

*Paper Laid**Monday, December 06, 1993***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Monday, December 06, 1993*

The House met at 1.35 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PAPER LAID**

National Insurance System of Trinidad and Tobago—Report of the Fourth Actuarial Review. [*The Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services (Dr. The Hon. Linda Baboolal)*]

**APPROPRIATION BILL  
(BUDGET)**

[FIFTH 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 Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh):** Madam Speaker, I join this debate in order to support the Appropriation Bill which was presented by the hon. Minister of Finance. During the course of my contribution. I shall be responding to several very valid points made during the debate by the Members for Caroni Central and Tobago West. But I shall be putting those responses within the context of new policy initiatives.

I want to start off by making the point that in the 1994 Estimates of Expenditure, the Ministry of Education is the line ministry with the largest allocation, over \$1 billion. That is an indication, even in these difficult times, of the importance we as a Government place on education.

I want to go further. While it is important to say that we place a high priority on education and are, therefore, allocating over \$1 billion to the Ministry of Education, even more important is how the ministry spends that money. The Member for Chaguanas referred to, what I may call, the output approach to management. That is important. While the inputs amount, in terms of money, to over \$1 billion, at the end of the day we have to ask the question: After having spent that money, what have we achieved? That is the fundamental question; not the expenditure, but the achievement of the expenditure.

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I wish to divide my contribution into three general parts. The first will deal with management issues; the second part with curriculum issues and the third part with physical facilities.

The management issues: The year 1994 will be a year in which we shall begin to see certain fundamental departures in education, starting with management. We may put into place the most meaningful programmes for students and for our school system, but if we do not have appropriate management systems to deliver the product, then our investment would not be cost-effective. In looking at management issues and education, I wish to focus, firstly, on the Ministry of Education, and secondly, on the management of the system in the field, if I may use that expression.

Over the years we have grown accustomed to a high degree of centralization and bureaucracy education. But while recognizing that the time has come for us to begin the process of decentralizing and debureaucratizing, it is important to remember that at a particular time in our history it was important to exert central control to bring the education system into a rational structure. In the same way—and I should make this general point—we tend to be very negative at times when we discuss the education system. I am afraid it is not confined to Trinidad and Tobago. As you read about education in many countries, all of them claim to have the worst.

We must be conscious of our achievements in education, and there are many. We must also be cognizant of the fact that in some areas we have not done well, and what we need to do as we go forward is to build upon the achievements of the system and take the necessary remedial steps to ensure that we improve quality and performance in those areas. I shall take the opportunity to go into some detail about the performance of the system and the achievements. Very often we allow individual small pieces of evidence to influence and even determine our perception of how the system is performing, and we usually get an inaccurate picture. I make that as a preliminary point about the general system.

**1.45 p.m.**

In looking at the management issues, we are guided by three things: firstly, the strategic plan of the Ministry of Education; secondly, the task force report on education reform and thirdly, by simple common sense.

A draft strategic plan was prepared by June, 1993 and formed the basis of a series of workshops or retreats or seminars, call it what you will, among staff of the Ministry of Education, our public service staff, and our teaching staff, in particular, principals and vice-principals. We engaged them in discussions during

the period July to December, 1993 on our strategic plan: How can we deliver quality education to the citizens of this country? As very valuable inputs were made, and as we seek to finalize that strategic plan, these inputs will be taken into consideration.

The idea of a strategic plan is part of the whole process of public service reform. It is a more professional approach to management, where we set specific objectives for ourselves, outline the strategies by which we seek to achieve those objectives, and build into the system a valuation, so that we are constantly evaluating where we are to know whether we are going well or not where we need to make changes and adjust.

At the end of the strategic planning exercise, what we should like to see—not only for the Ministry of Education, but for every ministry—is a score card at the end of the year indicating how we have performed. Strategic planning must have some relationship to allocations and expenditure. In other words, we should not just put money into things; we must perform and show that we are worthy of the allocation, as budgeting will be influenced by the performance, as enunciated in the strategic plan.

We have found that the Ministry of Education has become too bureaucratized over the years, where the maintenance and perpetuation of bureaucracy have become ends in themselves at the expense of the delivery of the service. Do not get me wrong. One needs procedures and systems, but systems and procedures are not ends in themselves; they are means. They are means to the delivery of a service.

What we have started doing at the Ministry of Education is the process of streamlining certain procedures. Of course, I do not promise magic that tomorrow morning it will be all done; the important thing is that we have started on that process of streamlining systems in the ministry; of reorganizing departments. For example, we are on the verge of establishing a human resource management division in the ministry which will bring together a whole range of functions and, essentially, that division will have the responsibility for ensuring that we have the right people, with the right training, in the right place at the right time; an essential principle of manpower planning.

Another area to which we should be paying particular attention is that of research and evaluation, in particular evaluation of the system. In that respect, during recent meetings with officials of the World Bank, they have agreed to give us technical assistance on system evaluation. We cannot just keep on doing things

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without evaluating, then, in years to come, suddenly realize that we are not performing, that we have made mistakes. We must build in systems of evaluation.

In the strategic planning, and the reform of the Ministry of Education, we are seeing the ministry as a customer service organization. We have a product to deliver, which is quality education, and our customers are the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the approach we are making to move away from much of the bureaucracy.

Indeed, in October of this year the Ministry of Education established a Customer Services Department. It is in its initial stages, but basically it interacts directly with the public so that a person can go to the Ministry of Education, get information from this department, or be directed to where the information is available, or where the problem can be resolved. It is a small start, but it is the beginning of the process of changing the approach of the Ministry of Education from a highly bureaucratic organization into a customer service organization.

In the same way that the Ministry of Education has become too bureaucratized, the management of the education system has become a far too centralized over the years. It was necessary at a particular time, but with the passage of time, and with a whole range of developments, it is now important to put more appropriate management systems in place. The year 1994 will see the beginning of the process of decentralizing the operations of the Ministry of Education.

Again, it is a process that will take time, but we shall move along in incremental steps. Our ultimate vision is greater school-based management, greater community-based management, of our schools, to use the words of the Ministry of Finance in his budget speech, "to invite the participation of the citizenry in the management of our school system."

We propose to start by using the existing educational divisions. We are identifying a whole range of activities which can be handled much more efficiently and expeditiously at the divisional level than from the central office. It is sheer absurdity that if a teacher wants a job letter he/she has to go to the ministry's head office. That is wasting everybody's time. I just chose that extreme example to make the point that we need to streamline the management and decentralize it so we can move more speedily, so that the solution is nearer to where the problem is rather than being very remote.

**1.55 p.m.**

A whole range of services will be performed at the divisional level and we are looking at some of these services to include the maintenance and repair of schools. We feel that in decentralizing with certain controls and accountability, the task of maintenance and repairs would be more speedily handled. You will find as we decentralize, we will become more cost-effective; it is felt by many—and not without truth—that the system has become so highly centralized that we are not cost-ineffective; that we are, in fact, wasteful and inefficient. With proper decentralization of the management, the moneys allocated to us would go a longer way, using the education divisions, as they exist now, to carry out a range of functions.

In addition to that, we need to look at school-based management. We need to put our principals once more in charge of their schools, to give them a greater say. Free up the system. It is a truism that the quality of a school is to a large extent determined by its leadership and, what we need to do is to create the conditions where the leaders in the schools, the principals, can perform. We see the principal as a manager and from seeing him so, certain consequences flow.

We are at present examining financial procedures to see how we can give more responsibility and authority to principals in the expenditure of moneys. There is the possibility of giving them their budget in a different way from what is done now, and allowing them to manage it so that they can deal with problems quickly, so that a small problem which takes so long to be handled with the resultant inflated costs would no longer apply or, would be considerably reduced.

While it may seem a bold step, it is not unprecedented. The principals in Government schools operate at a disadvantage. In the assisted schools the principals have their budgets and their bank accounts; they run the schools and there is accountability. We have to see if within the system of Government accounting and financing procedures we can facilitate our principals. We may not be able to do all of it at one time, but we are examining it to see the extent to which it can be done. The question has to be asked: What should be the role of a principal in the selection and recruitment of staff?

Modern management practice, as I understand it, involves, in respect of employment and recruitment, the line manager. Principals are line managers. We need to see how we can make them function effectively, what say we can give them, what is their role in the recruitment and selection of staff. It may seem bold,

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but it is not unprecedented. The assisted schools, to a large extent, have that in place. The principals of government schools find themselves at a disadvantage.

It is one thing to say we are initiating the process of decentralizing and we would be giving more authority to the educational divisions and the principals, but we must also do the preparation. During the course of this year, the Ministry of Education has undertaken a whole series of training programmes for principals and vice-principals to prepare them to be managers. We have begun to move away from the conventional training of educational administration towards human resource management. Our pilot project this year consisted of three three-week seminars for principals and vice-principals, and over 80 of them benefited directly from those programmes.

We are analyzing those programmes to see what ingredients we need to put for the future, and next year we will intensify that programme. We started with a backlog, approximately 600 principals, many of whom have never had management training.

We have to deal with the backlog and we shall try to do so as quickly as possible. Our idea is to get through this exercise and put this country in a position where, before people are promoted to the position of principal, they have the necessary management training and exposure. We cannot put people in management jobs without giving them the necessary exposure before. It is unfair to them.

Side by side with that, in January we are starting at the University of the West Indies a collaborative effort between the Faculty of Education and the Ministry of Education providing training for principals, vice-principals and senior teachers in curriculum and instructional leadership. So, we are doing it at several levels.

That, basically, is an outline of the approach of the management issues. To summarize: To debureaucratize the Ministry of Education and to decentralize the management of the education system, putting both together to develop appropriate management systems for the delivery of quality education. And as I said, we have to come to terms with the management issues before we can implement any other measure.

I should add under "management", that from October 1, 1993, we started our pilot project involving the appointment of deans and heads of departments in certain of our large secondary schools. It is a pilot project for two years. We shall see how it works and the extent to which it can be expended. The idea is, within the school itself we must put in adequate management systems to ensure that the school is properly managed. It is extremely difficult for a principal and vice-principal to run a school of 1600 students with 100 teachers and, maybe, 100

maintenance staff. The deans and the heads of departments are a means of assisting the principals in the management of the schools.

**2.05 p.m.**

An employer has a certain caring responsibility towards his employees. Employees wherever they are have problems such as personal and financial. These problems have an impact on their job performance. It is with this in mind that an Employee Assistance Programme has been put in place at the Ministry of Education. It would cater not only for teachers, but all employees of the ministry, by agreement with the respective associations and unions, where we would seek to assist our employees with their problems which have an effect, generally deleterious, on their work performance.

At the moment the training of supervisory staff of the Employee Assistance Programme is going on. When I say “supervisory staff”, I use the word “supervisory” in the widest management sense, because before the programme can be implemented properly, those who are in positions of supervisory responsibility must be properly trained to use the programme. That training started last week. It would take about three months.

It is expected that by the end of March the first referrals would be made in the Employee Assistance Programme. Between January and March, I have been assured emergency cases may be handled because there are many employees who have serious problems and we need to see the extent to which we can assist them. While one does not condone bad performance, the instinctive response to bad performance must not necessarily be the big stick of disciplinary action. One must seek to engage with the person and find out the cause of poor performance and see the extent to which we can help.

**Miss Bhaggan:** Just on the question of the Employee Assistance Programme, could the Minister give me some detail about the plan to protect confidentiality with respect to information received? He said that the supervisors would deal with this. From what I understand, that is supposed to be a system which is confidential. Is that programme going to be different in the sense that it does not impact upon performance appraisal reports?

**Hon. A. Ramrekersingh:** There would be two methods of referral, supervisory referral and self referral. Of course, self referral is always preferable, but confidentiality is built into the system. It follows very closely on the experiences of other EAPs. In fact, we have prepared a booklet on the workings of the system. The Member can always have a look at it. That is important. There must be confidentiality, otherwise the system would not work.

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This programme at the Ministry of Education is intended to be the pilot project for the entire public service. As we implement in the Ministry of Education, the government as a whole would learn from the experience, and move towards the establishment of an Employee Assistance Programme for the entire public service of Trinidad and Tobago, the government recognizing its caring responsibility towards its employees.

I now move to some areas of curriculum change. As you know, we appointed a task force to do a comprehensive review of the education system and to make proposals for modernization and improvement. In April, 1993, the task force presented its draft report and about five months was spent with individuals and organizations discussing very intensively the recommendations of the report. At present, the final draft is at the editing stage and that report would form the basis for overall reform.

There are certain things which are so obvious, and this is why I said that one of the things which must guide our action is simple common sense; certain things that are so obvious that we must move towards handling them. I would not deal with all of curriculum reform. For example, it is quite clear that a sizeable number of students in our schools, especially secondary schools, are not achieving certain minimum levels. Therefore, one of the tasks of curriculum reform is to put into place programmes that are appropriate to their needs which would ensure the development of their full potential.

I do not want to go into the broader question today. Quite rightly, Members of this House and the citizens of this country have been making comments on the problems of literacy and numeracy. We must not hide our heads. In this country, there are a substantial number of students who have not achieved what I would call an acceptable minimum in basic literacy and numeracy. It is, of course, not unique to Trinidad and Tobago. This Government's responsibility is to Trinidad and Tobago. We will learn from the experiences of others.

Among other things, it has been one of the consequences of democratization of education, but there is also a whole range of additional factors. I do not want to go into those factors today. There have been enough commentaries on them. This is not a new problem. It began to exert itself somewhere in mid- or late 1970s. What we have been doing for a long time is dealing with the symptoms; we wait until these children reach the secondary school level and then we seek to do remedial work. It is sometimes then that we discover it. It is important that we continue to do the remedial work, because there is a backlog.

The approach we have begun to use is go to the source. Therefore, programmes are being put in place to deal with the problems of numeracy and



literacy at the level of the primary school. It is a challenge, not only for the Ministry of Education or the principals and teachers, but for the entire country, and parents are important in this. I do not want to go into that aspect.

We have been training teachers who would train other teachers in the primary school system to handle reading and numeracy in such a way that our students would achieve higher levels, but we have to go further than that. The Ministry of Education together with the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association hosted some seminars for principals of primary schools both in Trinidad and in Tobago. A plan of action was devised, and the responsibility of the principals is to show leadership in the implementation of those plans to deal with the problems of literacy and numeracy. As a nation, we cannot be happy about the situation where so many children are deficient in basic reading and numeracy skills.

### **2.15 p.m.**

We are going into the primary schools. Side by side with the action plan worked out with the principals, training in those areas for teachers will be done jointly by the Faculty of Education and the Ministry of Education, starting in January. But we are going a little further.

Again, after discussions with principals, teachers and the Association, as at June 1994, we shall be conducting national diagnostic testing of students in primary schools at the levels of Standards I and III in basic language and basic mathematics. We shall conduct this testing with a minimum of "simi-dimi." We do not want to make it a traumatic experience. It will be done basically under normal classroom conditions with proper supervision, so that we can not only test attainment—see where they have reached—but from early we can diagnose deficiencies and seek to deal with them. The idea is that by the time a child has completed his primary school education, he should have attained a certain mastery of basic language and basic mathematics, two important tools for civilized living.

In order to tackle this problem, we have also intensified teacher training at all levels and in particular the Learning Resource Centre at McBean is a hub of activity, not only from Monday to Friday but Saturdays as well. It must be said publicly that there are many teachers in this country who give up their Saturdays so that classes would not be disrupted to attend training programmes and they do not ask for a cent. They do it because they are anxious to develop themselves and become better teachers.

During 1993, we started an on-the-job training programme for teachers. Basically, it is a sophisticated or modernized version of the old monitor system

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where one does nine months pre-service training both at the theoretical level and on-the-job in the classroom under the supervision of a senior teacher, or, if I may use the classic term, 'in apprenticeship', under a master teacher. We have put in over 400 trainees in the middle of this year and their training goes on until March. Early in 1994, we will be putting in another batch.

There are some administrative problems still involved which we are ironing out. I hope that Trinidad and Tobago would be in the position before the end of 1994 where to become a qualified teacher in a primary school, one must have successfully completed a nine months' teaching apprenticeship, an improved quality of teacher. During that nine months we also have an opportunity to assess trainees to see whether they are the kind of persons we want to teach our children. It is changing the system of recruitment. Of course, the trainee also has the opportunity to look at us and decide whether we are the kind of persons he or she wants to work with.

As we settle the question of primary school teaching, we shall then move to the secondary schools where at present a university degree qualifies one to enter the teaching service. There really is no valid relationship between the mere acquisition of a degree and the ability to teach. We have to discuss with the University the possibility of putting certain modules of education within the degree, or having special programmes for those who wish to enter the teaching service. As we start the process, the eventual aim is that pre-service will be a necessary qualification for entrance to the teaching service at secondary school level—improving the quality of our teaching and improving the quality of our teachers.

As I speak of teacher training, I wish to announce that in September, 1994 Corinth will once more become a teachers' training college. In 1987, it was closed as a training college and a senior comprehensive experiment was carried out, but we have analyzed the developments and the decision has been taken to make Corinth a teachers' training college once more, giving considerable ease to those students who live in South Trinidad. Some 55 per cent of the people who now attend the Valsayn Teachers' College come from South and Central Trinidad, so that will be an important development for them. Money has been allocated in the 1994 Budget for the work that is necessary to reopen Corinth as a teachers' training college and I expect that work will begin early in 1994, as tenders are awarded. In looking at the numbers of teachers to be trained, one cannot do arithmetic; one must do algebra. Arithmetic was responsible for that change.

Diagnostic Testing: The Government has taken a decision that we must move towards the elimination or transformation of the common entrance system. Several measures have to be put in place for that to become a reality, among them a school building, which I will talk about. Also, if we want to use, as is being mooted, a system of continuous assessment we need to do some training. We must prepare in advance. Starting in January, again, with collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Faculty of Education, programmes in student assessment and evaluation will be conducted, preparing our teachers for the new system which will eventually come of the movement from primary to secondary school.

In addition, through discussions with the World Bank, they will soon be sending one of their experts in continuous assessment systems to work with us at the Ministry of Education for a little while.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**2.25 p.m.**

Thank you, Madam Speaker and hon. Members.

I want to make the point therefore, that we are moving towards a different set of arrangements for that transition from primary school to secondary school. We need to take our time and put proper arrangements in place. So that this idea of transforming or abolishing the Common Entrance Exam—we all would like it to go—is not something which can be done in a day or a week. It will take some time: we have started the process.

The 14-plus examination: In the 1968/1983 Education Plan, it was conceived that 38 per cent of the students at junior secondary schools would go forward to further their education. An adjustment was made in the 1970s as the finances of the country improved, and it was decided that everyone would go forward. In the original plan, going forward was dependant on performance in the 14-plus examination. We decided that everybody would go forward, but the 14-plus examination remained. It was supposed to be transformed into a diagnostic test. The 14-plus examination—and I have said it in this honourable House—has some, but not too much validity.

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In the 1985/1990 Education Plan the idea of a national certificate of secondary education was mooted. Unfortunately, no real movement was made in that direction. Studies were done, discussions were held, and the time has come when we must begin to implement the programme of secondary education. I do not wish to go into the technical details of it here, but simply to say that it is not a replacement of or substitute for the CXC and GCE; it is an examination of a particular kind. But to me, there are two aspects of the National Certificate of Secondary Education that are very important. Firstly, it will be a system of certification which will give the profile of a person, not just—as we have at present—the examination results; that system of certification will assess academically, co-curricula activity, the esthetics and all of these things. So that the idea that we have, that we give students a well-rounded education would be reflected in the certification, not as it is now and has been for so long a time. We say that we want a well-rounded education but at the end we merely get examination passes. Secondly, when the system is fully implemented, it would be done on a credit basis; even though one has left secondary school one can continue to achieve credits and get a National Certificate of Secondary Education. It will have implications for adult education. I simply want to confine my remarks today to that third form level.

Starting with the school year September 1994, and therefore, implementable by June of the next year, will be Part I of the National Certificate of Secondary Education. It will be done on a pilot basis involving the third formers of 25 secondary schools. The 14-plus is written only by students of the junior secondary schools. Part I of the National Certificate of Secondary Education will be written by all third formers. The principals and teachers of the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association are working out the details now, so that 25 schools will be tested in the NCSE Part I in 1995 as the prelude to the removal of the 14-plus examination. I will discuss some of the more technical details in another forum; I just want to signal that we are moving away from the 14-plus to the NCSE Part I and it will involve all third formers. It is not restricted to junior secondary students.

We have put programmes in place where we are making more books available to schools, especially library books. Contracts were awarded under the IDB programme for some \$15 million worth of books for school libraries; 1994 will see the arrival and the distribution of books. The Cabinet took a decision to purchase a certain number of basic textbooks for primary school students; tenders were awarded through the Central Tenders Board and basic textbooks for 40,000

primary school children were purchased. Almost all of them have arrived, distribution has started, it is a joint effort between the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services, and the Ministry of Education. The Social Welfare Department is playing a very critical role where it is helping to identify the needy students in the primary schools. We are catering for 40,000 students and there will be basic textbooks at a rental cost per year of \$3.00 per book. The books will be returned at the end of the year and another group will use them.

In addition, class sets have been ordered. We have 10,000 atlases, 10,000 dictionaries and 10,000 copies of the thesaurus. I want you to see the direction of the books—the thesaurus and the dictionary, zero-in on this question of reading and literacy. Ten thousand dictionaries, 10,000 atlases and 10,000 copies of the thesaurus are being made available from January to the primary schools, and each school will have a certain number to be used. In addition, 500 science kits have been ordered, some have arrived and the majority are to come. Each school would have a science kit which is especially important for the older schools which do not have science rooms. Before the distribution we will be having seminars for our teachers on the use of the science kits.

I come now to physical facilities. In 1993, several primary schools came on stream—Newtown Boys, Mohess Road, Siparia SDMS, Springdale SDMS and so forth. Early in 1994, several other primary schools will be opened—Tunapuna Hindu School, Mathura Government, Sangre Grande Government and Dabadie Government. These schools will also have additional capacity to what they were before.

During the course of 1994, there is going to be a school building programme. In terms of primary schools, the construction of the following schools will start in 1994: Arima Boys Government, Charlieville ASJA, Reform Presbyterian, Gasparillo Government, Guayaguayare Government, St. Mary's Anglican School—that is next to the St. Mary's Children's Home. The first two are being funded under our normal expenditures and the other four are being funded under the FINCOR Programme.

### **2.35 p.m.**

There are also some projects for Tobago, which are being handled by the Tobago House of Assembly, involving primary schools, post primary centres and others.

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At the secondary level; 1994 total rebuilding will start on the Lakshmi Girls' Hindu College, moving it from a present enrolment of 275 to a school that will cater for 800 children. Work will start in 1994 and will be completed in 1995.

Several secondary schools have been identified for refurbishing. I do not want to raise people's hopes unduly. A sum of \$9.5 million is available under the development plan for school building; the largest slice will go to the Lakshmi Girls' Hindu College for construction—about half of it will be completed in 1994—and we have identified certain other secondary schools where we can do some work. One of the schools that are targeted is Pleasantville Senior Comprehensive. For several years now Block C has been uninhabitable, unused, because it has collapsed, virtually. We will start that work, which involves piling and rebuilding, and it is very important that we do that repair work because it eliminates a shortage of places, which has been going for years. Work on Pleasantville will continue.

