit trust.

It is interesting to note that although the tax credit of \$625.00 has been withdrawn from the Second Scheme, all the benefits of the First Scheme remain; and in the Second Scheme also, taxes will not be paid on income up to \$5,000.00. That is one of the major points that I wish to make.

I shall also touch on the pensioners' tax credit. Pensioners, whoever they maybe, whether old-age pensioners or retired persons would have served this country in some form or fashion but their incomes remain fixed. They are subject to all the vagaries of the economy. Sometimes they are the forgotten ones; and sometimes those who come after enjoy much healthier facilities than those who went before.

I know cases where people have headed departments and have retired on a small pension; and those who come afterwards—perhaps not as dedicated and long-serving—draw a pension which is higher or equal to those who went before. So that the idea of giving the tax credit is much deserved by the pensioners of Trinidad and Tobago and on that, too, I wish to commend the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Sudama: Are you suggesting old age pensioners will benefit from that?

Mr. A. Casimire: Madam Speaker, my Government is a caring Government

Miss Bhaggan: Do not spoil it, now.

Mr. A. Casimire: It has always “looked out” for the underprivileged.

Dr. Rowley: When Sham was there.

Mr. Mohammed: Is the Member “troubling” me?

Mr. Sudama: I just want a little clarification, Madam speaker. The Member spoke about old age pensioners in one breath, and in the next breath he spoke about a tax credit of \$625. I ask whether he thinks that old age pensioners will benefit from that tax credit.

Mr. A. Casimire: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance will clear that up when he is replying, but it is my view—

Mr. Sudama: But the Member made the statement, not the Minister of Finance.

Mr. A. Casimire: The tax rebate is for pensioners and not old age pensioners; that is how I see it.

Mr. Bereaux: They do not get enough money to pay tax.

Mr. A. Casimire: Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to inform this ordinary House—this honourable House [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sudama: Are you an “ordinary” Member of this House, or are you an honorary Member?

Mr. A. Casimire: The Member for Couva North asked about—

Mr. Bereaux: He has gone home. [*Interruption*]

Mr. A. Casimire:—the reform of financial structures and institutions, the need for new institutions in the area of industrial relations and the administration of justice. I would like to touch briefly on the question of structures of industrial relations and the administration of justice.

The Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago is a creature of Government. It was established to allow for orderly settlement of disputes. We know that there is a backlog of cases to be determined in the court and my ministry is now taking action to improve the Industrial Relations Act; and also have the construction of a new Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago.

7.40 p.m.

In the administration of justice, the question of amending and bringing legislation to this honourable House will touch several Acts. The Bail Act is now under consideration and will be brought to this honourable House in the not too distant future. The Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Act will also come before the House in the not too distant future. Order 53 of the Supreme Court Rules has been amended to allow for disposal of matters pending over two years. That was a major achievement on the part of the Attorney General.

Mr. Maharaj: I wonder if the hon. Member would give way? Order 53 was not amended to dispose of matters. The Supreme Court Rules were amended to have automatic dismissal of certain matters. There has been a protest from the Law Association and there has been reconsideration of the matter. The Attorney General’s Department is going to amend that rule so that that situation will not arise.

Mr. A. Casimire: Perhaps I should inform this honourable House that action has already been taken on that amendment.

It is also proposed to select a committee to look at and improve the development of the institution responsible for the resolution of trade disputes. What we are trying to do is find ways and means of cutting down the backlog of

trade disputes in the Industrial Court. We hope that by the middle of next year or sooner we would be able to bring legislation to this honourable House in that regard.

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]

Question put and agreed to .

Mr. A. Casimire: I thank you, Madam Speaker, and Members of this honourable House for allowing the extra time. Let me thank my Friend the Member for Nariva most kindly for his graciousness in asking for the extension of my time.

We have also taken action to improve the Land Registry. The Land Registry will now become computerized.

Mr. Sudama: Do you know how long I have been hearing that?

Mr. A. Casimire: Action has already been taken. There is a team in the registry. The necessary hardware and software have been identified and work is going apace to bring some relief to the registry. The Companies Registry is also being modernized and action has also been taken to improve the Trade Marks Law, and the Patents Law. All this is in the pipeline and will be coming to this honourable House later.

Mr. Maharaj: I wonder if the hon. Member would give way. Is he aware, since he is talking about these laws and reforms, that the hon. Attorney General has stated that there are about 21 pieces of law which were passed in this Parliament, since 1981, and have not been assented to or proclaimed, and he promised that at least one of those, the Limitation Act, which prevented people from filing claims against the state, would have been assented to? Could he give us some idea as to whether there is any development on that?

Mr. A. Casimire: Madam Speaker, the Attorney General will be here on Monday and he will reply appropriately to the Member for Couva South.

The report of the committee appointed to look into the delays in the administration of justice has been laid in this honourable House and action is now being taken to implement most of the proposals in the *Gurley Report*. The Attorney General, I am sure, will give details of that in his contribution next week and he will provide up-to-date information on the achievements thus far.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. CASIMIRE]

Friday, December 03, 1993

I wish to support the budget in its entirety and I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance on his delivery. Not for one moment did I feel tired, bored or sleepy during his presentation and that is a major achievement for the delivery of any budget in our Parliament.

I wish to thank Members for giving me this opportunity and I support the Bill in its entirety.

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Monday, December 6, 1993 at 1.30 p.m. [Hon. K. Valley]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.50 p.m.