There are several other schools. Drawings and designs for the rebuilding of the Tranquility Secondary School will take place in 1994 so that construction can begin in 1995. Work on St. Francois Girls' College, Barrackpore Senior Comprehensive, San Fernando Senior Comprehensive, Malick, Arima Government Secondary, Holy Faith Convent, Penal; Belmont Boys, Bishop Anstey High School, within the limits of the resources available.

In talking about the refurbishment of secondary schools, we have had to assign priorities. I wish to announce that as of September, 1994, the El Dorado Junior Secondary School will become a five-year school and the El Dorado Senior Comprehensive School will become a seven-year school without any loss in places. As at September, 1994, the Barrackpore Junior Secondary School will become a five-year secondary school, and the Barrackpore Senior Comprehensive School will become a seven-year school without any loss in places. We have done the work; the principals worked out the details inviting participation.

While \$9.5 million was allocated to this heading for Trinidad and Tobago, \$3 million was allocated to Tobago, the bulk of which I think was for continuing the work on Bishop's High School, a prominent school in Tobago. However, work needs to be done on Signal Hill. The Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and the Members of the House of Assembly are looking at the possibility of work on Signal Hill. Signal Hill must become, not only a full comprehensive school, but in our opinion, it must also be able to offer to the people of Tobago programmes which are offered at John Donaldson and the San Fernando Technical Institute in Trinidad.

None of us can say that we are absolutely satisfied with the physical condition of our primary schools. Many of the primary schools are older than everyone in this Parliament—those that are not that old are still quite old—and there is much work to be done. In 1992 we handled just over 90 schools; in 1993 we were able to do work on about 50—this is apart from routine work—within limitations of our funding. We are in the process of targetting a whole range of our primary schools for a massive refurbishment programme in 1994, and so far, as we seek to put the programme together, it seems as though we shall be trying to refurbish some 150 primary schools in 1994. The expected cost is somewhere between \$15 and \$17 million. The details have not been completely worked out. As soon they are, hon. Members will be informed, and it is hoped to start work early in 1994.

So that in addition to teacher training and better management systems, the physical conditions of our schools, especially primary schools, must be facilitative of quality education.

In terms of school buildings, we have started discussions with the World Bank. I have had a few meetings with them and we have put to them a building programme. We have done our school mapping exercise which will take care of the primary school needs of Trinidad and Tobago until the year 2010. The discussions are continuing. In fact, this afternoon architects from the World Bank have come down to carry out another aspect of the discussion. We hope to finalize those negotiations in 1994 so that we can begin another programme of school building at primary level to satisfy our needs for the next 17 to 18 years.

In terms of secondary schools, we are looking at putting together certain financial arrangements, which will allow us to begin building some more secondary schools. On a previous occasion I had identified some of the priority areas for those schools. This Parliament and the citizens will be kept abreast of these developments as we go on.

I should have liked to mention several other things, but I know there will be many other occasions. I want to wind up with the following points. During 1994, we shall be pursuing also the opening of more post primary centres, but with a different emphasis. We are looking towards the idea of an integrated school which is tied in to the NCSC Part I and which will offer an appropriate programme of work for students whose achievement is at a particular level but which, at the same time, will allow them the facility as they improve to go on to other parts of the school system.

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**2.45 p.m.**

The emphasis has been, and will be for some time, on primary education because it is the rock upon which we must build. We also need to pay some attention to what is popularly called pre-school or nursery school. The direction which this Government will be following from 1994 in this area is indicated in a sense by the new title we are giving. We are changing from the pre-school concept to the whole idea of early childhood care and education, because we are going beyond the mere school or children—it will involve parents.

Cabinet has approved the establishment of a National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education. In due course we will be announcing the names of the persons who will serve on that council. I can assure you that when the names are revealed, you will see that it comprises persons who have a track record in early childhood education and care, but we are taking it beyond the old concept of pre-school.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Finance talked about strengthening our relations with Latin America in terms of trade and culture. The question of language comes in, and at the Ministry of Education we are now looking at ways and means of increasing the level at which Spanish is taught in our schools. I know at present not a large number of children do languages. I could give details of that as a “language person” myself. It is a source of regret. But we feel that with our new orientation, Spanish is important. The strategy may be not to do it in the traditional way that has turned off people, but to use a utilitarian approach to teaching it, and when our young people can see the value of it, that would encourage them to pursue it at school. So, that is an area that we are looking at.

I close, Madam Speaker, by summarizing, I have looked at management, curriculum and physical facilities, comprising a part of the new direction in education in 1994. The process of change will take some time, but it will be pursued relentlessly. There is a school of thought which holds that we could not have certain kinds of changes, especially in management, without amending the Education Act. That has always been an excuse, not for inaction, but for non action. Because within the Act it is entirely possible to make a whole series of changes.

There will come a time when we would have to amend the Act, but we will start by working with it. We can no longer postpone initiating the process of change. I invite the Parliament, the national community, and all the teachers’



associations and organizations to join hands in 1994 and beyond, as we start the process of putting an education system in place in Trinidad and Tobago which will ensure that our people have the best possible education we can offer and on that we build for the future. That is our springboard to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

I thank you very much.

**Mr. John Humphrey** (*St. Augustine*): Madam Speaker, I start my contribution by asking the Prime Minister to do the honest and noble thing and admit to the national community that he is redundant and that he should vacate the offices he occupies in the Central Bank Tower and immediately despatch to Washington a letter of invitation to whomsoever the board of directors of the World Bank decides they will put in charge; and save the people of this country the cost of maintaining a government. I would be willing to resign as a Member of Parliament, close down the place, and I am fully prepared to converse with this new colonial governor that will be despatched from Washington about participating in the whole programme of getting our economy moving forward.

However, I would have a great difficulty, in that I do not endorse the World Bank's view and vision for Trinidad and Tobago. But I do recognize, however, that the World Bank is in charge of Trinidad and Tobago. It took charge during the last regime and it remained in charge. The difference is, however, that the last regime was implementing the proposals and programmes designed by the World Bank more in tune with the requirements of the Structural Adjustment Programme and was attaining a degree of success.

Since the PNM took over, where all of us thought that we had a more caring regime—at least the electorate was led to believe that; I believed that, because I know most of the honourable Members and I think that most of them are caring—some of them, however, only care for themselves. I think the last speaker is one of the former group. I dare say the Minister of Education would be employed by the governor who would take the position of the Prime Minister.

Some time ago, I raised this document and described it as the “real manifesto” for Trinidad and Tobago; and I raise it again. If one reads this document, which is the *Report and Recommendation of the President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development* (which is commonly called the World Bank) *to the Executive Directors* (of that body in Washington) *on a Proposed Structural Adjustment Loan in an Amount Equivalent to US\$40 Million to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, November 21, 1989.*

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This is the strategy, the course on which Trinidad and Tobago is venturing today. In this document a forecast was made; and let me quote from page 25, paragraph 85, what the World Bank's directors felt would happen as a result of Trinidad and Tobago adopting this strategy.

“...the decline in real GDP is projected to bottom out in 1990. An essential factor favoring this outcome is the increased flow of foreign exchange in 1989 and 1990 from balance of payments support by multilateral and a very few bilateral donors which would ease the import constraint so critical in 1988. Thereafter, GDP is projected to rise gradually from 1.5 per cent in 1991 to 2.5 per cent in 1992 and to 3 per cent in 1993. Growth is projected to reach 4 per cent per annum during 1995-1997.”

**2.55 p.m.**

That was the forecast on Trinidad and Tobago agreeing to adopt the structural adjustment programme of the World Bank. Now, what was that structural adjustment programme? Again, it is found in the document under “Programme Description.” It is related to this loan of US\$40 million which was to be matched by bi-lateral agencies, and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago did source another \$40 million from the Japanese Ex-Im Bank and sourced other loans and was able to reschedule the national debt to give the country a breathing spell.

This programme is the Government's structural adjustment programme in selected areas of policy that are key to growth.

“The program aims at raising the efficiency of public sector management, removing the allocative inefficiencies produced by the prevailing restrictive trade regime, and providing the social underpinnings for the sustainability of the adjustment process. Specifically, the loan would support a reform program encompassing: (i) public sector resource mobilization and allocation: state enterprise restructuring and divestiture, efficiency improvements and tariff increases in the public utilities and strengthening the management of public sector investment; (ii) improving the incentive framework, particularly the trade regime and investment incentives; and (iii) strengthening the Government's social sector policies and programs, including ameliorating the social impact of the adjustment and maintaining an adequate social safety net.”

This was recommended on the basis of the belief in the world that history had ended, the socialist system had collapsed, one could not count on it for mobilizing

resources of societies in their own self-interest, and that there was only one system available to the human species to enable mobilizing of resources for the provision of needs and the maintenance of order and so forth.

It was presented to this country at a time when a valid foundation for development had been laid in the independence movement and it was a prescription for the dismantling of that foundation and for establishing a new foundation—a foundation that would bring Trinidad and Tobago into an area of planet Earth that was considered to be developed. It did not say what they were going to bring us into that area as, however. It could not have been as a partner or as an equal player, because one is talking about these superstructure powers that had developed on planet Earth. It had to be as a little, minute appendage to that.

The context in which we find ourselves debating the Budget for 1994, I think, was described graphically when the Prime Minister met a number of students at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies. He is quoted in the *Newsday* of Wednesday, November 24, under a headline “PM: TT running HOUR BY HOUR.” This report went on to say:

“The Ministry of Finance is running the country virtually on an hour-by-hour basis, PM Patrick Manning yesterday told students of the St. Augustine Campus, University of the West Indies.”

That is what is reported that he said.

“He further said, economic changes are not dictated by the domestic government, and policies of trade reform have been predetermined. Countries such as TT are therefore called upon to redefine the meaning of sovereignty; since they are being told, to do business with the developed world the LDCs must open their market to the MDCs, Manning said.”

That is the least developed countries must open their markets to the most developed countries.

In that context, I would say we do not need a Government. I am not being facetious; I am being very serious because it is the context of a new colonial structure of the world, a structure that relates to the centre of power being in the big developed nations’ hands. That is where the power resides. That is where the wealth resides. This power is being used to dictate to the human species that we should all accept and accommodate this approach to mobilizing resources.

The budget is presented in this contextual framework. The framers of the national policy of Trinidad and Tobago of the 1990s and beyond—at least until

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this regime is removed by the electorate and a truly nationalist government is voted into office—recognized that there would be risks involved in adopting this adjustment.

If the framers of this had recognized the validity of what we already had in place, and that is, a mixed economy where the state had a dynamic role to play in economic mobilization along with the private sector and along with workers who are becoming more and more involved through their trade unions which were growing and getting stronger and stronger—if they had recognized that that was valid, then they would not have advocated structural adjustment as they have done. They recognized there would be risks, and let us see what they said about that under “Risks”.

“The principal risks affecting the success of the program are:

(i) the social and political pressures stemming from the sharp adjustment to date which, if intensified, could derail the program—”

The adjustment has been intensified. More pressure is being brought today on the people of this country than ever before, even under British colonialism. The pressure has intensified and the whole program could be derailed—it was recognized—and will be derailed. It is going to be derailed by the people of this country either by revolutionary means—which is not far down the road—or if we can hold the lid on the pot we can have elections and persuade the people to put in a government that will restore some semblance of mobilization based on national interest and on the concept of sovereignty.

**3.05 p.m.**

On this side we do not intend to change that concept. We believe it is valid that even small nations that do not have any power in terms of the world order, do enjoy a degree of autonomy, a degree of freedom and a degree of sovereignty, because what we find is that the big, giant developed nations of the world are creating more and more chaos for the human species. I will deal with that in more detail.

Let me go on to quote from the “Risks” to be found at the beginning of this document.

“...while the Government is sensitive to the likely adverse social impact in the short run, it has demonstrated a strong commitment to the adjustment programme, and is taking steps to ameliorate the social impact to the extent possible; (ii) a lack of implementation capacity and weak investment response

to the improved incentive environment could delay the projected supply response—support through the proposed Technical Assistance Loan would strengthen implementation capacity; and (iii) unexpected adverse international price developments could intensify the need for a more rapid adjustment, creating further social pressures—current Bank projections of international prices for Trinidad and Tobago’s exports do not envisage abrupt adverse changes.”

The framers of the structural adjustment programme recognized that when the programme slows and/or stalls, they are going to have to provide some safety net for the population, or the whole thing would be derailed. You can imagine what they mean by derailment. The fact that this year’s budget has allocated an increase in the safety net allocation—it is now \$1.1 billion—though I am sure analysts will examine what was allocated when this programme was first adopted by the former government and see that there really is no great increase at all. But if an increase has to be provided for the social safety net, it is an admission that the strategy is failing.

If we look at the published facts and figures on gross domestic product, what we will find, in fact, is that the strategy is failing. However, when it was first introduced, the forecasts were achieved. In the *Review of the Economy*, 1993 at Appendix I, Gross Domestic Product of Trinidad and Tobago, 1989—1993 at Market prices (Constant 1985 Prices)”, this is what we see. In 1988, we produced \$16,027.4 million. We had declined from 1987 by 3.9 per cent. In 1989, a further decline to \$15,894.0 million, a decline of .8 per cent, but a smaller decline. In 1990, an increase; it was \$16,134.4 million, an increase from the previous year by one and a half per cent. The strategy said the slide would bottom out. It did. It said that we would start increasing output. We did. In 1991, a further improvement in production to \$16,530.60 million, which is 2.5 per cent better than the previous year.

At the end of 1991, the Government was changed and I think it is important that we understand why that occurred, because as far as the economy and this strategy were concerned, it was working quite well; it was being properly managed, although this side never endorsed this particular strategy. The NAR did not go to the electorate to impose a structural adjustment programme. We went to the electorate to rally the resources of this country in its own interest. That is what we went to the electorate with. But “Give Jack his jacket,” or “Give the devil his due,” however you want to put it, the strategy was working as forecast.

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When the PNM came in, the downward trend started again. From \$16.5 billion was dropped to \$16.26 billion, 1.6 per cent decline. We further dropped to \$16.10 billion, another one per cent decline.

I would forecast that from now on we are going to continue to drop. But there is something else that has been happening. While GDP has been shrinking, the country has been borrowing, and borrowing and borrowing more and more money. In borrowing this money there are conditionalities which are having expression in certain things. I am very worried for Trinidad and Tobago.

You see, the Minister of Finance in presenting his budget sought to give a vision of Trinidad and Tobago that no doubt he and his Prime Minister and his other ministerial colleagues and leading members of the ruling party may well share; I honestly do not know. What I do know, however, is that we on this side do not share it and I know that we can speak for a substantial part of the national community. We do not share that vision. But let us see what the Minister of Finance said:

“My Government is dedicated to inclusion. Therefore we have urged you to let us all go down the road together. But we in Government also have a responsibility to lead. The question is lead where?”

And he answers his own question:

“The answer is to become the Global City of the Caribbean.”

So here is the vision of the Government to become the global city of the Caribbean. In order to achieve that, the Minister of Finance went on to say that certain things are required.

Let me just pause here to describe “city” in the context of the developed world. “City” is the source of very, very serious human problems. The big cities of the world have attracted tremendous resources. They have become out of scale of the human species. They have built gigantic buildings, gigantic bridges and airports; gigantic ports, ships and aeroplanes, and to maintain these cities, it is taking a gigantic share of the world’s resources. These cities are not giving the humankind any genuine service in terms of meeting our needs, that is, the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, and the other needs of spiritual development. In fact, it is going just the opposite way.

These cities are decomposing and decaying materially, and they are taking with them the human spirit. So spiritually we are decomposing and decaying as well with escalating crime, with values that bear no relationship to human

existence. If you believe, as I do, that our destiny is to become one with the Creator and to live in harmony with his creation, then these cities are not taking us there. They are taking us in exactly the opposite direction.

So what is the Minister of Finance's concept of 'city'? I want him to say. He said, not just little city of the Caribbean. I want him to explain that concept, because as far as I am concerned, instead of trying to provide the things that are spelt out here to achieve that status, we should be looking inward and seeking, not to be a city, but to be a village where we love and care for each other, where each of us is our brother's keeper, where we show some concern for our fellowmen and women.

### **3.15 p.m.**

Listen to what the Minister of Finance says are the pre-requisites for this achievement of the global city of the Caribbean at page 2 of the Budget Speech:

- (i) "Excellent Infrastructure
  - Road, sea and air transport
  - Ample and reliable electricity
  - Adequate good quality water and waste water treatment
  - World class telecommunications
  - Strong educational and health systems
- (ii) A bureaucracy that is international in outlook, efficient and responsive.
- (iii) A people living in harmony and welcoming to visitors.
- (iv) A work-force that is skilled, productive, flexible and willing to accept and embrace new technologies and practices.
- (v) An atmosphere of relative security and stability.
- (vi) A sensitivity to the protection of the environment."

He goes on to say that:

"...the realisation of our vision will require all segments of the society to participate."

But he also said that we are blessed in that many of these things we already have.

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A vision that is contrived, not in the interest of our people, but to put Trinidad and Tobago into this new world framework—that to them is a given; they are not even considering that there could be other possibilities for mobilizing resources. They are trying to immediately fit into this framework. The Minister of Finance gave six requirements, but I want to add a seventh—we also need a happy, fully mobilized people with involvement in the production process, sharing in the wealth and enjoying a safe, secure and decent living standard.

We have been witness to the collapse of the social system. What is the real reason that socialism collapsed? I would like to suggest that it is because under socialism, as we saw it develop, the human individual was denied the principle of freedom to be himself or herself. Freedom of the individual was denied, and each human being became a veritable pawn in a system of state domination and control. Those that did not fit in were either executed or locked away in distant places. Everyone had to fit in for fear of life and limb.

The human spirit cannot accommodate that for very long, because it goes against nature. We did not create our own nature. Our nature was created by the being, the entity, the force that created all existence, and, in his wisdom the Creator made each of us different. No two of us are alike. We are not clones of each other. Each one is unique. That aspect of creation must recognize that we must be free to be what God made us to be. Any system that denies recognition of that is doomed to fail.

There is another principle that I discern in the creation. The principle that we are individuals, we are entitled to be free to be individual, that we are equal one to the other in the sight of the Creator; that he has not discriminated against or in favour of anyone or any group of us. The bounty of the world is there for all of us to enjoy and not just for one little group of us to control and dominate.

The other system which the Government claims is the right one and which it is now forcing down the throats of our people does not recognize the principle of equality. In fact, it takes this individual freedom to a ridiculous extent. It encourages citizens to accumulate more and more power and wealth unto themselves. For what purpose? To die and let it all go, to find that they really had nothing.

Just a few days ago we saw one of the richest men in the world hounded down like a wild animal and killed. He had all that wealth and power; enough to buy this country from us. The interest derived from a few, perhaps, one of his bank accounts in Switzerland, could have paid the national budget of Trinidad and



Tobago. With this we vision, this global village of the Caribbean, that is what is being encouraged.

In Trinidad and Tobago we see it happening. We never knew in our little country that any of us could become billionaires, but there are a couple of people becoming billionaires. They are not satisfied with one, 10 or 100 million dollars; they are now aiming at the thousand millions. There are Members among the ranks of the Government who have that as their focus. I cannot condemn them; I have to forgive them for their ignorance because that is what they are expressing—ignorance.

There is a respected sociologist who expresses his point of view in one of the our daily newspapers every week. I quote quite a bit from the ‘Viewpoint’ of November 28, 1993 of the *Sunday Express*, by Dr. Selwyn Ryan. I know headline writers are inclined to exaggerate, but this is not an exaggeration. He said “World at Behest of Secret Elite.” That is how things are being managed. I suggest that Trinidad and Tobago, not the world, is at the behest of a secret, and not so secret elite, because that is part of the structure. That is how it is working, and some of the members of that elite belong to the Government, at least one that I can name. When he got up last Friday and spoke, this side drowned him out.

When that Minister kept repeating the “World Bank project financing,” “the World Bank, the World Bank,” as if he could not say anything else, something happened to me. I am now being described as “soft” by the media. They say they do not hear from this firebrand politician any more.

I am not a firebrand any more; that is for the youngsters like Hulsie. The Leader of the Opposition remains a firebrand. Quite frankly I do not understand how he does it, because we are the same age. I do not know whether his genes are different. I mean his children are the ages of my grandchildren, so that might help one to understand. I honestly do not feel like a firebrand. When that Minister from the other place, who is responsible for our planning and development got up, something must have snapped, because the temperature of my blood started to rise. It is the only thing that started to rise.

Let us see what Dr. Ryan says:

**3.25 p.m.**

“There are today few leaders who can be said to be successfully managing the affairs of state. Pollsters everywhere report that a majority of the world’s population have lost faith in political leaders and rate their performance as

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being less than effective. Everywhere the story is the same. Leaders are said to be fiddling while millions of jobs are being lost, dole queues are lengthening, crime is becoming more rampant, drug abuse is becoming endemic, fiscal crises have become a routine occurrence and corruption in business and politics the norm rather than the exception.”

I agree entirely with that observation. That is the trend. He goes on:

“In Trinidad and Tobago, the diagnosis is much the same. The people revolted against the PNM, and then, with evident disdain, sent the NAR packing. They returned the PNM to power, a party which said that it cared. Now that caring Government is presiding over a more massive down-sizing of the state than the NAR ever contemplated, all in the name of modernization, reforming labour markets, and the need to be internationally acceptable and competitive.

To many, Manning and his team are wicked, intellectually and ideologically bankrupt and short on vision.”

I am one of those “many” described by Dr. Ryan. On his own admission, he has capitulated absolutely and totally to the bosses in Washington. I do not know what he is going to get for that. Ryan goes on:

“The questions that one might legitimately ask as one looks comparatively at what is taking place is whether the quality of political leadership all over the world has in fact, suffered a massive decline; whether political emperors everywhere can no longer conceal their nakedness from the prying eyes of television or the amplified bellowing of talk show hosts; whether they can no longer insulate themselves from the corrupting influence of narco-traffickers and special interest groups; or whether it is that the world’s problems have become geometrically more complex and therefore, less tractable.

Have our leaders become less caring? Or are they really now no more than bit players on a field on which finance capital has become the ultimate empire with power to make or break any Government which refuses to abide by the rules and conditionalities?

...The charge that political elites are no more than executive committees which rule in the name of the capitalist elite is of course, not a new one. It is the stock in trade of most Marxist and left wing radicals. My own view is that the charge is more meaningful now and will become progressively more so.”

That is Dr. Ryan’s view. My own view is that I agree with that.

Further in his viewpoint he says:

“What some see as re-colonization, other see as prudence and a recognition of reality. Indeed, national elites are being told that they really have no choice but to follow the dictates of the new international technological and financial order if they want to gain access to the locker rooms where the rules and market decisions are now being made. Political sustainability and relevance depend on being on the world team, even if as members of the junior reserve bench.”

We are not even going to reach the bench as junior reserves, far less.

We will be there perhaps, tying shoe laces.

“As one contemplates the activities of our own Government, one cannot help but conclude that neither wickedness nor a lack of caring or concern informs their behaviours. They, however, seem to have bought the argument that no island is an island and that small states have no real options but to follow the rest of the world on questions pertaining to economic reconstruction.

They are clearly convinced that their zone of discretion is limited to nickle-and-dime matters, and not to major issues such as the structure of trade and finance or the ownership of the commanding heights of the economy.

Some insist that there are indeed alternatives, both in the short run and long run, and that there is room even without the tight international system for an industrial policy that is more suited to our circumstances.”

I am one of those who insist that this is so. We do not have—

**Mr. Valley:** Continue the article.

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** Does the Member want to read it? I will satisfy my Friend, Madam Speaker. Dr. Ryan says:

“One however, still awaits a clearer articulation of these options. So far, we have been long on diagnosis and short on prescriptions which take into account the new realities which govern the world—“developed” and “developing” alike.”

I hope that Dr. Ryan is in the House and if he is not, that he will get the *Hansard* of the contribution that I am making.

Before I get into the positive aspect of my contribution—I am supposed to be shadow Minister of Housing. I was once Minister of Housing. In the Budget

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Speech there is not even a paragraph, but just two short sentences, on housing. This is what it says:

“In 1994, Government will spend \$57 million on a number of land developments and housing projects. In addition, we expect to stimulate housing construction by a number of fiscal measures to be dealt with later in this presentation.”

That is the extent of it. But let us see, by reference to the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, dated November 1993, for 1994. In the first part of this document they gave the performance for 1993 at page 8 as follows:

“Housing and Settlements:

The largest component of the investment programme for Housing and Settlements is the IDB-funded Settlements and Squatter Regularization Programme for which 1993 planned expenditure amounted to \$85 million. This facilitated the substantial completion of 1,215 lots at Couva North (Phase II), Harmony Hall and Debe (Phase II). Development work was also continued on approximately 2200 lots at Bon Air West, La Paille, Union Hall and Malabar. In addition, squatter sites at Bamboo Settlement and Maturita Triangle have been upgraded. Total expenditure for 1993 is now projected at \$46.1 million.”

This delivery of land and basic infrastructure, which the PNM Government has said would not be its approach to solving housing problems, the extent of its performance for 1993 has been confined to that. In addition to that, they were not able to utilize the funds allocated. In the amount of \$85 million the Government could have utilized only \$46.1 million. It has carried forward into 1994, therefore, \$38.9 million from the 1993 allocation.

**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. Palackharrysingh]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** Let us now go to 1994, remembering that \$38.9 million was not spent in 1993, but has gone forward to 1994.

“Capital expenditure on housing and settlements also represents a significant proportion of projected Central Government investment expenditure for 1994.

The total of \$58.6 million allocated for this purpose is equivalent to 9 per cent of the investment programme”

Of this sum \$47 million will be spent on the implementation of the IDB financed Settlement and Squatter Regularization programme.”

When you take out what could not be spent in 1993 from what has been allocated in 1994 you are left with \$19.7 million. I suggest that the performance in the housing sector will be no better in 1994 than it has been in 1993.

### **3.35 p.m.**

I also suggest that if those involved in construction, contractors who own millions of dollars in heavy equipment; and smaller contractors who might not own any equipment, the carpenters, masons, electricians and plumbers, want to be activated in 1994, it is not going to be through a programme of housing, because the Government’s involvement in housing is going to be very limited, to exactly what the NAR was limited to. It is certainly not going to be as a result of the Government’s capital programme.

Again, in this article in *Newsday*, the Prime Minister said he would make provision for employment, particularly through the construction sector. He went on to say what the Government’s major programme would be. Page 1 states:

“...major programme of public works with establishment of a city centre, a library centre on Hart Street, upgrading of the Ministry of National Security on Knox Street, the Red House and Woodford Square will inject faith in the industry and encourage the private sector to build.

Simultaneously with all of this would be construction of a centre for the performing arts on the site of the Princes Building, and continuation of Government’s urban development programme.”

He further said construction of some 5,000 hotel rooms has been earmarked for Tobago.

Of course, all funded by the IADB and supported by a tremendous quantum of imports because these are all useless, wasteful projects which would not impact in any way on the suffering masses of this country. They would put the country in deeper debt; build more monstrosities, and the city that these monstrosities would be built in, would become just like any of the cities I described earlier in my contribution.

I would love to see what it costs in maintenance, on a month to month basis for the Twin Towers. And the Government wants to provide more of that kind of

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accommodation. I think that the cost of maintaining the Twin Towers would flabbergast the national community.

I do not know if I would have enough time to make my entire contribution this afternoon. I described at least one Member of the Trinidad and Tobago Government who is on his way, and whose vision is to be a billionaire. There is something going on in this country today that ceased during the last regime. It is something that invites the scrutiny of the national community.

In 1970, which was a year of tremendous social unrest and disturbance, when the Government found itself having to deal with more and more foreign agencies—1970 predated the oil boom—a very influential citizen was able to persuade the Government to establish an institution in the country for focussing the professional services dealing with construction and development at home.

I have a copy of a letter addressed to the Hon. G. Chambers, Member of Parliament, Minister of State for Finance, Planning and Development, dated August 11, 1970. It is really very interesting. It was written to the then Minister by Professor K. S. Julien, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering. It states:

“Dear Minister,

Firstly, let me express my appreciation for your obtaining Cabinet’s approval for the establishment of a national consulting engineering company. Without your initial encouragement, and your final major effort, this idea would have died and died very rapidly.

I have been able to attract five top people to this company including two from abroad, and with this type of encouragement we are actively pressing on with the paperwork in order that we may be involved in the many infrastructure projects that are about to start. In particular, letters of intent for work in water, airport development, transportation, ports and project coordination and for the various projects would be forwarded within the next few days.

One problem has arisen. I am seeking your assistance to solve it. Dr. L. Saith, who presently holds the post of Planning Engineer in the Ministry of Works, is firmly committed to the idea of a national consulting firm. If we are to be involved in the transformation plan and highway project, the services of someone like himself are essential.

On the other hand, I feel pretty certain that unless he is given an opportunity much more challenging than he now has at the Ministry of Works, he would certainly be lost to Trinidad and Tobago in the near future.

The national consulting company presents such a challenge and I am aware Dr. Saith recognizes it as such. He however, has about two years to complete with Government under the terms of his scholarship arrangement. I am requesting that you use your good offices to seek his relief or secondment to the national consulting company for this period.

The national consulting company would pay him a full salary, and in the case of a secondment, pay whatever pension contribution is needed during the period of his obligation to Government.

Dr. Saith, in addition to being a key man in our transportation vision, will be also providing tremendous assistance to the urban redevelopment programme for which the national consulting company would be offering assistance as part of its services to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. He has training in this field which is now not available to Government, but with the establishment of his firm and his availability, these skills become readily available.”

What we see here is a place being created for one called Dr. Lenny Saith. What is that place? That place is a senior position in a company that was established and Dr. Saith is now Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith, Minister of Planning and Development.

In this Parliament, on November 27, 1992, he said a few things. One of the things he said was that he was the outgoing managing director of a firm called Trintoplan Consultants Limited in which he holds 272,732 shares which is about 16.5 per cent equity in that company. Dr. Saith is a Minister, but he still holds his equity interest in Trintoplan.

**Mr. Manning:** Madam Speaker, as Prime Minister, I think I must say that on being appointed a Minister of Government, Dr. Saith disposed of his interest in Trintoplan. The arrangement with that company is that once you leave the company, your interests in the company have to be left to those who stay in it. All the senior partners in Trintoplan have shares in the company. It is the company's policy.

**3.45 p.m.**

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** Madam Speaker, this firm is one in which Sen. Dr. Saith, who is a Minister of Government, has not only a direct interest—I do not care what the Prime Minister says—but a very strong influence.

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Madam Speaker, you saw who signed that letter recommending that Dr. Saith be released from the Ministry of Works so that he could join that conglomerate in professional services in the construction and development sector of the economy. It was Prof. Julien.

Trintoplan, which is a group of engineers and project managers who got together and were given much work to do, especially through the boom years, was whittled down to a mere two engineers at the end of 1991, because they were not able to compete on a level playing field with other engineering establishments in the society and they lost the vast majority of their employees.

Suddenly, PNM comes back into office. Dr. Julien is made Chairman of the National Gas Company and we see working with Dr. Julien in key positions in the National Gas Company, a gentleman named Prakash Saith and a young lady who is even closer to the Minister, his daughter. Every contract since 1991—with the outgoing NAR—for civil or general engineering has been awarded by this PNM Government, under this caring Prime Minister, to Trintoplan, either directly or in conjunction with some other group, usually a foreign group. From two engineers at the end of 1991, they now have in excess of 40 engineers. *[Interruption]* Are you standing on a point of order?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Madam Speaker. The Member is misleading the House. The statement that every single civil engineering contract has been awarded to Trintoplan is simply not true.

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** If you say it is not true, let the Government reply and give us a list of contracts awarded and to whom.

Plipdeco is the centre of much industrial development and a gentleman named Quentrall-Thomas is the present chairman. There is a family link, in that he is married to a sister of the Minister's wife. Plipdeco gives no contract to anyone in this business but Trintoplan, and nobody can get in the door.

Do you know how it is done? It is scheme. We have a Central Tenders Board Act and in that Act there is a process by which the Government technical people pre-qualify all those who will bid, either for professional services or for contracting services. Once you are pre-qualified you are then in a position to submit your bid to the Central Tenders Board.

Today they do not use that approach. That is an equitable and reasonable approach. You pre-qualify the people on the basis of their technical competence and experience, and once they pre-qualify you cannot come afterwards and say



that is a reason for rejection. So, when they submit a tender to the Central Tenders Board, price and financial package is what is being considered. The Act, in fact, says that the Central Tenders Board must accept the lowest tender, unless there is compelling reason not to do so. They cannot now introduce as a compelling reason incompetence, incapacity or incapability because they were written off with the pre-qualifying exercise. Once that system works, everyone is treated fairly. There is a level playing field.

What is being done today is a two-envelope system. You submit your bid and your capability. There is no pre-qualification, and the people who sit in judgment and determine who should get what, if the price is double, can still get it because they justify their decision on the basis of technical ability. Invariably the wicked hand of corruption is in charge of it. One of our Ministers will be able to boast that one of these days, if the Government should stay so long, he is on his way to his first billion.

I will not touch First Citizens' Bank and their list of debtors and the way they borrowed money without security. I will not touch that but that will come down the road and I want to advise the media to investigate that and a particular shopping complex in San Fernando.

I want now to deal with the United National Congress and some of the things that we had promised in our 1991 election manifesto. I want to deal with what we promised at page 28 of the manifesto:

“Establishment of a Roads and Transport Fund

The UNC proposes to examine the feasibility of creating a Roads Fund, separate from the current budget, in which expenditure for road construction and maintenance will be financed through taxes on motor vehicles sales, fuel and lubricants, car parts and vehicle maintenance. Public transport will be subsidized from this fund. A ‘pothole squad’ with a hotline for instant response will be introduced.”

What we advocated was a fund which, in our view, should have been separate from the budget, out of the control of any Minister of Government and in the control of a number of trustees who could manage that fund in the interest of the national community, and not in the interest of winning elections.

The pothole squad is something which I tried to introduce while I was Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization. My concept was to make them very noticeable—put the squad in a colour that wherever you saw it you

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knew it was they; put the workers in overalls; let the national community while driving on a road be able to call the hotline and say. “Listen, I have just hit a pothole with my car. It is located at such and such a place”, and within 24 to 48 hours they would see a squad fixing that pothole.

**3.55 p.m.**

To me, it would have been a service that the national community would have welcomed, and in fact, I could see members of that squad being treated the way the police were treated in 1970—housewives coming out with juice and sandwiches and welcoming them wherever they went. That did not come to pass, like many of the things I was seeking to do, while I was a Minister in the NAR Government.

I want to deal with what my party, the UNC, has stated is the most important problem, the problem that requires the harnessing and mobilizing of the greatest resources for its resolution: the problem of unemployment. Let me give some factual statistics. The population of Trinidad and Tobago in 1993, according to the *Review of the Economy*, is 1,260,181. The labour force of Trinidad and Tobago is half a million. Persons employed within a half a million labour force number 400,000. Persons unemployed 100,000. We have the proportion of 4:1, of employed to unemployed. GDP at current prices for 1993 is listed at \$24.282 billion, total production of the national community.

If you do simple calculating you would see that the average dollar value of production of each employed Trinidadian, one of the 400,000 who are employed, is \$60,700 per annum, that is, each worker is contributing to the national community the value of \$60,700. There are certain areas of involvement, like petroleum, that cannot be expanded very readily, but there are other areas that could be expanded immediately—by construction, road improvement, opening up lands, retention reservoirs and so forth. Therefore, if you assume 50 per cent of the national average, for each of the 100,000 unemployed, put to productive work, you can assume that in the year he would produce TT \$30,350 of value. That would amount to a 12 per cent increase in GDP or an average of one per cent per month.

The World Bank proposals were talking about minuscule increase, and the national community is being led to believe that they must accept that kind of prescription. I am suggesting that the real wealth of this country is in its people. In that regard, I endorse at least one thing which the Minister of Finance said in his budget presentation, “All segments of the society must participate.” He said it in

the context of realizing their vision, which we do not share—but I want to agree that in order to resolve this problem of unemployment, all segments of the national community must participate.

I will tell you something: If we do not do something about this, all that we hold dear, all that we are producing, all the living standards of the rich and the upper middle class and so forth, are threatened. We do not know from day to day whether we will continue to enjoy them. We could achieve if we mobilized the national community.

Let us ask a couple questions. What would it cost to put 100,000 unemployed persons to work? If the money could be sourced, how could the national economy absorb 100,000 unemployed persons productively? There are some proposals that I want to advance, some are contained in the UNC manifesto and some are not. If you take this year's budget of \$10.5 billion estimated, depending mainly on the price of oil—

**Madam Speaker:** I should like to remind the hon. Member that he has four minutes. So that he could structure his contribution accordingly.

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. If we take that \$10.5 billion Government expenditure as the bench-mark—we know that they are not going to be able to, but we presume they should support 400,000 people working in the overall economy—can we assume that by spending an additional \$2.6 billion, that is one quarter of the budget, we could put the 100,000 unemployed to work? If we could make such an assumption, then let us answer that second question: How can we put 100,000 people to work productively?

Let me try to answer within four minutes. We are seeking to spend \$2,000 per month for each unemployed. Two hundred dollars, if we could source it would go partly to paying a wage and partly to enhancing the capability of whoever will absorb him, so that he could be absorbed productively. If we approach the private sector and seek all partners in the private sector to participate in a national programme of apprenticeship supported by a government expenditure on the basis which I have described, our people could learn as they produce.

Initially, since businessmen would not have to bear the cost of it, they would be all very willing to absorb the unemployed within their establishments and seek ways to involve them in productive work. If they are involved in productive work, the result is that we would increase the total output. We could do the same thing with the state enterprises and with the public utilities. Then we would use the principle of the National Commission for Self-Help. That Commission has been

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the best deliverer of services to the people of this country, the best mobilizer of resources. It is completely free of political involvement. Let me quote on the strategy from a document *National Commission for Self-Help*.

“The Commission is intended to serve as a facilitator and as an agency responsible for the mobilization of resources, that is, human, financial and physical (to include idle equipment) for use in self help activities throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

“...the end is borne out in the philosophy that citizens should take the responsibility for originating planning, part financing, directing and carrying out projects to enhance themselves and their community in general. ...our credo is that a free and independent people should be promoting actively the characteristics of self-reliance, concern for social and environmental needs, voluntary mutual assistance and active participation with other members of the community in ensuring that their individual and collective needs are met.”

Networking, and this is the key to the success. I know my time has expired. Madam Speaker, I have not yet expired and I ask you to give me one or two more minutes to complete this part of my contribution.

Networking means that you bring into the programme all those agencies that exist, which are capable of mobilizing both human and other resources. I contend that we could indeed, solve the unemployment problem of this country but not under the present strategy employed by the representative of the World Bank in Washington, who should be fired for failing in his adjustment programme.

**4.05 p.m.**

**The Hon. John Eckstein (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, I wish to begin my contribution by dealing first with an incident, involving Miss Lenora James, which is alleged to have occurred at the Mt. Hope Women’s Hospital on November 12, 1993. It has been widely reported in the press that on delivery, the head of the infant came into contact with the floor. I want to deal with all of the implications coming out of that incident.

I have a report from the attending nurse, addressed to the Acting, Head Nurse. The report is for onward forwarding to the Nursing Supervisor and the Nursing Administrator of that institution.

I also have a report of that incident from the Acting Head Nurse to the Nursing Supervisor, and one from the Nursing Supervisor to the Nursing Administrator of the institution. The Nursing Administrator’s report came to the

Ministry of Health on Monday November 15, the very date on which she became aware of the incident. As was widely reported in the press, Miss James did not indicate to anyone what had transpired while she was a patient. The Administrator, becoming aware of it on Monday 15, interviewed the attending nurse and the other nurses and submitted a report to the Chief Nursing Officer of the Ministry of Health.

On November 18, the Medical Chief of Staff submitted a report on that incident to Principal Medical Officer in charge of Institutions. In summary, therefore, the Nursing Administrator at the institution submitted a report to the Chief Nursing Officer in the Ministry of Health; and the Head of the Medical Staff submitted a report to the Principal Medical Officer (Institutions) at the Ministry of Health.

Both the Chief Nursing Officer in the Ministry of Health and the Principal Medical Officer of Institutions submitted reports to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health. The Permanent Secretary, having received and considered these reports, appointed an investigating officer and advised the attending nurse accordingly. I have here the letter from the Permanent Secretary to the attending nurse, advising her that an investigating officer had been appointed to look into the matter. The investigator was then advised by letter dated November 19, that he had been appointed to look into the matter. In one paragraph of the letter it states.

“Your report, together with statements from witnesses, should be submitted to this office in duplicate within 21 days from the date of receipt of this letter.

The Permanent Secretary then informed the Director of Personnel Administration as to the course of action that had been taken in respect of this incident.

Finally, I got a letter from the Permanent Secretary, dated November 19, 1993, indicating to me, as Minister, what action had been taken in this matter. Why was all this done Madam Speaker?

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, by which the Ministry of Health is guided, at section 120, says as follows:

- “120 (1) There shall be a Public Service Commission for Trinidad and Tobago
- (2) The Members of the Public Service Commission shall be appointed by the President, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.”

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In section 121:

“121(1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the power to appoint persons to hold or act in offices to which this section applies, including power to make appointments on promotion and transfer and to confirm appointments,”

and importantly here—

“and to remove and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in such offices shall vest in the Public Service Commission.”

The regulations of the Service Commission anticipate that problems of discipline will arise, and those regulations set out clearly the procedure that must be followed in a matter dealing with the disciplining of a public servant. So regardless of what we might want to do we are bound to follow the laws and the regulations approved by this Parliament. Regulation 84 says:

“An officer who is alleged to be guilty of misconduct of who is alleged to be guilty of indiscipline by failing to comply with any regulation, order or direction for the time being in force in the ministry or department to which he is assigned is liable to disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the procedure prescribed in these regulations.”

That is what the regulation says.

**4.15 p.m.**

And Regulation 85 (1) of the Public Service Commission Regulations says:

“Where an officer is alleged to be guilty of misconduct or indiscipline, the Permanent Secretary or Head of Department shall forthwith report the matter to the Director...”

that is, of the Commission,—

“for the information of the Commission...”

That is why I said earlier the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry had an obligation under the regulations to report the matter to the Public Service Commission.

Regulation 90 (1) says:

“Where a report or allegation of indiscipline or misconduct is received from which it appears that an officer may have committed an offence, the Permanent Secretary or Head of Department, shall in addition to making a

report as required by regulation 85, concurrently warn the officer in writing of the allegation and shall forthwith refer the matter to an investigating officer appointed by him.”

That is what I indicated the Permanent Secretary has done—acted in accordance with the law of this land.

Regulation 90 (2) says:

“The investigating officer shall be appointed from the Ministry to which the officer is assigned and shall hold an office in a grade higher than that of the officer against whom the allegation has been made.”

Unless we decide to set these regulations aside and become a government of—I do not know what—we have to follow these laws.

Regulation 90 (5) says:

“The investigating officer shall, with all possible despatch, but not later than twenty-one days...”

You remember the letter from the Permanent Secretary to the investigating officer charged the officer to report “within 21 days?” He did not arbitrarily pull that number out of the sky; it is in the Regulations—90 (5).

“from the date of his appointment, forward to the Commission, for the information of the Commission, the original statements and all relevant documents, together with his own report on the particular act.”

Finally Regulation 90 (6) says:

“The Commission, after considering the report of the investigating officer and any explanation given shall decide whether the officer shall be charged with an offence and if the Commission decides that the officer should be so charged, the Commission shall, as soon as possible, cause the officer to be informed in writing of the charge...”

That is, following the investigating officer’s report, if the Commission deems that a case has been made out by the investigating officer, then the officer will be charged.

Regulation 95 (1) says:

“Where the Commission under regulation 90(6) charges an officer with an alleged act of indiscipline or misconduct and the provisions of Regulation 93 apply, the Commission may appoint a disciplinary tribunal...”

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to look into the matter.

These are the regulations and the Government is bound by them. An investigating officer must look into the matter and it is for the Commission to deem that a *prima facie* case has been made out. The Constitution has created the Commission and charged it with the responsibility for disciplining public servants.

**Mr. Sudama:** How long have they known this?

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Regulation 98(1)—and this is critical again:

“The following procedure shall apply to the hearing by a disciplinary tribunal of a charge of alleged misconduct or indiscipline:

- (a) The officer shall be summoned to appear at the hearing and shall be given full opportunity to defend himself.”

Not on a TV or radio programme—but before a tribunal. And regulation 101 (1) says:

“The standard of proof in any proceedings under this Chapter shall be that required in a court of law in criminal cases.”

This is the situation, and this is what Members opposite are prepared to call a “cover up.” I am not sure what they are suggesting.

**Mr. Sudama:** How long have they known this? What is the point of making these statements?

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** You see, I think the amount of misinformation—and I do not like to use uncharitable language, but the amount of “ignorance” you hear—and I apologize for using the word—it has to be that people do not understand the laws under which we operate.

Regulation 102 (1) says:

“The disciplinary tribunal shall make a report to the Commission, and the report shall contain its findings of fact and an expression of its opinion as to the meaning and value of the facts found, together with the record of the proceedings required...”

Again, Regulation 102 (2), says:

“The disciplinary tribunal shall not disclose the contents of the report made under subregulation (1) to the officer charged, or to any officer not authorized to receive such report;



(3) an officer who contravenes this regulation is guilty of misconduct.”

Then the Commission will consider the report of the tribunal and may either exonerate the officer or impose a penalty specified in the law, and the law sets out the various penalties.

Those are the laws and regulations relating to the disciplining of public servants and the laws by which the Government must be guided in the conduct of its affairs.

Having dealt with this matter as extensively as I could, what can we discover from this system that we presently operate? I have come to this Parliament on several occasions and I say that the problem is systemic and can only be addressed by a fundamental change of the system that we operate.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Agreed! We agree. What is stopping you?

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** It is a system that gives the authorities absolutely no authority to discipline public officers for whose work they bear responsibility. That is the reality. If you recall the series of reports, the Nursing Administrator—all she does is to submit a report to the Nursing Officer in the Ministry of Health; the Medical Chief of Staff submits a report to the Principal Medical Officer of Institutions and that finishes the role of the administration in the hospitals. They have no role beyond that—merely to report what has transpired. And what does the ministry do? It has no function, other than to act as a post office. It collects the reports and sends them on to the Director of Personnel Administration for the attention of the Commission—

**Mr. B. Panday:** So the Minister is the Postmaster General!

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** —for the Commission to do as they see fit. They appoint a tribunal; therefore, the people who have the responsibility for managing the service have no authority—and I have made this point over and over.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Do something about it!

**Mr. Humphrey:** They are playing for time.

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Madam Speaker, what about the Minister of Health? I have not mentioned the Minister of Health so far in the whole thing. Where does the Minister of Health come in?

**Mr. B. Panday:** He is the Postmaster General.

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** The role of the Minister of Health in the present system is to be called upon to resign for the faults of others. That is basically what it is—there is no other role.

**Mr. Sudama:** Why not do your duty?

**4.25 p.m.**

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** The Minister, far from having any role—

Regulation 75 of the Public Service Commission Regulations says:

“An officer shall not solicit the intervention or influence of members of Parliament . . .”

Which is what I am.

“Ministers, members of the Commission, or prominent members of the community to support or advance his individual claims in the Service.”

So the affected public servant cannot even come to me as Minister.

Furthermore, section 126(1) of the Constitution precludes a Member of the House of Representatives from being appointed to the Public Service Commission for up to three years following his departure from this House.

Given my maturity, unless I propose to become a member of some interlocking directorate of senility, I cannot now, nor in the future, influence the disciplining of a public servant. Yet, one hears people who ought to know better, calling on the Minister to do something. Do what? Under what regulations? Under what law?

I can remember once in 1986, when I was a Minister of Government, there was an incident at the Port of Spain Hospital and I spoke to a public servant. I said, “Look, we are doing a number of things. Why do you not tell the press about what we are doing? The officer said, “I am not permitted under the regulations to speak to the press.” I said, “I am telling you to speak to the press.” The officer said, “If the Public Service Commission calls me to account for speaking to the press, it would not be a sufficient defence for me to say that the Minister directed me, because you would have to tell under what regulation you are directing me.” The matter ended there.

What the Minister is being asked to do, if I am to interpret what I have been hearing through the media, is to publicly castigate and condemn a public servant

against whom much has been alleged, but nothing has been proved. No evidence has been led; nothing has been done. Or, probably make statements which will prejudice—and I have not made any statement hereto prejudice any inquiry that is being done, either by the investigating officer, or to be done if the Commission sees it fit to set up a tribunal to look into the matter. I am afraid that these are invitations, which, as a responsible Minister, I must decline.

What I have done instead, and what the Government has done, is put proposals before this Parliament, which will represent a fundamental reordering of the system that we now have, and which will address for Miss Lenora James and the many thousands of people in this country, the problems that they have within the present system.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.06 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Madam Speaker, I will, for this part of my contribution, discuss the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. The idea of the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex was conceived in the late 1970s in the heart and mind of Dr. Eric Williams. It was born of a wish to provide not just the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but also the people of the Caribbean with a centre of medical excellence. At that time many of our institutions housing our medical facilities were in need of repair and, in addition, many of our neighbouring islands were finding it more and more difficult to facilitate the provision of modern medicine. And so the vision of a hospital for the Caribbean took shape.

In 1970 the foundation stone was laid and in September 1986, the contractors handed over the completed facility to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The complex opened its doors to the general public on January 1, 1990, and thereafter begun the very difficult task of bringing the whole range of services on stream. Let me give the House an idea of what I am talking about, for I am not aware that many Members have full knowledge of the extent of these facilities.

The hospital complex consists of an adult hospital with 334 beds, a children's hospital with 210 beds, a dental hospital and an animal hospital. The adult and children's hospitals comprise a continuous four-storey building which houses the in-patient areas, that is the wards, an ambulatory area housing the out-patient departments, a surgery suite, a same-day surgery suite, a diagnostic department, two accident and emergency departments and other facilities.

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With respect to the adult and children's hospitals, they have their own dedicated accident and emergency departments with operating room, x-ray and laboratory departments. There are 20 observation ward beds in the accident and emergency department; 12 in the adult area and eight in the children's hospital. There is also a surgical suite serving the adult and children's hospitals, comprising 10 theatres as follows:

- 2 dedicated to Endoscopy procedures;
- 1 dedicated to cardiac work—recently commissioned;
- 1 for Orthopaedic/Neurosurgery work;
- 6 General theatres.

The ambulatory areas of the hospital comprise 10 out-patient modules. There are, in addition, a same-day surgery unit comprising two operating theatres and a 12-bed patient recovery area; a hyperbaric unit complete with hyperbaric chamber designed for the treatment of anaerobic infections and other conditions. The diagnostic areas are housed alongside the ambulatory facilities and they consist of the department of radiological sciences which provide a full range of diagnostic imaging modalities, including conventional X-ray, cat-scan, ultrasound, and nuclear medicine.

There is a diagnostic laboratory equipped to perform high-speed, large volume investigations in the fields of microbiology, haematology, clinical chemistry, histopathology and immunology.

There are facilities and equipment to perform a range of physiological testing such as cardiac function testing, respiratory function testing and neuro-muscular function testing, among others. The hospitals are served by central and satellite pharmacies and by departments of rehabilitation, social services, nutrition and dietetics, kitchen and laundry.

The medical schools—and I am not going to say very much about these because they do not fall within my area of responsibility—comprise the schools of medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine. The medical school can accommodate an annual intake of 65 students, dental school, 25, and the veterinary school, 20. There are also facilities for advanced nursing education and for pharmacy. All of the schools share common facilities which include:

- 4 amphitheatres,

12 seminar rooms,  
4 multi-use laboratories,  
1 anatomy laboratory,  
a centre for medical education, including an audio-visual centre, and  
a library with space for 120,000 volumes.

To complete the description of the complex, there are engineering facilities housing the central plant, providing air-conditioning, steam, water, sewerage, electrical, vacuum and medical gas services. And finally there is an administration building housing the departments of finance, human resource, computers, corporate management, the University of the West Indies Faculty of Medical Sciences administrative offices, and residential accommodation comprising a total of 112 apartments housing medical students and staff of the University of the West Indies and the Authority.

All of the facilities mentioned are housed in 70 buildings spread over 100 acres of landscaped property at Champs Fleurs. According to the December 31, 1991 financial statements of the Authority, the depreciated book value of the fixed assets of the Authority was \$557 million consisting of buildings, \$378 million; plant and machinery, \$8 million; medical equipment, \$146 million; computer equipment software, \$16 million; office appliances and equipment, \$834,000; furniture and fixtures, \$8 million; motor vehicles and transport equipment, \$445,000.

In addition, the land on which the complex facilities, inclusive of the Mount Hope Maternity Hospital, are situated has been valued at \$32 million.

Before the tea break I was speaking about the Mount Hope Women's Hospital, which is not administered by the Authority but by the Ministry of Health, and the regulations that I spelt out then—the Public Service Regulations—do not apply to the Complex Authority. It has its own legislation. Getting these facilities on an operational footing was the task faced by my administration on assuming office in late December, 1991.

### **5.15 p.m.**

Notwithstanding the fact that the complex had thrown open its doors to the public two years previously, as I said January 1, 1990, very little had been accomplished. This is not meant to be and should not be construed as an attack on the former administration, or on the board appointed by that administration to

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manage the affairs of the complex; for there were then, and there continue to be now, very powerful forces arraigned against any development of the complex. I do not wish either to identify these forces or to deal with them, neither at this time nor any other time.

The first and most immediate problem then was securing the finances to ensure the continued operation of the complex. Let me give the House some idea of the costs involved in operating the complex. The authority estimates that it will cost about \$3 million per annum to undertake necessary capital work. This involves construction and refurbishment designed to prolong the useful life of the existing capital stock as well as some physical assets acquisition, for example, instruments. That is one category of expenditure.

Then there are capital maintenance costs. There are the expenses associated with keeping the whole range of assets that I have described in a good state of repair and so prolong their useful life. They also include the expenses associated with procuring operational supplies for treatment of the water system, the provision of diesel and natural gas for operating the generator equipment and the cost of utilities—electricity, water and so forth.

These expenses are considered to be fixed, regardless of the extent of operations of the complex. They are estimated by the authority to be in the vicinity of \$27.62 million per year, and broken down as follows:

Plant and machinery maintenance	\$3.62 million
Biomedical equipment	\$3.07 "
Computer equipment	\$2.0 "
Buildings and grounds	\$2.3 "
Internal cleaning	\$2.6 "
Security	\$1.9 "

Utilities—and my colleague on my right, his Ministry takes a very large slice—electricity, \$4.5 million per annum, rising to \$6 million in 1994; Water and Sewerage Authority, \$450,000; communications, TSTT, \$0.5 million, and so forth. Then, some of the services have to be contracted out—the maintenance services—which the complex does not have the capacity to deal with in-house. This costs approximately \$11.95 million; giving an annual total maintenance cost on average of about \$27 million.

Administration costs: These are the expenses incurred in connection with the overall management of the complex. More specifically, they are the costs related to the administrative departments of finance, materials management, information systems, human resource and general management. Approximately \$6.3 million annually is required for administrative costs.

Direct operating costs: These are the expenses of operating the revenue generating departments. Without these expenses there can be no services provided at the complex. The employment expenses in this area now average \$1.4 million per month or \$16.8 million annually, and material expenses \$4.8 million annually, giving a total of \$21.6 million, annually. It must be said that unlike the capital maintenance costs that are fixed regardless of the level of output, these are variable and will depend upon the service levels offered at the complex.

In summary, therefore, the minimum operating costs of the complex on an annual basis are as follows:

	Million \$
Capital	3
Maintenance	27
Administration	6
Operating (revenue expenses)	21

To continue in operation, therefore, it is necessary for the complex to obtain on an annual basis revenues sufficient to meet these costs. The sources of revenue identified for the complex were: Government subvention, private patient revenue, non-patient revenue and reimbursement for services to the Government.

Let me deal with these revenue sources; firstly, Government subvention. This revenue source is a function of the state through the national Treasury and, of course, Government policy. With respect to the former, everyone is aware that the financial circumstances are especially difficult and, of course, the subventions would decline as the national situation declines. In any event, Government's policy is that the complex should seek to reduce its reliance, as far as possible, on the Treasury.

With respect to the private patient revenue, another source of funding, in January, 1992, the situation was rather bleak and, really, not very encouraging. In 1990, the complex had earned \$578,000; in 1992 it earned \$2 million. It was necessary to increase that figure substantially if the complex is to stand any change of survival.

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The authority also earns revenue from the rental of its facilities, apartments, conference facilities and so forth—and it is estimated that this can bring in a revenue of \$3 million per annum. Finally, reimbursement for services which it provides, and it estimates it can earn approximately \$10 million.

The situation which faced the complex in 1992 was a very precarious financial one, where, on the one hand, inescapable and quite considerable expenses could be identified, but there were no real corresponding assured revenue streams of comparable size to match these expenses. Strategies had to be worked out to ensure the complex's survival.

Firstly, the situation had to be brought to the Government's attention, and my colleagues, were fully apprised, through several Cabinet Notes, of the need, notwithstanding the very difficult financial situation obtaining, to maintain the subventions at as high a level as possible. I wish to thank, very sincerely, the Minister of Finance as well as my other colleagues for their unstinting support of my efforts on behalf of the complex. Without their full support, it would not have been possible to survive these past two years.

Secondly, a very comprehensive marketing strategy had to be devised, designed to sell the complex's services. The strategy had two aspects—a resource strategy and a customer attraction strategy. The resource strategy was concerned with identifying and developing opportunities for individuals, corporations and the Government, where appropriate, to transfer resources to the hospitals of the complex and attracting and retaining the professional and other staff necessary to provide the service. The customer attraction strategy was concerned with identifying market opportunities and customer needs and systematically developing plans and programmes to exploit these opportunities.

Another strategy was that we had to manage the service delivery in a manner which emphasized professionalism, excellence and customer orientation. Yet another strategy was to expand the range of services offered by the complex, and there has been, since 1992, a concentrated and systematic expansion in the range of services. The final strategy was, and it had really become necessary, to cut expenditure to the bone.

**5.25 p.m.**

All staff that were not necessary to the direct provision of health care had to be reviewed. In some cases, regrettable as it was, some had to be discontinued, always, however, in accordance with the provisions of the existing Industrial Relations Act. A strategy was developed linking remuneration more closely to performance with a view to developing a commonality of interest between the medical personnel and the complex itself.



The complex has survived these past two years and as I indicated earlier, it has expanded considerably the range of services it offered.

Let me provide some range of details of the clinical services now offered at the complex.

The complex has published this information which I now share with this House. On any day now there clinics in orthopaedics; cardiology; general surgery; general medicine; child development; general dentistry; women's walk-in clinic dealing with pap smears and breast examinations; general practice, recently introduced; executive medicals; vet; periodontics; ophthalmology; nephrology; haematology; paediatrics nephrology; well baby clinics, asthma, paediatric cardiology.

If one goes back to January 1992, there was very little that was offered then. So there has been a considerable expansion in the range of services now available at the complex. Not only does the complex provide an expanded range of services, but it also provides these today, to thousands of Trinidadians and Tobagonians where just a few months ago the numbers accessing the complex's health services were very small.

Let me give an idea.

<u>Clinic Visits</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>
Paediatrics	413	4,231
Adult	1,729	7,765
Dental	7,556	16,505
Veterinary	434	1,184
Radiology	19,715	26,960
Laboratory investigations	68,909	87,786

One of the things the Ministry of Health is giving very serious consideration to is centralizing all laboratory services at the complex. The facilities there are massive and it would probably save us a considerable amount of money if we could rationalize and centralize all our laboratory services at the complex.

**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.*

**Mr. Robinson:** Madam Speaker, that is an excellent report, but can the hon. Minister give us figures for the entire medical service so that we would know it is not just people who were going to San Fernando or Port of Spain who are now going to Mt. Hope? We would like to know if it is an increasing number of persons who are accessing medical facilities. If those figures can be given in addition, we would be in a better position to assess.

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Madam Speaker, the question has merit. I do not have that information at my disposal. I am unable, in the circumstances, to give that information.

I can assure you in dentistry there is very little happening at any of the established public health institutions. That is one area where the public service delivery of health care is almost brand new. Pap Smear Examinations:

I wish the ladies would all take this test.

This is a test that we cannot emphasize too strongly that they need to have because it is one of the means by which you can detect cancer in women at an early stage.

<u>Clinic Visits</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>
Pap smear	2,023	3,088
Cardiac procedures	1,552	3,569
Executive medicals	2	678

This last statistic means that a vast majority of our executives are not now going abroad but are having their executive medicals done at the complex. An examination of the charts provided by the complex shows that between 70 and 100 executives access this service monthly.

**Mr. Maharaj:** You sent the President of the Senate overseas.

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** The President did not come for an executive medical.

Now clinics — Surgery, 1992 — 763; 1993 — 1,400.

These statistics relate to individuals accessing the services at the complex. The complex deals not only with individuals; it has aggressively sought corporate Trinidad and Tobago in an effort to provide services to the statutory authorities, and companies.

I will give you a few of the companies that have agreed to use the services of the complex: Airport Authority, ALCOA Steamship Company Inc., America Life & General Insurance Co. Ltd., Amalgamated Security Services Ltd, AMOCO Trinidad Oil Co., Asa Wright Nature Centre, Bank of Commerce, Berger Paints, British American Insurance, BWIA, Cannings, Caribbean Development Company Ltd., Caribbean Food Corporation, Caribbean Home Insurance.

Others are Carib Glassworks, Caroni (1975) Ltd, CAREC, CONSOL, Development Finance Ltd, First Citizens Bank, Gordon Grant Shipping, HI-LO, Indian High Commission, Industrial Court of T&T, Institute of Marine Affairs, Johnson & Johnson Trinidad Ltd, Ministry of National Security, (I do not know if they pay), National Flour Mills, National Gas Company, National Insurance Board, National Petroleum; Nationwide Insurance, Neal and Massy Holdings Ltd., Nestlé; Niherst and Nucor, OWTU, Plipdeco, Port Authority.

Included also are Reinsurance Co. of T&T Ltd., Republic Bank of T&T, Royal Bank of T&T, Scotia Bank Securicor, Shipping Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago, T&T Pensioners Association, TATIL, THA, Trinidad Co-operative Bank, Trinidad Cement Limited, Trintoc, TSTT, TTT, TTUTA, T&T Bureau of Standards, T&T Carpet Installation and Cleaning Ltd, T&T Defence Force, T&T Methanol Company Ltd, National Petroleum Marketing Company Ltd.

In the meantime, notwithstanding this explosion in the service levels at the complex, what exactly has happened to employment levels and expenses? As I indicated to you, expenses had to be cut to the bone. In 1992 the complex spent \$46.41 million and in 1993, it has spent so far, \$37.22 million.

### **5.35 p.m.**

The number of employees was reduced from 712 in January 1992, to 590 in November 1993. However, no member of staff necessary to the delivery of health care, such as doctors and nurses, was retrenched; in fact, members of this category of staff expanded. What has happened is that the Government expected to transfer services out of some of our traditional institutions into the complex and the complex had geared up to facilitate that transfer. That transfer did not materialize for reasons I will not go into. Therefore, the complex was overstaffed in terms of its administration. It was geared for a bigger throughput. There are powerful forces arraigned against the operations of the complex, but I am not dealing with them at all.

The transfer did not materialize and as a consequence, the top heavy burden of administration had to be dealt with. Once the service levels increased, we would

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certainly make every effort to bring back those people, provided they are interested in coming back to the complex.

The increased service levels and the reduction in expenditure have helped the financial picture considerably. Now more and more of our citizens are paying directly to the complex for the services that it supplies. What has happened to the collection of patient revenue?

You would recall I indicated that in all of 1991 the complex collected \$570,000; in 1992 it was \$2 million. In March, 1993 the complex collected in excess of \$1 million—in one month, for the first time in its history; \$1.5 million in private patient revenue. Trinidadians and Tobagonians were happy with the service being provided and were prepared to pay. In April, 1993 it dropped to \$.98 million and every month thereafter—May, June, July, August, September, October and November—collections have exceeded \$1 million. In November, 1993, the complex attained its highest level of private patient revenue of \$1.7 million.

What of the quality of the service? I have a number of unsolicited testimonials from people who have accessed these services. I would just give you some idea of some of these. We have a letter from the human resources manager of the National Flour Mills. It states:

“Our management team recently completed executive medical profiles at your institution from April to May 1993. The feedback which I have received from our team, and which I can endorse from my own personal experience, indicated the service to be marked by a high degree of professionalism and courtesy.

On behalf of the management of the National Flour Mills Limited, I would like to commend the staff of the complex and express our wish for a continued cordial relationship between our organizations.”

Another one came from the corporate manager, human resources of the National Commercial Bank. The letter states:

“I had the pleasure this week of attending your institution and was impressed by the pleasant and efficient manner in which I was attended. I do not have much experience as a hospital patient, but those experiences that I do recall are not pleasant memories, when I remember the service I received.

To be able to arrange an appointment in advance for a specific date and time; to have someone call just prior to the date to remind me; to go through the

admission area on the said date within ten minutes; to have an attendant walk me to the executive medical area to meet and chat with two lovely nurses, who set my mind at ease; to be exposed to state of the art equipment; to be treated as a person; these are some of my memories, during my short stay at your facility.

This kind of service will no doubt go a long way towards changing the public's perception of service at a hospital.

One small detraction though, relates to the need for the external ground to be better maintained. I saw grass weeds over one foot high in some areas."

Finally, I would read a letter from one Caroline Skillings who is not a member of any organization. It reads as follows:

"The month of February 1993—

**Mr. J. Humphrey** rose—

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Madam Speaker, I do not understand why good news disturbs Members opposite.

**Mr. Humphrey:** Would the hon. Minister indicate to this House whether the World Bank or the IADB has any input in the management structure of the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex?

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** The answer is no.

**Mr. Humphrey:** We can do it.

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Let me read the letter. It states:

"The month of February 1993 was the most devastating time in my life and in the life of the entire Skillings family. While my mother Merilyn Skillings, and I were vacationing in Trinidad, she suffered an acute myocardial infarction and was admitted to the coronary care unit at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. This occurred on February 23, 1993. Unfortunately, she was gravely ill with multiple complications and expired on February 24, 1993.

My mother's illness, hospitalization, subsequent death and the days that followed were the most difficult time of my life. Being in a foreign country; trying to arrange for an autopsy, death certificate, selecting a funeral parlour and making flight arrangements to New York for my mother and my family

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during Carnival was quite stressful and truly a challenge. The support of your staff made a difficult time much more manageable.

The coronary care unit health care team was responsible for the management of my mother's complex health care problems. The nursing and medical personnel rendered efficient and effective patient care in adherence to professional standards. Meeting with Dr. Henry and Dr. Primus upon my mother's admission gave me a sense that she was in competent hands. The nursing staff...and other nurses reinforced this belief.

During mother's hospital stay and subsequent death, she and my family were treated with respect and dignity. Your staff aided, assisted and met our need by fostering dialogue and exchanging information in a professional, yet compassionate, manner.

Ms. Denise Gonzalves, nurse manager, is an excellent role model for the coronary care unit staff. Her clinical and managerial expertise demonstrates competence in nursing practice and problem solving. She utilizes effective communication and interpersonal strategies for information sharing, problem identification and resolution...

I am a practising registered professional nurse with 14 years of ICU experience. I have a Master's Degree of Nursing Science, and am currently employed by one of the leading health care facilities in the United States. We could learn quite a lot from the EWMSC in basic virtues, love, honour and compassion.

Thank you all for your support.

Carilyn Skillings."

**Mr. Jurai:** Would the Minister give way? Would he indicate how soon we can expect to have similar letters of commendation about the Sangre Grande Hospital?

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Excellent question, Madam Speaker! I would answer him before the end of my contribution. I trust he would wait for the answer.

The Prime Minister of Barbados who spent a few days at the complex told me personally that he received excellent treatment and he felt proud as a West Indian to know that there was such an institution in the Caribbean, which he felt belonged to the entire Caribbean making the vision of Williams alive and finding expression in the mouth of a present-day Caribbean leader.

I spoke to two Opposition Senators, Sen. Muntaz Hosein and Sen. Carol Merritt. I speak from memory. Sen. Muntaz Hosein told me that he got the impression that they were falling over one another trying to satisfy him and make him feel good about the complex. Sen. Merritt also expressed very fine words about the service she got there at the intensive care unit.

**5.45 p.m.**

My very, very dear colleague and friend, whom I am deliriously and ecstatically happy to see back with us, has told me of the remarkable financial sacrifices being made by the nurses at the complex. You may not know, but they are all working a 32-hour week in the interest of the complex's survival. One of them told him that the complex is the institution of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and she wished to work nowhere else. He himself has told me that anyone who thinks of closing down the institution should have his head examined.

Given the unsolicited testimonials I have read, all reflecting favourably on the quality of the service provided at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, I wish to take, with the greatest respect, strong objection to the view expressed in the 'Opinion' column of the *Sunday Express* of December 5, 1993, wherein it is stated that a change in the system such as the Government is advocating will not bring an end to the callousness so often meted out to members of the public seeking attention at the nation's public hospitals.

Surely an awareness and appreciation of what is taking place at the complex where the change that has been recommended has already taken place, must lead to an entirely different conclusion. The fact is—to answer the Member for Nariva—when we bring the other institutions to the state that the complex is at, where the managers would have the authority to manage, only then would we be able to deal with the problems at Sangre Grande and all the other institutions.

What surprises me at the Express position is that I have heard a senior manager on the radio speaking in glowing terms of the treatment he received at the complex. So I find that the sentiments expressed in the *Sunday Express* 'Opinion' a little difficult to understand.

What of the future for the complex? My earnest hope is that it will grow from strength to strength and achieve the dreams of its founder, Dr. Eric Williams, of being an institution of excellence, not only to Trinidad and Tobago, but the entire Caribbean. This facility needs the support of all—individuals, corporations and authorities. It needs the support of this Parliament and this Government. It represents the future delivery of health care in Trinidad and Tobago, one marked

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by professionalism, excellence and customer-orientation; one in which the managers have the authority to manage the operational aspects of the service for which they have responsibility in accordance, of course, with policy directions laid down by the Minister of Health.

This is the transformation that this Parliament must make. This is the challenge that history has given to this Parliament and to which we must rise. Madam Speaker, I am confident that history will record that your Parliament made the difference in the delivery of health care in Trinidad and Tobago. When we adopt the legislation which is before this Parliament, Leonora James and every other citizen of this country, will, have the opportunity for quality health care.

I thank you.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite would not be speaking. There was an agreement but for some reason the Prime Minister does not want any Opposition Member responding to him, and we disagree. The Opposition has requested that if the Prime Minister speaks in this debate, it must respond. The Prime Minister, through his Leader of Government Business does not want anyone to respond. So, we would go on the Floor and see what happens.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, this is the type of misinformation and misrepresentation that is really upsetting.

**Mr. Robinson:** Madam Speaker, I regret, but we on this end of the House are not hearing.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, as you know every day we arrange the speaking order for the following day. When we left here on Friday we agreed on a speaking order. Today, we attempted to arrange the speaking order for tomorrow and there has been no agreement. As a fact, the speaking order for today was arranged since last Friday and that was handed to you. This is the type of misrepresentation and this is what makes my job as Leader of this House extremely difficult, when I have to deal with an individual like that.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, it was arranged on the basis that we have equity and that there would be a response every day after a certain amount of time, but this is another attempt by the Government to shield the Prime Minister from the Opposition's response in Parliament. I have never seen a Prime Minister who does not want anyone to respond.

**Hon. Member:** Close the debate! Close it!



**Madam Speaker:** Order! Hon. Members, I have called on the Member for Tabaquite because this is what has been given. I do not know if there has been a change. *[Interruption]* Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Valley:** I want to know if there is an arrangement and the Member for Tabaquite does not speak now, can be speak afterwards?

**Madam Speaker:** I have not got the attention of anybody else. The Member for Laventille West is going to speak at this time.

**Mr. Valley:** I will take you to the hilt on that. *[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, you can take each other to the hilt outside this House. We have been proceeding in a very dignified manner in this debate, let us continue. If you want to conduct yourself otherwise, please do it outside.

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall):** Madam Speaker, I am indeed very pleased to intervene, even though briefly, in this very important national debate on the Appropriation Bill, 1994. During my absence a great deal has been said about the agencies under my control and I certainly would have been uncomfortable if I did not have the opportunity to respond to some of these matters and, generally, to put the issue of the utilities from our perspective on the parliamentary and, indeed, on the national agenda once and for all.

It is my intention to talk briefly about a few of the general fiscal measures outlined in the budget and, quite importantly, seek to position those measures in the context of the serious economic difficulties facing us here in Trinidad and Tobago, and certainly facing developed and developing countries.

**5.55 p.m.**

I will also outline the general focus of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the work that the ministry and its agencies has been doing, particularly over the last year. Additionally, I will attempt to explain to you, and indeed, to hon. Members, and the national community, where we are trying to take the utilities. In the process, I will address the possible divestment of the utilities and respond to concerns related to this very sensitive matter.

The world is going through a most difficult economic period. It is in my view the most difficult period for a long time. Most of us quietly agree with this view; many of us accept it; we acknowledge it; but however, not many of us in a real sense internalize the implications of the situation, not only for ourselves, but indeed for our respective citizens.

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My colleague the hon. Minister of Finance in his presentation referred to this development. I think it is on page 6 of the 1994 Budget Speech. I just want to draw you back there for a short while. He states:

“These changes are taking place against the backdrop of the world economy which seems to be limping along. Growth of the world economy seems to have stalled at around 2 per cent for the fourth year in succession and indications of a resumption of stronger growth in 1994 are at best very tentative. In the major industrialized countries, economic performance has been even slower at 1 per cent and has tended to fuel protectionist sentiments in these countries in response to rising unemployment levels and increasing pressures on living standards and social conditions.”

That was what the hon. Minister had to say, looking very briefly at the situation on the international front.

It is certainly a most traumatic experience for most of our global citizens and there is no escaping this trauma, whether we are citizens of Japan, Britain, Germany, United States, Canada or one of our sister islands in our Caribbean region.

I was speaking recently with a young professional about the difficult economic situation, and she was expressing her position that she was very seriously considering leaving the country because of the difficulties she was experiencing. I said to her, “Okay, leave the country and go where?” I know that if I ask my Friend and colleague the Member for Couva North he would most certainly suggest that my friend could go to Singapore. However, let me remind him that in Singapore, Lee Kuan Yue locked up opposition leaders. *[Interruption]* And let me remind him even further, that they do not put them in prison for five days. *[Interruption]*.

I am really seeking to make the point quite seriously, that it is important for us, especially in this small enclave here in Trinidad and Tobago, to understand that it is a very difficult period for all of us. Part of the problem—I made the point before of Third World and regional leaders—is that we keep ignoring that, we keep being caught up in our own little environment, completely oblivious to what is taking place right around us and the implications of those problems.

I am talking now about the region, that we will find that we will go nowhere and go nowhere fast, if we fail to get out of that sort of situation. *[Interruption]* It does not matter whether five years ago I did not know that. One of the important things about intelligence is that, if at one time you did not appreciate a particular

point, and you are able to accept that and to learn and develop as you move along, to me, that is what differentiates those persons to whom I want to ascribe intelligence as opposed to those who are—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Robinson:** Could the hon. Member give way to a question? Is he aware that the developing countries as a whole had been growing at a rapid rate and are forecast to grow at a rapid rate, from 5 per cent this year to 6 per cent next year, and that 80 per cent of the population in developing countries are benefiting from this growth, as against industrialized countries where they are in recession? Is he aware of this?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Madam Speaker, I would really wish to see the data establishing what the hon. Member is in fact saying. From the information coming through to me there are still problems in most developing countries. In fact, I was reading from the *South China Morning Post* this morning. We are talking about the last bastion of communism as we understand it. Let me read briefly what they said:

“China is to launch a new wave of reform by taking bolder steps towards building a socialist market economy, the Communist Party mouthpiece *People’s Daily* has reported.

Declaring “the fundamental way out for China lies in deepening the reform [process]”, the leading newspaper said intensifying reform was the only way to seek a “sustained, speedy and healthy” development of the economy.”

There are difficulties all over the place. Countries are confronting these difficulties in various forms, but I am simply making that point and I really wish that the point is not lost on us, especially a country of our size, in the context of all that is happening today in Eastern Europe, in North America and right around us in the Caribbean region.

#### **6.05 p.m.**

If we allow ourselves to be pigeon holed, not understanding what is taking place around us, we could find ourselves in greater economic difficulties. I just thought that we should be alerted to that.

In Trinidad and Tobago, this may be the most difficult period over the last 30 to 40 years in terms of the economic struggles we are going through. We have moved from the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s of unavailability of sufficient resources; we have moved into the late 1970s and early 1980s where we had a

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surplus of resources; and now we are back to a situation in the late 1980s and 1990s, where once more there is an unavailability of resources with all the implications—the pressures, the problems, the unemployment and the poverty—and how do we deal with that situation.

It is in that context that I see the budget attempting to treat with those concerns: what is happening on the international front and how we deal with it, and what is happening locally, as well, and how we deal with it. While I am not saying that the budget is perfect, while I am not saying the budget would succeed in addressing all the concerns, I believe that it is an excellent attempt at addressing the critical problems facing Trinidad and Tobago at present.

It is in that context that I want to talk a little about some of the agencies under my supervision. Unfortunately, many persons in responding to the Ministry of Public Utilities tend to believe it is the ministry just for the Water and Sewerage Authority. They keep forgetting that the Ministry also has control over agencies like the Meteorological Service, the Government Printery, the Postal Services, TSTT, T&TEC—which I will talk about in a little while and respond to the question of divestment—and one or two other agencies that are performing fairly well. I just want to put some of those things into the record.

Let me deal with some of those agencies that are not so contentious. Let us look very quickly at the Meteorological Services. The mission of the Meteorological Service is to provide meteorological information and advice consistent with international standards, towards the pursuit of national, scientific, social, economic and cultural development.

Unfortunately, in our country citizens are concerned about the Met. Office only when there is an impending meteorological disaster. That is the only time they remember and focus on this facility somewhere in Piarco. Hon. Members will recall the recent threat of tropical storm Bret which was due to hit Trinidad and Tobago on August 6, 1993. The Met. Office was able to monitor Bret's activities and report to our people accurate details as they occurred. The information coming out of the Met. Office was able to prepare us, as a nation, for what might have been a major national disaster.

Even though I did it formally before, I wish to publicly place on record my personal appreciation as Minister, and I am certain the appreciation of my colleagues on this side—and on this occasion I hope that I can take the liberty of operating as well for my colleagues on the other side—to the officers at the Met. Office for the kind of work they did to ensure that we went through that period prepared.

Under the capital programme of the Meteorological Services, they embarked on a programme to develop information and expertise to service the agricultural sector. In this context, four automatic weather stations were installed. These are located at the Water Resource Compound, Wrightson Road; Caroni Research Centre, Waterloo; the Central Experimental Station and the El Reposo Demonstration Station, Sangre Grande. Three other stations are carded for sites at Penal, Cedros and south-eastern Trinidad. The eighth will be installed in north-eastern Tobago. This project is under the thrust of strengthening the national meteorological service and is being undertaken by the existing United Nations Development Programme Project for 1993.

During that period the department also embarked on a number of training programmes and quite a few of the staff members have had the benefit of these.

Under its capital programme for 1994, the division would pursue the implementation of the proposed new regional meteorological telecommunications network, which has been the subject of study by the Trinidad and Tobago Government and has already been agreed upon by the Government in June, 1993. This network is to be installed and commissioned in 1994. This is expected to bring new and revolutionary approaches to weather forecasting in Trinidad and Tobago and the region at large, making our country the leader in weather forecasting. That is planned for 1994.

During 1994 as well, efforts will be made to restructure this department to give it the potential to earn funds. So that they will be doing quite a number of things on a commercial basis to be able to bring in funds that will balance some of their expenditure. The relevant changes in the law will be effected to enable us to do that.

The Government Printery is also under the control of the Ministry of Public Utilities. Though we have not been able to access much funding for 1993 we have, in fact, sought to utilize the available funds to ensure some level of stability in the service at the Government Printery and utilizing and adjusting what was available. I may say, however, that notwithstanding the funding problem, the Government Printery was able to provide some level of service to the respective government agencies as relates to a number of things. We are going to be heightening these efforts.

I visited the workers last week Thursday when they were preparing the documents for the budget. They worked really hard, all night, to ensure that all the budgetary documents were available for the Parliament session the next day.

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We are seeking as well, to the extent that we can, to modernize that department. Much of the plant is being gradually replaced by modern equipment so that it can be on par with what is existing right now on the market. At some point we would probably have a little more to say about that.

Another agency is the postal services. During 1993, this department utilized its limited budgetary allocation to do a number of things as follows:

- improve the physical condition of existing post office buildings;
- improve and expand existing services;
- enhance the working conditions for staff;
- train and develop its human resources.

In this connection the following developmental works were done during 1993. I am certain that the Member for Oropouche would be most pleased to know that finally the Debe Post Office is almost complete and is expected to be officially opened on December 15, 1993. I know that he has been very concerned about it, and quite rightly so. I myself made two visits to this facility in the company of the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister Draper.

**6.15 p.m.**

We opened as well, during the period, a postal agency at Upper Cumuto. At the invitation of both my Friends the Member for Toco/Manzanilla and the Member for Nariva we went there. There was a problem which we were able to sort out and it is my understanding that the postal agency is open and functional at Upper Cumuto.

Repairs and refurbishing works at the following post offices also took place: General Post Office, Diego Martin, Fyzabad, Prince Town. Facilities were installed at the St. James Street Post Office, San Fernando, to facilitate 24-hour security service.

The refurbishment of the government quarters to facilitate the provision of postal services to Penal and surrounding areas was also done. This facility should be opened, as well, around December 13. Again, this should have some impact on the Member for Oropouche, and I think the Member for Siparia is also involved. There have been many complaints about the existing post office there and what

we sought to do was to have it relocated. Work is almost complete and the new post office is expected to be opened on December 13.

We are also working as best we can to deal with the Tunapuna and Couva post offices. We visited them recently and we are seeking to work out an arrangement. The Member for Tunapuna is very much involved and I have also spoken to the Member for Couva North on this matter. We are hoping to identify particular buildings to relocate the Couva and Tunapuna post offices.

I also wish to inform this House that we have been able to engage in a contract with MTS to take care of the security arrangements at all post offices. The process has started. I think about 19 post offices are now being provided with MTS security services and by January 2, 1994, all the others will be so serviced, leaving the policemen available to deal with police matters.

That will also take care of a matter which created many problems for the postal services department. On quite a number of occasions, for one reason or another, the police officers were not there or not there on time and it meant, whenever that happened, that the service was not available to the public, so the pensioners and others had a difficulty in cashing cheques and obtaining the services they required.

During this period, we continued to work on the outstanding personnel matters. When we came on board, I think there were over 300 matters relating to postal assistants who were not appointed for many years. We addressed quite a number of those cases in 1992 and we are almost at the end of it now in 1993, and the rest will certainly be addressed in 1994 to bring some peace of mind to the workers at the postal services department. My senior staff members have been meeting with representatives of the unions and the management of the postal services department to address these outstanding matters.

**Miss Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, I just want to get a little clarification here. Can the Minister tell this House what he is doing on the matter of speeding up mail to Tobago so that the services can be properly provided to the people of Tobago?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Yes. In fact, I heard about that through a news item. Apparently, it was a problem with the carriers, Air Caribbean and BWIA. The postal services department has a contract arrangement with BWIA and apparently they were having some difficulty making the same arrangement with Air Caribbean. In fact, I think there was more money involved in terms of what BWIA

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requested. I spoke with the Post Master General about two weeks ago and he has assured me that the matter was now being addressed and I expect it should be behind us by now because I expressed my very serious concern about it. Out of an abundance of caution, I will double check to see if it was done, but I did speak with him and, based upon what he told me at the time, I got the impression that the matter was now behind us.

**Miss Nicholson:** Check him again.

**Hon. M. Marshall:** I will check it again.

**Miss Nicholson:** Please do.

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Continuing with the postal services department, I just want to make two other quick points.

One of the reasons for the increases in postal arrangements is so that we can obtain some funds to address the rehabilitation work at most of these post offices. All of us visit them. Some have been built 80, 90 and 100 years ago in some instances, and I have been able to get the assurance—while those additional funds would not come directly to my ministry—that working with the Ministry of Works and Transport and also with MTS, we will be able to utilize some of those funds to address the 46 post offices which require urgent rehabilitation work. That is something I wanted to share with the House.

I also wanted hon. Members to know that as we stabilize the situation at the post office, we feel that there is much more that can be done, and recently we have drawn from the Public Utilities Commission some of the high-level staff available to that commission and we have asked them to go into the post office department, look at the situation there in the context of what is happening in other countries, to see what action can be initiated to begin to modernize the postal services department of Trinidad and Tobago. That is one of our major priorities for 1994 as we proceed with the rehabilitation work at the post offices, in addition to dealing with all those outstanding matters relating to personnel.

I want to talk a little now about telecommunications, which are also under the Ministry of Public Utilities.

**Mr. Jurai:** Talk bout WASA.

**Hon. M. Marshall:** We shall come to WASA in a little while.



In this information era, the Government recognizes the vital role of TSTT; therefore major efforts continue to be made to improve the level of efficiency of this utility and to hasten its modernization thrust. In this context, TSTT 1993/1994 capital expenditure programme has been developed to achieve six major targets:

1. to satisfy 98 per cent of forecasted demand for telephone service by 1998 and by providing a high quality service for both national and international telecommunication customers.
2. increase the customer service by 82,542 lines over the next five years.
3. replace existing step-by-step and ND 20 exchanges as soon as possible in order to enhance the quality of service to customers currently served in these exchange areas.
4. to maximize the benefits from existing outside plant facilities by undertaking an extensive programme of network upgrading and outside plant rehabilitation.
5. to enhance the international transmission network by means of increased diversity through satellite system upgrade and fibre transmission using Americus 1 and Eastern Caribbean fibre system; and
6. improve the company customer information system.

**6.25 p.m.**

In 1994, TSTT will complete some of the following: expansion of the cellular network via three enhancers in Trinidad and a cell site enhancer in Tobago. It is significant that the pre-feasibility study with a view to maximizing service penetration through the use of cellular technology has been completed. That is very important, especially for those representatives who have been crying out for a service in their respective communities. As a result of this particular feasibility, it seems quite possible that using fixed cellular will allow 10,000 lines of demand in non-urban areas much sooner than originally envisaged, using conventional plant.

Based on the information coming through, and I spoke at length with the officials at TSTT on this particular matter, what I understand is that they can put in a cellular system at very reasonable cost; and once it is fixed, in a very short period—much shorter than if you had to go the route that you would have had to normally—about 10,000 lines can be put in; and we are talking particularly about the rural communities. To me that is a most significant step, and what it means is

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that some of these rural communities will be able to access a telephone service very soon.

In 1994, TSTT will also install two remote units each to cater for 1,218 new lines in Valencia and 1,218 new lines in Tobago, modifying existing equipment to satisfy existing and projected traffic demand in Matura.

**Hon. Member:** Look at “Pam”; she is smiling.

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Another very important matter which I want to share with you—I know you would prefer to hear about WASA, but this is also very important—is that work continues on the Americus I submarine cable. This is an international fibre optic submarine telecommunications system, which links the United States, St. Thomas, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela and Brazil. The system is scheduled to be ready for service in July 1994 and this will facilitate greater international linkage with Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean territories.

**Hon. Member:** Internationalization of the communication system. Global city.

**Hon. M. Marshall:** I remember that some time ago when, unfortunately, I was out of the country, the Prime Minister did us the honour of formally launching this project. We shall also develop the digital cross system to optimize use of existing digital facilities, as well as improve the inter-administrative system for the preparation of outgoing statements and incoming estimates for foreign administration, as well as replacing obsolete and old equipment.

**Miss Nicholson:** I am very pleased that I am a part of that.

**Hon. M. Marshall:** This is most important, too, because talking with TSTT I understand that on a monthly basis sometimes they have about 13,000 lines that are down, especially during the rainy season. We are embarking on a programme that will replace these systems and they have informed me that they will be putting down about 3,000 to 4,000 monthly, which is going to be extremely good and really rid us of those kinds of problems that we can do without.

**Mr. Mottley:** Will Santa Cruz benefit?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Santa Cruz will also benefit.

To improve customer maintenance support in 1994, TSTT will also replace systems in Princess Town, Matura, San Fernando, and Lady Young Road. In addition TSTT will undertake to purchase 152 systems for rental to customers, purchase 400 card phone booths and available equipment, and develop an audio bank service for the expansion of audio bank equipment capacity and capability.

So, much is, indeed, happening at TSTT. All things considered, there is a positive relationship with the management and union representatives. I was at their recent function where the Chief Executive Officer and top managers were meeting with the union leaders. While they continue to have problems, there is a level of industrial peace that I think is working extremely well for the advancement of TSTT. So TSTT is, at the moment, working fairly well.

Over the last year, the Public Transport Service Corporation has been caught up in a very difficult financial situation. That is a fact. No reason to try to hide it from you. PTSC can make transport available to the country only through the resources that they have. Last year, PTSC received about \$50 million. They got an additional \$66 million, but they had to readjust and restructure their whole operations, meeting with the unions, management and board, looking at the total picture and making some significant internal adjustments to be able to address the very difficult financial situation. There was some organizational restructuring taking place.

They were able to rationalize the human resources and, as you are aware, there was a kind of separation programme, where a number of workers decided to accept early separation from the utility. They are also meeting with the community and talking about what is happening at PTSC, so that the community is, in fact, alerted. They went into a cost reduction mode, putting a number of things in place, cutting down on overtime, scaling down public holiday services, reducing expenditure on utilities, consultancies, contract services, and things like that, in order to bring down costs.

For this year, while we have not finalized the total package, what we are looking at is a new arrangement where we can assist communities to purchase and manage maxi taxi-type vehicles, which can complement the PTSC service, especially in those rural areas where we cannot provide service at this time. In Blanchisseuse and Caura, for example, PTSC is coming up with a programme that will help to empower the community village council, the self-help group, and the regional corporation. They may be able to access two vehicles. That is all they may need, where they can hire a particular person in the community to drive the vehicle, with PTSC providing a certain kind of back-up service.

It makes no sense our telling you that we are going to get 300 or 400 buses again to be able to provide that kind of service. That is simply not going to be on the cards for quite some time, but at the same time we cannot allow the situation to continue as it is at this time.

**Mr. B. Panday:** They wasted 600 buses—threw away 600 buses!

**Hon. M. Marshall:** I also want you to know that in the context of the level of financial support we were given from the state, PTSC have been requested to look at their own resources—the land that they own—to have it valued and see if they might be able to use that as collateral to purchase some of the vehicles which they urgently require. As soon as we are able to work it out, very shortly, I think, we shall be able to come back here and tell you about our progress.

So it is not “business as usual” at PTSC. We have gone into new business ventures, offering certain kinds of services at PTSC, in order to pull in additional revenues and to deal with the situation. I must say, quite frankly, notwithstanding the difficulties, that I am convinced that the board and new management are seeking to address the problems at PTSC, given the sort of limited financial resources they have.

**6.35 p.m.**

I am now left with T&TEC and WASA which I want to say something about. There are two things I want to draw to the attention of the House. Notwithstanding all the criticisms we have been hearing about the utilities, WASA and T&TEC in particular, T&TEC did not have a bad year. Unfortunately, they probably did not make known the number of things they did, and people may not be aware of the kind of efforts which are being made at T&TEC, nor the effects of those efforts. That is the first thing I want to share with you. Secondly and more fundamentally, I want to point to where we are going with T&TEC, and in that context, bring you up to date.

In spite of its financial constraints, T&TEC have been able to provide some 95 per cent of the population with a reliable, safe and adequate supply of electricity. The total number of customers as at December, 1992 and September 1993 was 297,776 and 298,656 respectively. The expenditure for 1993 is \$635 million.

With a view to moving towards greater effectiveness and efficiency, many initiatives have been taken in 1993. A major restructuring of the organization commenced during the period under review. This included the establishment of a department to co-ordinate the corporate strategic planning function. In addition, the commercial department was established with a focus on improved customer service and a more efficient billing and collection system. Collecting the funds has been a problem, so they put in a new commercial department to address that.

Further, a safety department was set up with the responsibility to implement the commission's health and safety policy. Despite its restructuring process, T&TEC continued in 1993 to undertake routine planned maintenance and combination inspection in accordance with the generation maintenance plan. Major overhaul and rehabilitation works are being undertaken on the power stations at Penal, Port of Spain, Point Lisas. Sixteen km and 66 kV lines were installed between San Raphael substation and Sangre Grande, which it is expected will be commissioned by the end of 1993.

This project will improve the quality of supply to the customers in the north-eastern section of the island, as well as Tobago, quite significantly. In the northern area, work on the 33kV system between Diego Martin substation and the new Diamond Vale substation was completed in January 1993. Also completed in February 1990, was the modification of the 33dV circuit between Diamond Vale substation and Mt. Pleasant. The reinforcement of the 33 kV west ring is now in progress and it is anticipated that by the end of 1993 both sections of the 33kV line between Boundary Street, Maraval and Westmoorings, Diego Martin, will be completed.

Work is continuing on the extension of the San Raphael substation to accommodate the new San Raphael/Sangre Grande 66kV line. Construction work is also in progress at the following sub-stations: Pinto Road, Sangre Grande, North Oropouche, Wrightson Road, Savonetta, and New Courland, Tobago. All these projects are geared towards the reliability of supply. These was also some expansion of distribution in many areas throughout the country.

It is important to inform you as well that there was an intensification of the electrification programme in the rural communities, working with self-help. I think over the period about 49 projects resulted in about 4,963 persons benefiting from new services. Communities like Caura Valley, for example, which never had a service, I understand about three or four weeks ago they were able to get a service. I am very happy about that.

T&TEC has also applied for a grant of about ECU 2 million from one of our international agencies. This will be able to fund 48 projects—again, that will be done on a sort of self-help basis and will be able to provide electrification for about 1,250 households.

**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.*

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We also had quite a lot of work done with respect to street lighting. Projects were completed in: Balandra, Malabar, Maracas, St. Joseph; Caroni; Charlieville, Cunupia, Mayaro, Debe, Carlsen Field and one of our major Sou-Sou Land Projects, Westmoorings.

There are quite a number of others that I do not wish to get into, all work done by T&TEC throughout the period. We had extension of work, completion of substations, upgrading facilities here and there, all in keeping with the mandate of ensuring that an effective supply is made available to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I just want to talk about this privatization and divestment matter, as we are here. T&TEC, as part of its normal planning process, prepares what is called a history and forecast document. It covers a 10-year period. It outlines, among a number of other things, the maximum demand for power for the country as best as can be predicted, bearing in mind the prevailing circumstances. As a result of this analysis, T&TEC, in March 1993, brought to the attention of the Minister of Public Utilities and by extension, the Government, the need for a serious plant expansion programme, and also the need for additional power.

This issue, of course, as a Minister responsible to Government, I could not ignore, so that matter was brought to the attention of the Cabinet; it went to the Energy Committee and the committee established a task force. Now, T&TEC are the competent authority to provide us with these details, and they told us that the cost would be about TT \$1 billion.

Arising out of that, the Government, knowing that it was unable to provide that kind of funding, authorized T&TEC to seek to address that particular matter. At the moment, what we have is a proposal from the OWTU; we also have proposals from a number of international agencies which are interested in investing in such a project, under certain terms and conditions. Arising out of a Note that I myself put to the Cabinet requesting that local investors be considered, I must say, as well, that the short list that is before us includes a local investor.

It is my understanding that the process is continuing T&TEC were instructed to call in the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to give some advice and

direction on this particular matter. There is now a shorter list and those potential investors' programmes as put forward will be looked at a decision will be taken on this particular matter in due course.

At the moment, no decision has been taken. It is my view that the Government would take a decision if it feels confident that the terms and conditions that can be agreed to would protect the interests of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**6.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister indicate how many companies satisfied the prequalification criteria?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Madam Speaker, I cannot give the exact figure; it could be 30-odd as the initial number. At the moment, I think it is about 30 that have been short-listed. I am subject to correction.

**Mr. Maharaj:** I can say that it is 47. Can the Minister tell this House how many companies are from Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** It is my understanding that there is one company from Trinidad and Tobago.

That in a nutshell is where things are at this time. What we have to put as paramount, as I said before, is what would certainly work out to be in the best interests of Trinidad and Tobago. As a Government we would simply be behaving irresponsibly if we ignored that information coming through from T&TEC.

The Water and Sewerage Authority continues to be the agency under my responsibility which presents the greatest challenge. I am really not feeling happy to come here and report that we are still experiencing difficulties with the Water and Sewerage Authority. I am not happy when I have to hear the number of complaints, almost every day, from people across the country—representatives included—about what is happening in respect of constituencies.

There are a number of reasons for this—I have sought to explain this to the country before—but there are two things which I want to identify at this time, which more or less, are responsible for the kind of situation which we are now experiencing. I have come to acknowledge and accept that the problems at WASA are much more far-reaching and difficult than I initially thought. Secondly, we are seeking to confront the problems at a time when there is a drastic shortage of

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financial resources. I think it is important for us to understand that. [*Disturbance in public gallery*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order please! Would that person in the red jersey please leave this Chamber. I just do not understand how members of the public would assault each other in the public gallery of the Parliament!

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Madam Speaker, it is very unfortunate that we are seeking to address the problems at a time when the resources are just not there.

**Madam Speaker:** Members of the public gallery please be quiet; otherwise I would have the public gallery cleared completely!

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Most of us may know that five years ago WASA had moved from a subvention in excess of \$100 million; and last year what they received was \$15 million. In the context of the very difficult national and financial situation; in the context of the fact that WASA has outstanding commitments to creditors in excess of \$40 to \$ 50 million, creditors who have a direct linkage with the operations WASA on a daily basis, if we cannot meet the commitment to them, they can, in a very serious way, interfere with the operations. It is that type of situation that we are talking about.

In addition to that, the fact is that this is 1993 and citizens of this country, whether they reside in Toco, Sangre Grande, Ortoire, Barrackpore, Naparima or wherever, feel that they are entitled to a service—and rightly so. Years ago, you would have found that people in the so-called rural communities would have been more tolerant and gone along with rain water for three or four months, and made whatever kind of arrangements they found necessary. That is no longer the case. As I said before, with justification, they are now demanding, as of right, that they obtain a similar level of service that some of the other communities are enjoying.

It is that type of situation. What we have been trying to do at the ministry and at WASA is to address some of those problems to the best of our ability, given the resources we have, and on a short-term basis, virtually on a sort of survival mode, to ensure that the service does not collapse completely. At the same time, while we do that, we are looking at addressing the more long-term problems, via a task-force that has been appointed by the Cabinet, and which is presently looking at the situation in a comprehensive manner. It is my hope that by the end of this year, or early next year, we would be clear in terms of talking to a number of people.

I held two sessions with the unions on this matter, and as soon as the ideas of the task force are a little clearer, we would meet with the unions again, putting those suggestions on the table and seeing whether we can come up with a



common position that would address the critical problems facing us at the Water and Sewerage Authority.

It is my firm view that it is going to be difficult to push WASA forward unless we got the workers and their representatives on board in terms of what we are seeking to do. While we do that, we are also seeking to access a loan—I think the Minister of Planning and Development in his contribution here on Friday of last week talked about it—of about US \$50 to \$60 million to do a number of things. We would deal with the rehabilitation of plant of one kind or another; it would also assist with the restructuring of WASA as a whole; and the rehabilitation of water supply installations. The replacement and expansion of the water supply distribution network is also going to be given some assistance from this particular funding.

**6.55 p.m.**

There will also be the replacement and upgrading of the booster and water treatment plants pumping station. Rehabilitation of water treatment plants, rehabilitation of wells, purchase and installation of bulk meters on WASA water production sources and water supply system; purchase and installation of 80,000 meters.

I can tell you, that there is a particular local private company that has come up with a programme that will make available to WASA the resources to embark on a comprehensive metering programme. If we can involve that local private sector group the money that we are, in fact, going to be sourcing from the World Bank for this particular aspect of it, maybe, we would be able to do something else with it. WASA is talking with them.

There is also another local private company that is, in fact, saying it has the financial competence to rehabilitate most of the wells in San Fernando, manage them and provide the water to WASA almost at half the cost that WASA now presently provides. We do not know for sure whether this company can do what it says it can do. But that is an option coming through. And the task force will have to look at all these options that are available from abroad and locally, and what we can do for ourselves, and then we can come up with a comprehensive package, look at it together, even discuss it with our colleagues, and decide together that this might be the best way to proceed with the Water and Sewerage Authority.

**Mr. Sudama:** Are we not actually getting foreign management in WASA soon? Is that included in your plan for WASA?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** That is a premature question. We are looking at all the options. We are seeking to access that loan. It is important to note as well, and I am certain my Friend the Member for Tobago West would be very happy to hear that we have been able to deal with most of the concerns of the Leeward and rural water supply water project, and it should be on its way very shortly. So too the feasibility study for the Richmond water supply project; we actually applied for the funding for that programme a few days ago and if we succeed, based on the advice I have received, most of Tobago's water problems would have been addressed.

The Scarborough sewer treatment facility had some problems. We were able to deal with it. I have been talking continually with the Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly. I have been very concerned and they have been able to finalize most of the matters there. I expect that by April of next year that facility would be completed entirely and put that very serious problem behind us. Tobago is being looked at possibly more than Trinidad.

The St. Patrick water project. My Friend tells me all the time that that project will not help in his constituency but, unfortunately, I am not an engineer. The engineers at WASA assure me that some benefits will accrue to him. Work is proceeding apace on the St. Patrick water project. By the end of October 1993, 16.02 kilometres of transmission lines had been installed; 8.52 kilometres of distribution lines had been installed; the construction of the storage tanks is about 75 per cent completed. Essentially, the project is expected to be completed by October, 1994 at a cost of \$62 million funded jointly by the European Economic Community and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Sudama:** Where will the water come from to put into this expansion of the St. Patrick water project? Will it come from the Caroni-Arena project or the Penal waterworks?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** I believe it will essentially come from the Caroni-Arena, but that is not going to be done by itself. The problems that communities like yours experience are as a result of those wells in the south that are not functioning. We are seeking at present, with the help of my colleague the Member for St. Ann's East, to address about 12 of those wells. We are not only doing that. There are quite a number of other things we are going to be doing.

I want to accept the assessment from the technical people. I know that the member for Oropouche is a good economist but I would prefer to accept the

viewpoint of the technical people at WASA. I have asked them repeatedly and they have assured me that the completion of this project will go a long way in addressing some of the problems in these areas.

**Mr. Sudama:** If it does not [*Interruption*] what are you prepared to do with your technical people?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Let us cross that bridge when the time comes. That is what is happening in terms of those projects. It is important for the task force to complete its work. I have asked for a comprehensive programme from WASA which outlines the capital requirements. The amount that WASA is talking about in terms of its capital requirements for the period 1994 to 2004, is a very substantial one. We are talking about almost \$2 billion to address the capital requirements of WASA to enable it to deal with the critical problems facing the utility, both in terms of water and waste water. So the situation is not an easy one.

While we are dealing with these more critical matters, I wish again to let you know that we have been addressing some of the minor problems that have been creating some problems for us.

It is misunderstanding that we have sufficient alum to carry us into next year. We were having problems at the facility in Curepe. The pumps are now functioning properly. The trauma that we have over the last two weeks is now behind us.

**Mr. K. Jurai:** The Minister gave the assurance that the country has sufficient alum to deal with water treatment in this country. The information I have is there is a terrible shortage of alum at the Hollis reservoir and as a result of that there is a serious curtailment in the supply of water from that reservoir. Can the Minister say what he intends to do about this?

**7.05 p.m.**

**Hon. M. Marshall:** It is my understanding that at present, we have 600 tons of alum, which is sufficient for all the facilities to carry us until the end of the year. We have already made arrangements to access additional alum for next year. When I leave here, I would find out about what the Member has just said. I would be more surprised and disappointed if that is the case. I would check it.

We know that the situation at WASA is a difficult one. I am still convinced that in the next few years we would virtually compare WASA with what is happening at T&TEC or even at TSTT. Notwithstanding the difficulties and disappointments, there are some workers who are making very serious effort at WASA.

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I have said it before publicly, and I say it again, that with all the weaknesses and problems of one kind or another, it is a credit to those workers that the Water and Sewerage Authority has not collapsed. I really want—notwithstanding what other may say—to thank the workers who have been keeping the faith and to urge them to continue to keep the faith.

I read in the newspapers, either yesterday or today, about certain kinds of action, and I would be the last person to tell people not to get involved in whatever action they may wish to become involved, but any kind of action that would help to grind WASA into the ground would only work against them; not in their interest.

I make a special appeal to the leadership of the union and the workers to continue co-operating with us so that together, we can pull WASA out of the crisis situation that we now face.

I want to make one final point. That is in response to a matter that I heard over the radio while my Friend responded to the budget on Wednesday of last week something arising out of a newspaper article. In relation to that, I say simply, that one my problems as a politician is that I am not a game player; I do not play games, notwithstanding the consequences.

I say to you and those who wish to hear, that, yes, there were concerns. It is not in anybody's interest, as we address the politics of Trinidad and Tobago at this time, to proceed in a manner that would create problems for any organization and the country. That is not the way I intend to proceed. If there are concerns, in my particular case those concerns have been expressed to the right quarters and it is my hope that those concerns have, in fact, been addressed. I just wanted to make that point.

Madam Speaker, I thank you most kindly for giving me the opportunity to make these comments on these matters. We are not going to get out of the political hole that we are in; we are not going to move forward in the way that we would wish to move forward, unless there can be some understanding, to a large extent, among those of us who are the key political players in the life of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Carl Singh** (*Tabaquite*): Madam Speaker, I must congratulate the last two speakers. One presented a mini Throne Speech and the other Member who spoke before, gave us a didactic course on the public service and parts of the Constitution. The last speaker has always been noted to have his heart in the right place, the man who represents the people truly and faithfully.

The Member for Arouca South gave us all the information about the public service and the bureaucracy involved in the determination of any punishment to be meted out. Well, it seems that most of the public servants are fully aware of the chain reaction before any action can take place. And this may be responsible for the impunity with which they render service to the public. For example, an employee may be suspended for five or six years, at the end of which he would be fully compensated for his lost time.

The Bill before us seeks to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ending December 31, 1994 by authorizing the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sum of \$10,150,247,578. That is the quantum of the funds to be expended during the coming year.

This budget is really a mixed bag of indirect, regressive taxation, presented with the pre-budget hook-up of television and radio all over the country to assuage the feeling of the population that things are going to be hunky-dory in 1994. As the fiscal measures unfold during the coming year, the full brunt of this budget will be felt by the population, and moreso, by the lower middle class and the poorer section of our society.

I want to address a few questions and make a small statement on oil pricing. We are aware that there is a global contraction economically and to budget this year at a price of \$19 per barrel is rather imprudent. We suffered the consequences last year when the Government budgeted for \$21 per barrel. It was basically around \$18 per barrel.

There are several factors that are going to control the price this year. One is an early winter. There is usually an increased demand for fuel during the winter months. And if at this time the prices are varying between \$13 and \$14 per barrel, one would expect a further drop during the summer months.

### **7.15 p.m.**

The manner in which OPEC operates—a type of helter-skelter pricing and volume production—is another factor which one has to take into consideration. These are some of the constraints which would determine the price. On the verge of re-entering the oil market is Iraq. With this amount of fuel coming onto the oil market and the summer months coming on, I feel that the price would be much less. Our Prime Minister is rather optimistic.

I do agree that if one budgets for \$16 or \$17 a barrel and one gets \$30, so much the better, but why not budget realistically where one can control what one is planning to do? If more funds come, so much the better.

I turn now to transportation. There were two maladies inflicted on this society by the PNM Government. One is the disbanding of the railway system of transportation in Trinidad, and the second is the imposition of the maxi-taxi as a system of transport. One would appreciate that over this period there has hardly been an increase in the mileage of the road network to accommodate the increased volume of vehicles on the road. Very little has been done in that regard. Indeed, recently a transport officer remarked that there should be no more licensing of maxi-taxis. There is a degree of congestion. I think that the Government should think seriously about reintroducing the rail system whether they pass it in the air, on land or sea. It is a sine qua non to satisfy the travelling public of our country.

I turn now briefly to the motoring public. The introduction of the transfer tax with the scale level of seven years and down, the hardest hit in the society by this iniquitous and punitive taxation are the lower and middle classes. I believe that the Government should withdraw this form of taxation completely.

There are certain questions which I would like to pose. If someone aged 45 buys a car and gets a stroke after about six months; he wishes to hand over this automobile to his son or to his wife, must he pay a transfer tax to do this? Assuming another person buys a car, he is working at a company and is given one year's study leave abroad, what is he going to do? Transfer the car and pay tax and when he returns pay another transfer tax? What happens in the case of an automobile which is completely written off and the person is prepared to dispose of it as spare-parts, would the purchaser pay a transfer tax?

These are some considerations which must be taken into account. For example, you may say, I will not transfer the car, but what happens in the case of an accident? Where will the owner of the automobile be found? Would the insurance companies honour the claim? These are searching questions that one should pose before putting such tax measures in place.

Another important aspect of this taxation is that VAT was introduced sometime during the NAR regime. All vehicles purchased from then paid VAT. Are you now telling me that when you are disposing of that vehicle, you pay a transfer tax on that? That is very, very unfair. In fact, if the measure is ever introduced, all units purchased during that period should be free from VAT or the transfer tax. I would like to suggest that this entire piece of legislation should be withdrawn lock, stock and barrel. It is punitive, wicked and pernicious.

I turn now to pensions. What is happening in our society today? It is a small society with a workforce of 500,000. Why can all the pension payable to workers

not be put under one umbrella and be dealt with as one unit. There are pension funds problems at Texaco. So too on the docks and maybe other places. If all these pensions are made payable to one unit, a bigger quantum of resources would be collected and it would be much easier to secure investment so that on retirement persons who have contributed would be able to collect their pension with ease.

Another important aspect of the pension coming under one umbrella is that it would encourage employees to improve their skills over the years. If a person is working in a particular section of the economy and feels he can make a better contribution elsewhere, he can improve his skill, skip this job and go to another one and he is sure that his pension with all his benefits would follow and at the end of the day whatever benefits are due to him would be paid on a timely basis, he would be encouraged to do so.

I also here mention the old age pensioners. This has been like a recurring decimal in this House. Since the income tax laws have been emended, income to the tune of \$16,000 or less is usually tax free. The ceiling of the old age pensioner should be raised realistically to about \$10,000 or \$12,000. The persons who are getting around \$5,000 per year are excluded from the receipt of old age pension. This is a pension as of right, not a privilege. This is the right through having survived the rigours of work in our society and having build this country on which we stand today This is a pensioner of right, not a privilege. But at the age when they need more of the funds to maintain them, they find it difficult to face the drugstore to get the medicine.

**7.25 p.m.**

A more realistic approach would have been to raise the ceiling from \$5,000 to \$10,000, so that anyone in receipt of an income in the vicinity of \$10,000 should also get his old age pension. If all these pensions—those to which contributions have been made, old age pension, NIS—are put under one umbrella, issuing one cheque once a month, there will be less room for corruption with people cashing cheques falsely.

It was some time in the 1970s that the first prime minister remarked: Money is no problem. This statement was misrepresented, misinterpreted, several interpretations were given to it, but what really was the problem was the management of resources, not the money. If this Government is given any amount of money, the situation would remain the same.

The Government always makes a statement and then puts thought to the process. It is the management as I have said, but we have recognized the fact that

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on the return of the Prime Minister from his recent European trip, the Government agreed to provide management for WASA which suggests quite clearly that we are really lacking in managerial ability. This is another situation in which the Government has found itself. It makes decisions and then asks questions.

I shall mention some of the areas that are covered by this \$1.1 billion under the social safety net. It is a type of psychological deception, I that a big quantum of money is mentioned. "Oh, we are going to give our \$1.1 billion to the needy" and so forth. But realistically, these embrace old age pensions, the Unemployment Relief Programme, food subsidy, School Feeding Programme, social assistance.

And I come to a particular figure that is rather intriguing, \$43 million for free medicine. Is the Government going to hand it out on the roadside? I cannot understand. How is it going to give free medicine? To whom? Where and when? The whole medical service, so far, has been free, so why put this \$43 million under this heading of social net? Then grants for schools and colleges, apprentice schemes, orphanages, Servol, feeding programmes for the needy—these were all there. They were brought under one umbrella so this is just physiological deception.

The allocation has been increased by about 48 per cent, admittedly, but this is a touch and go business. If the funds are not raised, this is the first allocation to bear the brunt. I do hope that the major part of the funds that are going to be put under this one umbrella for the purpose of social services would not be spent on administration.

I think for the age group in which we have the highest unemployment, 20 to 30 years, there should be some type of educational programme whereby those persons can learn a skill or do some type of trade or activity to improve themselves, instead of giving them a hand-out at the end of the month. You are teaching them something and as the saying goes: "If you give me a fish you feed me for today, but if you teach me to fish you feed me for a lifetime."

Another aspect of the safety net is the increasing of the School Feeding Programme. That is good. We are all aware, Madam Speaker, as you will appreciate, that one cannot teach a malnourished child. I stand for that: feed all the children; they are our resource. It is that age group that must be trained and educated, so that when they enter the workplace, they would be the machinery to sustain the other part of the society. We are having an increasingly ageing population, so too, is the schooling age. So by treating them properly and arranging that they get good education and skill, they can support the other appendages.



I think, also, at this time another tandem of the whole economy could have been harnessed, in that it should be linked with the agricultural side of the economy to provide the basic items that we need for the School Feeding Programme. We are not going to spend \$79 million to buy food from abroad—Ireland, Australia—wherever; the agricultural sector can make an input and you will appreciate that our agricultural sector is important because we can also have quite a number of our people employed.

I should now like to make an appeal to the Tax Board. We are being asked to pay whatever amount is payable before. If the appeal takes 10 years, at the end of the period we will be paid six per cent on the money paid in front. This punitive: you must not punish the taxpayer for the deficiency in the tax system. The solution is to improve the tax system of collection and determination. If you are going to collect someone's money before a determination, then at the end of the determination, you should pay him bank rate for the money you have kept for the period.

We have had a five per cent imposition fuel tax on the motoring public, and this is expected to raise some \$50 million. As I look at the amendment, another \$50 million would be taken from the Ministry of Works and Transport to be put together for the purpose of fixing the roads. That is definitely inadequate, because our roads have never reached this condition within the last 35 years.

### **7.35 p.m.**

I shall touch briefly on the environment. The pollution of the environment continues unabated and with impunity. You will appreciate that this is an important aspect of the health of the entire nation. There was supposed to be a National Environment Management Authority since last year, but nothing has been done. As usual, this is held in abeyance. The Guaracara River is contaminated with oil spills from the Trintoc Refinery; so too the Ciperio River and the Couva River. These toxic wastes are just poured into the rivers, notwithstanding the inconvenience and the health hazard to the population in the vicinity. Earlier this year there was the situation at Wallerfield, where a number of children suffered from lead poisoning. At that time, mention was made about relocating the whole village. To date my information is that the families have all returned to Wallerfield, the lead contaminated material is still there on the roadway.

We are courting disaster by not heeding these principal forms of contamination of the environment—the leaded gas, lead in the spills and the

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fillings they have done there, together with other aspects. The human body is going to be affected by pollution of the air, water and food, because when these substances are dumped they are leached by water into the ground and find their way to other areas where people use this river for watering plants.

I now turn to health, generally. In a sentence, the health care system has been at its worst over the last 30-odd years. I have been a member of the health system for more than 20 years. Last week a Supplementary Appropriation Bill was presented in this House for approval to supplement certain ministries. I was surprised that not a penny was sought for the Ministry of Health, notwithstanding the fact that about \$184,000 was voted for electricity; \$200,000-odd for the Judiciary and even the Prime Minister on an advertisement spend \$400,000 in one year. The service in the health department was deteriorating but not one cent was voted to improve facilities for our people.

The Minister of Health alluded to the bureaucracy in dealing with reports in the ministry. This is probably why, with the “egg nog” report having been published and brought to the House, nothing has happened. When one reads that report it shows a callous disregard for these patients at St. Ann’s. Indeed, one gets the feeling that these patients are useless and they are a waste of taxpayers’ money. If one goes through that report, the higher posts are filled, but at the lower level, those who are concerned with the care of the patients, less than 50 per cent of the posts are filled. This is the situation.

Things have gone pretty bad with the hospital service. Recently, the City Medical Officer of Health had to take a matter at the Port of Spain General Hospital to court in order to have the hospital authorities:

- (i) sanitize and close elevator doors during transportation of food;
- (ii) repair and maintain all temperature-control trolleys;

These were the trolleys that were lacking at St. Ann’s that caused the egg nog poisoning—

- (iii) repair and maintain stoves on wards;
- (iv) provide separate cold storage for wards for food.

Blood samples, faecal material, urine samples were all stored in one fridge. This is what exists at one of our top hospitals. This is the reason the Medical Officer of Health had to summon the head of the department at the hospital to appear in court. Cockroaches were in the refrigerators; elevators were used transporting food and in some cases, carcasses.

I turn briefly to Aids victims. What are we doing about them? Once a person has acquired the virus and starts to show symptoms of the Aids syndrome, his or her death sentence is signed. What is this Government doing about it? It is affecting the young age group of the population; Aids patients are lying on beds with other patients in the hospitals—not that the disease can be transmitted like that—but there is a psychological effect on those who are lying beside the Aids patients. I say, therefore, having regard to the fact that the Caura Chest Hospital is being decanted right now—the patients are being moved to Mount Hope. Caura Hospital was built for the purpose of treating tuberculosis; my information is that there is an increase in the incidence of tuberculosis and this goes *pari passu* with some of the Aids patients; as their defences are broken down, they are subject to this type of chronic infection. I would suggest very strongly, that the Caura Hospital be turned over as an institute for the treatment and research of Aids patients, where they would be treated with a little more humanity than in the past.

I turn briefly now to the standard of patient care. The conditions of care for the patients are deteriorating. Over the past year there have been several instances of unhappy and unsatisfactory care, which I had reason to mention in this honourable House. The Minister spoke about Lenora James, but there are several more. A constituent came to report to me what had happened.

James has a child 8 years old and this was her second pregnancy. She went to the hospital, had anti-natal care outside. About two weeks before delivery time she had an ultrasonic examination and everything was okay. She was told that she was going to have a rather big baby, maybe more than eight pounds. Believe it or not, at the maternity ward at the San Fernando General Hospital, this patient went into labour and was unable to deliver easily. The nurse kept whispering that a caesarian should be performed. But all that was done was an episiotomy, a forceps delivery ensued; an eight pound dead foetus was delivered. Now this person already had a child eight years old; this was her second pregnancy, and this was the manner in which she was treated.

**7.45 p.m.**

We have an unpleasant thing to talk about—Deborah Yearwood, who bled in San Fernando, came to Port of Spain and bled, as though it is not worth doing anything for these people.

You see, Madam Speaker, as well integrated primary health care service is a *sine qua non* of a properly decentralized system. Staff must be well oriented, well taken care of, because if there are employees in the nursing profession performing a function and they are not satisfied, they will not be able to perform.

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For example, transfers that are occurring in the service. Another person, who has worked at the San Fernando General Hospital for more than 10 years, came to me. A qualified nurse—she has two children of high school age. Her husband works out and she was transferred to the Port of Spain infirmary on a three-shift basis. This person does not have a car. How does one expect this nurse to come from San Fernando to Port of Spain and work three shifts, in this day and age, when crime is so rampant? Indeed, this nurse told me she would rather resign than come to Port of Spain, where it would cost more than if she stayed at home. This is the helter-skelter method used for transferring nurses from San Fernando to Port of Spain to work—I do not know whether the reason is punitive, or what.

The Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex the Minister spoke about is in serious trouble and I would simply say it is a wasted asset. There is more than a billion dollars worth of taxpayers' money invested in it and another \$250 million worth of equipment buried in its bowels. I have some statistics which I would like to go through briefly. Total admissions for the months of January to September 1992, were 420. In 1993, the figure rose to 1,228.

**Mr. S. Panday:** For a billion and half dollar investment—that is the point he is making.

**Dr. Rowley:** They are missing two billion dollars.

**Dr. C. Singh:** At the Port of Spain and San Fernando General Hospitals there are laboratories for doing samples, and there is staff. But because of lack of equipment to do the work there, patients are sent to Mount Hope and the Ministry of Health pays the bill. The same thing happens with the surgical wards—patients are sent from the other hospitals to Mount Hope for surgical procedures and the ministry pays the bill. What are we doing?

At Mount Hope there are about 14 theatres and about 25 defibrillators. One or two are in use. At Port of Spain General there are about four to six operating theatres. There is one defibrillator. Imagine that four theatres are functioning and someone has a cardiac arrest and there is only one defibrillator. What are you going to do? Your number is called! That is it! Why not use some of the defibrillators at the Port of Spain Hospital? Taxpayers' funds have paid for them. They will not do that.

The same thing applies with X-rays. They want to have a specific investigation and it cannot be done in San Fernando; they come to Mount Hope,

the ministry pays the bill and they go back. Why are we depriving the population of this? We must appreciate that the people who come from far areas for these procedures can ill afford to travel the distance. It is not so easy to travel from South to Mount Hope—the cost is probably double or treble. Sometimes the indigent may need someone to accompany them and in that case they have to hire a car. These are some of the problems in relation to the Mount Hope Hospital.

I come to executive medicine. The Minister gave us an exhaustive list of company persons who have taken those executive examinations. We have reached the pinnacle. They are using facilities there that were really intended—it was the vision of Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, to set up Mount Hope as a tertiary institute in the Caribbean. That is good, but not to be used to treat coughs and colds. One cannot take a cannon to shoot a fly. This is the kind of situation. There is so much equipment in this institution and they are treating people for coughs and colds at \$40 and \$50 and wasting the assets of the country.

I envisage Mount Hope as a tertiary institute and it should not be brought in the mainstream of the medical services. It was intended to be a medical school for research, post graduate studies; cardiac, open heart surgery. But more importantly, an eye pavilion should be set up at Mount Hope. The facilities are there.

Eye cases are usually not acute, so someone can take the time and go to Mount Hope. We have the manpower. I read in the press today where about 3,000 near-blind people are awaiting surgery at the San Fernando Hospital. The staff is there to do it, but the basic ingredient—the equipment—is not there. But we are going on. That is bad. I think an eye pavilion set up at Mount Hope would be the ideal situation for all eye treatment in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean.

### **7.55 p.m.**

I should mention in passing some of the problems facing the banking system. It is sickening. It is depressing. We are planning to make Trinidad and Tobago the financial capital of the Caribbean. It is on the front burner. But confidence in our banking system is waning very fast.

One remembers in the boom years we had right, left and centre, finance houses being set up with millions of dollars collected. They all went down the drain. Why? Because a mandate was given to take people's money to invest. But *pari passu* with that, the management, the control, was not measured. This is the important issue. These financial houses were allowed to function even though the time when they were supposed to have handed in their audited reports and so forth

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had passed, sometimes, two years, three years. What was the result of that? The result was many of the people who deposited money there either committed suicide, went mad, went on to destitution or some to vagrancy.

**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.*

**Dr. C. Singh:** I thank you, Madam Speaker, and Members.

Banking in Trinidad has been a lucrative business. All the banks are declaring millions of dollars in profits. Why are the indigenous banks so downtrodden? They cannot move. Why? That is the question. Are they lending people without security, or, as the money is seen in the till, they feel it is theirs, they could use it? Is that the attitude? Again, further erosion of the confidence in setting up Trinidad and Tobago as the financial capital of the Caribbean. This is bad.

When one considers that the National Commercial Bank has been in operation for more than 20 years; there was Workers' Bank and the other one—all went through, millions of dollars which the taxpayers lost, and they are going to come and say, "We are human." This is a sad situation. It reminds me very much of the nursery rhyme, "Three blind mice."

I turn briefly to the constituents I represent in this House. The Tabaquite constituency is basically agricultural, and over the last two years I have sat in this House, not one of the access roads has really been rehabilitated. Indeed, many of the smaller farmers had to abandon their holdings because it is difficult to get access to bring out their produce. This has been the cry. I have had several farmers coming to me asking if something could be done. I have raised the matter before in this House, but to deaf ears.

Tabaquite, Brasso and the surrounding areas may be considered to be the cacao basket of Trinidad. Indeed, the beans that are produced in Trinidad are of a very fine quality and they are in demand world-wide. Reading from the review for 1993, there was an increase of 95 per cent in the production of cacao in the country moving up to about 2.18 million kilograms; coffee moving up to 1.1 million kilograms. From this, cacao was exported to the tune of 1.1 million kilograms and coffee from 41,000 kilograms to 143,000 kilograms.

These are smallholdings—people have 10 and 15 acres of land, some five. They devote themselves and plant, but they are not encouraged. Up to now, I see the agricultural people have not received the money that they are supposed to get before Christmas.

The roads: I have also brought this up before in this House. Guaracara/Tabaquite Road connects Tabaquite through Williamsville into Gasparillo and San Fernando. That piece of road was destroyed by the PNM Government. It is on the side of the Central Range. The lands on the lower side, the southern side, were tractored, the trees removed and they created pasture land. Basically, the support of this piece of road was removed and since then numerous problems have existed. Indeed, a distance that would take between 20 to 25 minutes, now takes someone about an hour and a half.

**8.01 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**8.35 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Dr. C. Singh:** Madam Speaker, I was highlighting some of the ills of the constituency I represent in this honourable House when we took the break. The Navet dam is situated in that constituency, and believe it or not, the water supply is very poor and irregular. I cannot understand that a person who pays water rates may get a supply once a week, sometimes once a fortnight. But what the constituents are asking for is not a water supply one day a week or a fortnight, but at regular intervals, so that they can prepare themselves to collect the water and ration it over the period. But this never happens. You get it running for one or two weeks, and the next two weeks, everything goes berserk and the people are helter-skelter looking for water. You cannot expect more from someone who is paying for water for the whole year and receiving such an erratic and poor supply. This is a national disgrace, I hate to say, Madam Speaker.

Again, as I mentioned before, the transport system in the Guaracara/Tabaquite area is very poor. Public transport hardly operates there. The roads are bad. The cost of repair of these vehicles is very high, and these are the people who are going to be affected severely when these transfer taxes are added to the present hardship that they are experiencing.

Whenever the doctor goes to the health office, the pharmacist is not there; and when the pharmacist goes, there is inadequacy of pharmaceuticals to supply the people. This is a perennial problem and these people in this area are suffering. I raise these matters so that the people responsible would try to improve on this.

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Decentralization is hoped to be the panacea for the health system. This is a bit of wishful thinking.

I am glad to hear the pronouncement by the Minister of Education that the government school in Gasparillo which was gutted earlier this year will be built next year. I plead here also for a small village in the Gran Couva area. There was a school which housed about 150 students, and some time in 1985 a contract was given to build a new school, but only half of a school was built and joined to a wooden section. The wooden section has collapsed so there is no school. The students were given an option to be transferred to Brasso, or go to Couva, distances that would cost a phenomenal amount when one considers that this is a cacao estate area where the daily pay or half-day pay is \$30 and \$35. If you have two kids to go to school in Couva or elsewhere, it would cost between \$10 and \$15 just for transportation. They can ill-afford this.

As a result, some of the residents of the village got together and agreed to use the ground below the house for schooling. So the school is now held below the houses of about four or five persons, with poor water supply and other sanitary factors. I do hope, with the optimism expressed by the Prime Minister, that the oil price would go up. As I said earlier, if the price goes up, so much the better, more money to spend, and I do hope Gran Couva would get a new school.

Now briefly to our sister Isle, Tobago. I cannot understand what is happening with the airbridge. The MV Tobago, and everything else, is breaking down. We are pushing Tobago as a tourism attraction, the main plank of our development, but when you go there, you can hardly get transportation to return on time; you are left stranded. BWIA refused initially to accept this run, and now they are turning back: they want it. Why? I saw in today's press where they are saying they are going to make profits. I have heard this a long time ago, since the airline was put in the air. But they have never made a profit, really. It was subventions from the taxpayers that kept it flying. Something definite has to be done to make it an efficient service to Tobago so that we can get the tourist dollar. This is important.

My information is, also, that the Scarborough General Hospital is in a terrible state. For instance, the anesthetic machine is sometimes without oxygen for two and three weeks. Put these two things together: you are holidaying in Tobago; you slip and fall and break an arm or leg and you want to have this fixed; the airbridge is poor; added to that, the hospital facilities are not available. Are we really serious about what we are doing, or are we just saying things that we do not believe ourselves can happen?



I have sat in this House for the last two years and I have thought over and over in my mind, very seriously, whether the appropriateness of this type of government is suitable to our culture. Is it really suitable to have the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy which hands over to the ruling party, truly, a democratic dictatorship? These are some of the thoughts which have crossed my mind over the years and I think that those who are involved in the study of government at the University, should be challenged to produce something better than what we have.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Minister of Housing and Settlement (Dr. The Hon. Vincent Lasse):** Madam, Speaker, I should like to preface my contribution here tonight with words of congratulation to the hon. Minister of Finance on his presentation of a courageous and well thought out budget for the fiscal year 1994.

The social and economic circumstances under which this budget was prepared were, to say the least, far from ideal. Given the limited financial resources available and the bone fide claims on the allocation of substantial portions of these resources among the various competing ministries and agencies, I am certain that the exercise was a most challenging one. In my view, the Minister has done an excellent job.

Permit me to address, briefly, one contribution which I think is almost a non-contribution, on the question of housing. I would first like to address the points raised by the Member for St. Augustine in his capacity as shadow minister—and I realize I have two shadows here. It is difficult to have one.

The Member touched briefly on the IDB sites and services sub-programme, stating, among other things, that the PNM administration was following the policies of the last administration. I am one of the Members here who do not like to get involved in disagreeing with persons, but I should like to set the record straight. He is not quite correct on this point, because in our 1991 manifesto we stated that we would correct the misguided approach of the previous administration. In so doing, the PNM, in its policy would reactivate a comprehensive approach to housing, recognizing of course, that land development on its own would not solve the problem of most of our citizens.

**8.45 p.m.**

The Government has also said that it would be implementing a broad range of policy instruments, including, on the one hand, provision of fully serviced lots, provision of apartments upon construction and in the course of my contribution, I

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would be alluding to instances to justify the points I have raised. I shall develop PNM's policies.

The Member for St. Augustine stated that 1994 would not be better than 1993 as far as housing is concerned. I want to assure him that the taste of the pudding is always in the eating. And because of innovative programmes we have put in place, we would be in a position to establish that we are about getting the job done.

I was very much surprised when the Member for Tobago West said that she was disappointed in this Minister. She having spent some years as Minister of Housing, I was ready to listen to the contribution she had to make. That is why I decided to ask for a copy of her contribution. When she was told by Madam Speaker that she had three minutes to wind up, she responded:

“Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will leave that because I really wanted to deal with housing in detail, but I think I will have another day. Another “lied” area. Everything that is taking place in the Ministry of Housing and Settlement was started by the National Alliance for Reconstruction...and I am very disappointed about that Minister, as well as certain things I saw in the document...”

That was the contribution of the ex-Minister of housing.

I was very sad about it because I expected to hear her speak on housing. It was on November 27, 1993 that I went to turn the sod at Calder Hall in Tobago; I invited the Member for Tobago West, and she attended the ceremony. I made the point to all present that I was happy to be there in the Sister Isle and to have present the Member for Tobago West who was the Minister when this project started, and I was happy to have her there because I intended to get the job done.

A few days later to hear that the Member was disappointed in this Minister, made me wonder who is to be disappointed in whom. Hence the reason I was not one of those who had been saying not a single house was built. Probably, that would have been an appropriate statement to make at that point, but I never get involved in those things.

I now turn to the current trends in the housing and settlement sector. First of all, I would like to briefly reflect on the global, regional and national trends in housing settlement sectors as they affect our plans and programmes for 1994 and beyond.

As we examine the current trends reported in the most recent global reports on human settlements, we note with concern that in today's world the provision of adequate shelter is progressively becoming an illusive target, given the dwindling

resources available to most national governments. Indeed, even among the highly industrialized countries, homelessness has become a significant social problem, notwithstanding, of course, efforts by government in these countries.

I would now allude to some of the major causes for this growing phenomenon; rural urban migratory patterns; poverty, inadequate resources and, of course, population growth. On rural urban migratory patterns, it is interesting to note that in 1920 only 14 per cent of the world's population lived in urban centres. By 1960 this figure rose to 25 per cent and by 1980 it was estimated at some 40 per cent. Now, should this trend continue, nearly 50 per cent of the world's population would live in towns and cities at the turn of the century; and by the year 2025 the figure could be as high as 60 per cent. What this means is that in three decades from now, as many people would be living in towns and cities as are alive in the world today.

The implications of this trend for planners are staggering, particularly as they affect the developing countries. Statistics show that the urban rural population drift in the developing countries is at present growing three times faster than in developed countries. Thus, increasing poverty has its roots in the tendency of world population growth to outstrip the growth in world production.

According to US statistics, world population has been growing annually at a rate of 1.8 per cent and is estimated to reach 6.2 billion by the year 2000. With the growth in production taking place at a much slower rate, and with a less than equitable show of output, those least able to help themselves are becoming even more impoverished. This, accentuates the need for governments to become even more proactive in their involvement in the shelter sector, and this is what this Government is doing.

#### **8.55 p.m.**

In the developed market economics of southern Europe, inadequate urban housing is a growing phenomenon, as the cost of shelter is now beyond the reach of large segments of their populations. These countries experienced a decline in private sector housing between the years 1971 and 1981. This was accompanied by high rates of inflation, increase in financing cost, land policies and a reduction of new building and rental regulations.

As we move closer home—and I shall here speak of the regional trends—we note that while human settlement issues vary from country to country, within the English-speaking Caribbean there are many commonalities which emerge from the island context and the shared general economic history and similar history of colonization with its ancillary, statutory and institutional framework.

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Our Caribbean neighbours, like ourselves, have been experiencing, within recent years, dire economic circumstances which have led to the situation where the informal housing sector has been growing tremendously giving rise to rapidly expanded, unplanned and spontaneous settlements.

The national trends: At the national level we are witnessing an unprecedented growth in the informal sector. If this emerging trend is not immediately and adequately addressed it would, no doubt, lead to very adverse and undesirable consequences. In this regard, the Ministry of Housing and Settlement is actively addressing this problem. We cannot wish it away, therefore, we have to deal with it. The preliminary results of research being conducted by my ministry appear to confirm the growth in the informal sector which has been noted earlier in our 1991 manifesto.

This growth is characterized by a proliferation of spontaneous unplanned settlements with no regard whatsoever to regulatory agencies, resulting in many social ills. Persons are now settling on river banks, hillsides, road reserves, aquifers, lands below sea level and other unsuitable and unapproved sites, posing a threat and major disaster, tempting nature as it were, in some cases with catastrophic results.

The end results are deterioration or destruction of the environment and sometimes unnecessary loss of life. The problems of squatting and unplanned developments are being seriously and urgently addressed by this Government. Our squatter regularization programme contains three major planks: regularization of tenure, upgrading of settlements and, finally, the containment of squatters.

I would now address the policy shift in the 1987 to 1991 period. In order that the national community should understand where we came from and where we are going, I must deal with this policy shift. During that period there was a fundamental shift away from the construction of houses, whether it was a starter or core house, to a policy which dealt basically with the provision of sites and services.

As I have said on many occasions, this Government is of the firm view that the provision of lands by itself does not solve the problem of the homeless. Added to this, there was a situation whereby persons were required, under the last administration, to pay up front the entire cost of the land before they were awarded their deeds. We found this to be rather onerous and it created a situation where the landless remained landless and the homeless remained homeless. Therefore, on assuming office at the end of 1991, this Government was

confronted with what appeared to be an impossible situation, and it decided immediately to address the situation. What we anticipated then was to return to the successful policies of the pre-1987 period.

I would refer to our manifesto wherein these policies have been announced:

“To correct this misguided approach, the PNM’s policy will be:

- Reactivation of a comprehensive approach to housing, recognizing that land development on its own does not address the needs of most citizens.
- Implementation of a broad range of policy instruments such as:
  - provision of fully serviced lots
  - construction of apartments
  - construction of starter houses and
  - fully furnished units
  - provision of adequate community facilities in public housing developments.”

These are some of the policies that we referred to aimed at addressing the housing sector.

### **9.05 p.m.**

I now turn to some of the instruments we have put in place. As the year 1993 draws to a close, those who have been following the developments in the housing and settlement sector would recognize that within my portfolio of Housing and Settlement, and with the concurrence of Cabinet, several initiatives have been taken to revitalize the sector, and that these have already started to deliver.

You would recall that on February 14, 1992, I appointed a committee to regularize the tenure on state lands and to explore the possibilities of and modalities for accommodating the squatter regularization programme within the policy framework of Act 20 of 1986 as is, or modified, and to make recommendations. The report of the committee on regularization of tenure on state lands was submitted to Cabinet in April, 1992, and was subsequently referred to a task force on housing and settlement, which was appointed by Cabinet on March 3, 1992 to make recommendations in respect of a comprehensive housing and settlement policy, including policy on squatting.

You would also recall that the report of both the committee and the task force was laid before this honourable House on Friday November 13, 1992. In this

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regard, I am happy to report that the recommendations of the committee on one hand, and the task force on the other, are well into the implementation stage. This is monitored on a quarterly basis by Cabinet.

At this juncture, I would like to highlight implementation efforts with respect to the recommendations which have been given priority, and in respect of which implementation is already at an advanced stage. First off, permit me to address the continuation of the settlement programme. The task force recommended that both the IDB assisted sub-programme and the NHA component of the settlement programme should be continued. These sub-programmes would be discussed later. I wish to say at this point that they are progressing satisfactorily.

I also wish to address Act 20 of 1986 which is at the heart of our squatter regularization programme. However, the squatting situation has changed significantly since the regulation was enacted. This piece of legislation came into effect in 1986, and had the administration which was in place from 1986 onwards, acted, the squatting situation may not have escalated to the state it is now.

At that point there were in the vicinity of 8,000 squatting households but by the end of 1991, there were about 50,000 squatting households—25,000 on state lands and 25,000 on private lands. This is one problem which I have been repeatedly stating we cannot wish away, and therefore we have proceeded to address it.

I also wish to speak briefly about affordability. When we took office in 1991, we found a situation whereby beneficiaries of parcels of land, after depositing \$1,000, had to pay the entire cost of the property up front, in order to acquire the title. In some cases this ranged from \$15,000 to \$25,000.

In some cases—and this relates to land under the jurisdiction of NHA—persons were required to pay as much as \$7,500 up front before they were allowed to select a lot. Under the new arrangement this has been changed. What is contemplated is that persons can pay the land value which is in the vicinity of \$3,000, and they would be able to get the deed in order to access a loan. This has been one of the innovative ways in which this administration moved. I am happy to say that we are seeing the fruits of our labour.

As I said, to address this problem the Government took steps in January, 1993 to soften the payment terms. The new policy allows titles to be transferred to beneficiaries on payment of the land cost only, rather than the cost plus the installed services, which would be drainage, water and sewerage. The outstanding amount on the installed services would now be consolidated with the mortgage on

the house constructed for the beneficiary. The persons involved would have up to 25 years to pay off the balance.

**9.15 p.m.**

I should like to address briefly the arrears problem. One of the thorniest issues affecting the viability and the survival of state agencies in the housing and settlement sector is that of arrears. The public is acutely aware of the high level of state subsidies in the provision of homes to the beneficiaries under the housing and settlement programme. The failure of these beneficiaries to meet their financial obligations whether on rental or mortgage arrangements inhibits the ability of the Government to create self-financing programmes, and thereby prevents other less fortunate and deserving members of our society from also benefiting from further expansion of our programmes.

It is a fact that on occasions Members on the other side in an attempt to gain political mileage make statements which could be rather misleading to the national community, and tending to frustrate the efforts of Members on this side to rectify certain matters in the national interest.

To illustrate this point: You will recall, that not too long ago statements were made by the other side to the effect that thousands of persons were being evicted in the Couva area by NHA for non-payment of arrears. This was, in fact, blowing a situation way out of proportion. The fact of the matter was that two tenants of the NHA who had accumulated rental arrears of \$8,300 in one case, and \$12,000 in the other, were evicted pursuant to warrants of eviction by the competent court. This must be put in the context of the NHA being faced with a very difficult financial situation.

**Mr. Maharaj:** I wonder if the hon. Member would give way. Is he saying that the Government, of which he is a part, would be prepared to take steps to evict these tenants although they are pensioners who have no means to pay, with families, no jobs and no avenues to get jobs? Is this Government going to take steps to put those people and their children out of their homes?

**Dr. The Hon. V. Lasse:** I will answer in the course of my contribution.

Madam Speaker, approximately \$100 million in mortgage and rental arrears is outstanding to NHA. Given the situation of escalating arrears, the NHA has started to take a firmer stand on defaulters, with a view to collecting as much of these arrears as possible. However, the ministry has adopted a policy of examining each case on merits before a final determination of the matter. I believe it is necessary

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to point out that eviction of defaulters would take place only after all options have been fully explored and exhausted, and only on the basis of a court order.

At this point I think I should deal with the Member for Couva South who wrote to me on the matter and to whom I replied. The entire matter was dealt with, I believe, in the most humane way. Both persons came to my ministry and we discussed the matter. I could not go against the order of the court. The persons were subsequently asked to re-apply and that is where the matter is now.

As we review our 1993 development programme in the housing and settlement sector, you will discern the commitment of this Government to provide adequate shelter for the citizens of this country, particularly those in the low-income stratum, notwithstanding the formidable financial constraints which we are experiencing. The progress we have made is already evident to the national community. *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker, I hear some grumbling on the other side. May I have some protection, please?

**Madam Speaker:** Members have been in Parliament for two years now and I think they are *au courant* with the Standing Order with respect to when Members are speaking. I do not think they need the Speaker to inform them of this Standing Order at all times. I trust that they will adhere to the Standing Orders and grant one another the necessary courtesy.

**Dr. The Hon. V. Lasse:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As this honourable House is aware, I am not given to peppery language. I intend to operate always as a gentlemen and bring some decorum to this honourable House.

I now turn to some of the agencies within the National Housing Authority. I cite the Project Executive Unit and the Sugar Welfare Committee, and give some insight into the programmes. The sub-programme of these agencies contains several components of the National Housing Authority; I alluded to them earlier. The major elements are:

- (1) Sites and services, which would be the provision of fully serviced building lots;
- (2) Squatter regularization, involving rehabilitation of squatter communities through a process of infrastructure, upgrading and the regularization of tenure;



- (3) Construction of starter houses;
- (4) Construction of rental apartments;
- (5) Provision of community services and facilities and urban renewal.

Let me turn to activities during 1993 under the IADB-assisted sub-programme. The programme is being executed and is funded partially by a loan from the IADB and partially by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The Government entered into a loan contract with the IADB in order to accelerate implementation of the National Settlement Programme.

### **9.25 p.m.**

The estimated total sub-programme cost is US \$82.64 million, approximately TT \$475 million. The IDB loan amounts to US \$66.1 million, approximately TT \$380 million so the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago would provide US \$16.54 million which is roughly TT \$95 million in counterpart funding. I shall now give the main features of the sub-programme. There is development of approximately 5,000 fully-serviced residential lots on some 13 sites. There is also a facility for construction/financing ranging from TT \$18,000 to TT \$70,000 and we are now in the process of negotiating for a further increase up to TT \$100,000.

Under this sub-programme, the construction of five community centres on sites with more than 400 lots. These sites are: Bon Air West, Arouca; Couva North; Harmony Hall; Union Hall in San Fernando and Malabar Phase IV. The centres would provide facilities for indoor sports and recreational activities and vocational, educational, childcare, social and cultural activities.

There is also a squatter regularization component involving approximately 2,500 squatter families on 11 sites throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me turn to sites and services sub-section. During 1993, land development works would continue at Union Hall, San Fernando, and Malabar Phase IV. Works have been substantially completed at La Paille in Caroni, Deve Phase II, which the hon. Member for Oropouche visited on two occasions—Harmony Hall, Couva; and together these sites would amount to 1,593 fully-serviced lots. Under the sub-programme a total of 3,422 lots are currently being developed. Occupation of sites will be on a phased basis commencing in January 1994.

**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. C. Sharma]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. The Hon. V. Lasse:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and hon. Members.

In 1994 we expect to have construction work commencing on most of these sites.

**Mr. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, would the hon. Minister give way to a question? Is he aware that no action has been taken on the Union Hall site where the existing roads have been damaged by the contractor? The Minister would recall that I drew this to his attention, but so far nothing has been done to the road nor has anything been done to the drainage problem on the Debe site.

**Dr. The Hon. V. Lasse:** The hon. Member is fully aware that we had been discussing these matters, but here I am dealing basically with the construction aspect of the programme.

I now turn to squatter regularization. Development works began at Maturita Triangle and also Bamboo Settlement No. 3 in upgrading some 631 squatting households. Members on the other side are fully aware of the commencement of the work. Early in 1992, when development works began at Bamboo Settlement, I met the Member for St. Augustine, the Member for Oropouche and others, who at that time thought that the work should not proceed. However, the residents of the area took care of the matter and I am happy to say today that the work is substantially completed; there is no flooding in the Bamboo Settlement No. 3 area and the residents are very happy about the development works. [Interruption].

Tender procedures were initiated for the upgrading of physical infrastructure at Warden Road, Point Fortin; New City, Valencia; Zone 8, Arima; Blitz Village, Pleasantville and Malick Phase I. Some 1,400 squatter households on these sites are earmarked for regularization. Work commenced at New City, Valencia in June 1993, with completion scheduled for December 1993. Development works are also scheduled to commence at Zone 8 in early 1994 to be completed by mid-1994.

During 1993, the Project Execution Unit took steps to procure the services of consultants to undertake engineering designs and prepare tender documents for project sites located at Upper Leon Street, Morvant; and Sogren Trace, Laventille. A contract has been awarded by the Central Tenders Board for Upper Leon Street, Morvant and the award of a contract for Sogren Trace is imminent. These sites will cater for regularization of an additional 471 squatter households.

I now turn to NHA sub-programme, site and services. The site and services component of the NHA's has, to date, yielded 3,000 lots at several locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Of these, 65 per cent has already been allocated to beneficiaries. During 1993, 53 houses were constructed on allocated lots and 103 houses are under construction.

**9.35 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, with specific reference to Tobago, NHA has commenced preliminary work on three sites—Castara Estate, Roxborough Estate, and Old Government Farm, Signal Hill. I wish to report that Cabinet approved the prices recommended by the National Housing Authority for lots at the following settlement sites in Tobago; Blenheim, 20 lots, \$3.00 per square foot; Calderhall, 162 lots, \$3.50 per square foot; Belle Garden, 25 lots, \$2.00 per square foot. Between January and September, 1993, 172 199-year leases were granted to beneficiaries on different settlement sites.

I turn to a joint venture, that is, projects at Lopinot and Pleasantville. Another recent and very significant initiative of the Government under the sites and services component during 1993 was to provide \$4.3 million to the National Union of Government and Federated Workers Construction Company to complete its commitment on the long-standing joint venture agreement with the labour movement. Under the agreement, Government previously provided funding of \$20 million for the infrastructure development of 387 lots at Lopinot and 425 at Pleasantville by the National Union of Government and Federated Workers.

The major obligation of the NUGFW Construction Company is the construction of 812 housing units on the developed lots. Infrastructure work at both sites is now substantially completed, and given the fact that the Government has fulfilled its part of the agreement, it is expected that the labour movement will now respond, as agreed, and begin construction of the 812 housing units.

Let me touch again on the squatter situation under the NHA. The National Housing Authority has been working on 35 sites comprising about 7,304 households. Eleven of these sites, with 2,530 households, have been adopted as a squatter regularization component of the Inter-American Development assisted programme being administered by the Project Execution Unit of the Ministry of Housing and Settlement. The National Housing Authority is actively engaged on the remaining 24 sites to regularize approximately 5,000 squatter families.

**Mr. Haniff:** a point of clarification, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister tell us whether anything is happening in terms of regularization in the Cocoyea area, that new squatting area that is a real hazard?

**Dr. The Hon. V. Lasse:** Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, there are some 34 sites on which the NHA is working and it is being done in a progressive manner. New sites are coming up from time to time, but the ministry has to deal with them in a staggered manner. At this time, Madam Speaker, we are not dealing with the Cocoyea area.

**Mr. Haniff:** That is the one that is being condoned and encouraged by the Member for San Fernando East.

**Mr. Maharaj:** I wonder if the hon. Minister would give way to another question. Can he state what is the Government's plan or policy to house families who cannot afford to pay rent? Is there any such policy, or are these people supposed to go on the road?

**Dr. The Hon. V. Lasse:** Madam Speaker, as I have said throughout my contribution, it is the intent of the Government to do everything in its power to house the homeless and assist the landless. Later in my contribution hon. Members will get some examples of exactly what will be done, starting January, 1994.

During 1994 ongoing land development work will continue at Union Hall, San Fernando; Malabar Phase IV, Arima; and under the construction/financing facility it is anticipated that shelter construction will be commencing at Bon Air West, Arouca; Harmony Hall, Gasparillo; Couva Phase II, Debe Phase II, La Paille. Further, we are continuing to deal with containment. But, as I have said before, it is the intention of the Government to house persons and then we would start to deal effectively with containment.

Construction of 271 houses will begin in January, 1994 under a \$30 million construction programme. In addition, Government recently approved for immediate implementation, a \$30 million housing construction programme to be managed by the National Housing Authority. Under this segment, a total of 271 dwelling units, consisting mainly of affordable core houses, will be provided on sites already vested in the National Housing Authority, which are either developed or adjacent to developed lands, with available trunk infrastructure. These sites include River Estate, Diego Martin; Bon Air, La Horquetta; Strikers Village, Buen Venue, Charlieville, and Madien and Ciperio Streets. These are areas where lands are already vested in the National Housing Authority, and we intend to commence construction early in 1994.

Designs for the units were completed in 1993 and the units will start coming on stream towards the middle of 1994.

This programme has been designed in such a way as to ensure that the sale or mortgage is effected on completion of the units. This would allow for a short-term recouping of development funds by the NHA and, of course, it would facilitate the implementation of a roll-on programme.

**9.45 p.m.**

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I should just like to reflect on the task that we as responsible persons are faced with. Given the scenario I have outlined tonight, it is clear that we must revitalize the home construction industry in 1994. Yet, we are faced with the problem of scarce financial resources. We recognize that it is a difficult task, but we have to continue to provide homes for our citizens; and also to generate employment and income. This is why I invite Members on the other side and the national community to reflect on our shared vision so that we can, ultimately, build a better nation together.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Cyril Rajaram** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for having afforded me the opportunity of making a small contribution. Let me congratulate all the previous speakers on their fine contributions. I specially congratulate the Minister of Finance on his wonderful and well-articulated presentation. It is mentioned in several quarters that this is one of the finest budget presentations made in this Parliament in recent years; and I have no doubt that that is a fact.

**Mr. Sudama:** Where did you hear that, Cyril?

**Mr. C. Rajaram:** In my constituency. As you know, preparing a budget at this time is a formidable task. We are experiencing serious structural adjustments and economic problems of all sorts; and when the Minister of Finance can produce a budget at this time, one can say it is a job well done.

There is no Minister of Finance in any part of the world who can produce a perfect budget. I am not saying that this budget does not have imperfections. It will have its human imperfections because the Member for St. Ann's East is a human being.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Is he? Can you be sure of that?

**Mr. Humphrey:** I want that verified!

**Mr. C. Rajaram:** Madam Speaker, it is only God who does not make mistakes; only he can produce a perfect budget, but we are dealing here with a human being.

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I have listened attentively to the contributions of the Members of the Opposition and these gentlemen have expressed certain serious concerns. We are all aware of them, but I am sure that in the new year the Government will address some of these concerns.

**Mr. Sudama:** Speaking on behalf of the Government?

**Mr. B. Panday:** No. Good speech!

**Mr. C. Rajaram:** Madam Speaker, never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that this budget would generate so much argument and heat! We are all aware of the fact that the country is experiencing adverse times. We are dealing with an economy that has been in a state of contraction for the past 10 years. It is very worrying to come here and listen to Members criticizing the budget.

**Mr. Haniff:** Does it bother you?

**Mr. C. Rajaram:** No, it does not worry me. Madam Speaker—

**Mr. Haniff:** Are you happy with the budget?

**Mr. C. Rajaram:** Give me a chance to talk! Am I so stupid? I have the protection of the House.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, address your comments to the Speaker, please.

**Mr. C. Rajaram:** Madam Speaker, the Chinese philosopher, Confucius, said “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.” If we as Members of Parliament can light candles, the road ahead will become bright some day, figuratively speaking. I think many of the Members opposite do not understand. We are rational human beings, I hope; and in these serious times, if we light candles, I am sure that the road ahead will be bright. And this is something we must try to practise in our lives. Wherever we go, we can practise this genuine belief.

Trinidad and Tobago, like other countries around the world, is experiencing serious financial problems, and what have these countries done? They did not run away from their problems. They faced them head on and were able to get over the problem of serious financial contraction.

We, too, can face our problems, and with God’s help we shall be able to get over them. But coming here and arguing, splitting hairs, and spreading rumours will not help one bit. Are we going to accept the challenge or run away? Let us all unite. This is not a partisan problem or a problem for Government or Opposition alone. If we can unite our forces, we can fight and beat the problem.

Many people do not know that we are facing serious problems. Are we going to hide ourselves in some corner, or stand up as men and be counted? Or are we going to be like rabbits running into holes? We must show that we are a resilient people who can fight back and turn around the economy once more.

I am very certain that if we unite and look at the problem from a nationalistic point of view, we can turn around the economy. Other countries have done it before. Take, for example, the Pacific Rim countries—Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan—they have all had problems at some time. Years ago these countries' economies were shattered because of war and natural disasters, but the people are a fighting people. They fought back, displaying their fortitude and courage and, today, these economies are enjoying some sort of growth once more. The people are enjoying a high standard of living.

**Mr. B. Panday:** But they had no PNM over there!

**9.55 p.m.**

**Mr. C. Rajaram:** Madam Speaker, we can show the same resilience. We can show the world that we can bounce back. We can save our country. But there are so many negative forces in this country that I feel very unsafe. Both the Opposition and the Government have common enemies. These are the things we should be fighting against. We should not be fighting amongst ourselves. The enemies that I am talking about are poverty, unemployment and vagrancy. Those are the enemies that we ought to be fighting against.

The Minister of Finance presented the budget and many organizations and groups have acclaimed it as being a good budget. Some of these agencies are the Trinidad Manufacturers' Association; the Employers' Consultative Association (ECLA); the FEEL Organization headed by Clive Pantin, the former Minister of Education; and the South Chamber of Commerce. All these organizations have—

**Mr. Sudama:** Call some village councils.

**Mr. C. Rajaram:** I will deal with that in a short while. All these organizations have acclaimed the budget as being a practical budget.

We have to be very watchful. As a people, we have to make sacrifices. If we do not make sacrifices, the country cannot go forward. We are a complacent people but we cannot be complacent in every way because we have to be aware of the fact that the country is undergoing serious economic problems.

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I am very proud that \$1.1 billion was earmarked for the social safety net. This is where my concerns lie and my contribution this evening is basically on the social safety net programme.

In my constituency, which is relatively poor except for the oil refinery, 65 per cent of the people are agriculturists. It is, as I said, a relatively poor constituency, but I have organized it into 10 areas. In each area, there are six persons who have joined with the churches, village councils, prayer groups and other organizations, working to help the destitute in the constituency.

On Independence Day the Claxton Bay Village Council and I organized a lunch for the senior citizens in the St. Margaret's, Claxton Bay, Union, Hermitage areas. We catered for 75 elderly persons. We took our cars, went for these people and when some of the elderly people came, we could see that they appreciated what we were doing. This is the sort of thing that I am doing in that constituency so that there is help. The help may not be very great, but it is going a long way to alleviate some of the hardship and suffering of those poor, unfortunate people.

Yesterday was a great day. In conjunction with the Marabella Cultural Organization, since we are aware of the fact that this Christmas would not be a very bright one for many people in the squatting areas—we know there are poor families and poor parents there—we had a Christmas treat, handing out toys to nearly 2,500 children. I think the Member for San Fernando West is aware of what I am saying. We had the Police Band, there were parang groups and we were able to distribute soft drinks, something to eat and toys for almost all the children. This function took place at Gopaul Lands.

These groups, which I have organized into 10 areas, are working to help those people in whatever way possible. The senior citizens are the people that they are helping. We are working with the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Marabella, Harmony Hall, Reform, and Gasparillo. We are asking 100 families to provide just one lunch each Sunday and we are taking these lunches to 100 senior citizens who cannot afford. We are really working in that area. If Members can introduce this sort of system in their areas, it would go a long way in alleviating the suffering of these unfortunate people.

In the national budget, \$1.1 billion has been allocated for the social safety net. This sum is 48 per cent more than last year's. It also represents 14 per cent of our total budgetary expenditure. It is not much, but will definitely go a long way in alleviating the hardship that follows structural adjustment. This is geared to



helping those people, the senior citizens, those unfortunate people. This is going to cushion the impact of structural adjustment.

When I say that the Government, is a caring Government—do not doubt that fact. If the Government was not caring, it would not have allocated that large sum of money to such a programme.

**10.05 p.m.**

I should like to deal, just briefly, with some of the areas under the safety net. My colleague the Member for Tabaquite spoke on old age pensions and he made some very good points. But I would like to say that old age pension is not charity. Our senior citizens have worked and earned this money during their early years. They are people who have contributed to the economy of this country when they were much younger, and they have the right to retire in dignity and self-respect. I am happy that within the constraints of the budget the Government has still been able to provide \$211 million, and while I believe that it is not enough, it will go a very long way in making life easier for these people. Hopefully, in the new year the economy will turn around. I am very hopeful that it will. I am not a pessimist. We have so many energy projects on stream, do you mean to say that God is against us that one or two of these gas projects will not strike?

The food subsidy is a very interesting allocation; \$89.5 million has been set aside for food subsidy, and I am happy that Government has allocated this sum, because food is very expensive and people must have food, especially the senior citizens. Government has made it possible for these people to be given food subsidies so they can, at least, have something to eat. This food subsidy will cushion the effects of the structural adjustment programme.

The sum of \$54.3 million was allocated to social assistance. There are about 10 persons going around the Pointe-a-Pierre constituency to find out who are in need of social assistance. This is not done according to party lines. If at any time I find that people are selected along political lines, I would just dismiss that person from the committee. We do things for people because they are people.

*[Interruption]* I am not going against PNM policy. This is the PNM policy; treat people like people. This is what we are doing.

This is something that I should disclose at this moment. The Unemployment Relief Programme is maligned. I have heard so many negative things said about it, but Members may come to the Pointe-a-Pierre constituency to see the URP operate. Many Members on this side are aware that we have URP in Reform

*Appropriation Bill (Budget)*  
[MR. C. RAJARAM]

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Village, Palmyra, Harmony Hall, Union Park East. These are principally areas in which I do not have support, to be very honest. But I am treating those people like people. They are human beings and they need to be treated as such. This is one MP who can walk in any part of his constituency as a free man. I know for a fact that we are a caring Government. My Prime Minister told me not to discriminate against people on URP. My co-ordinator selects people; I do not do that. But I will make sure that jobs are given to everybody.

The roads have always been a problem and this fund is for road maintenance and improvement. This fund is long overdue. It is hoped to collect through this Fund about \$50 million. When the roads are fixed, improved, maintained, I am sure that all of us would be happy to drive on them. The Government is going to ensure that this \$50 million is used properly, so next year we can be driving in comfort on some of these roads. In fact, there will be less repairs to our motor cars.

I want to make a special appeal to Members. Let us come together. We are fighting a common enemy. We are fighting against poverty, unemployment and all the social ills. I would love to see this country, once again, enjoy the status that we once enjoyed. We were once poor, then we became affluent, now we are poor again, but we have the ability and the resilience to fight back. We are a people who would never allow a problem to defeat us. We have that strength, that fortitude, that courage to face a problem and overcome it. We should not be cowards. We should be brave men and women facing a serious national problem and trying to overcome it.

I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**10.15 p.m.**

**Mr. Jarrette Narine** (*Arouca North*): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to make a small contribution at this time. I, too, would like to join the other Members who have congratulated the Minister of Finance on a budget that would take us through the year 1994. As a matter of fact, in these trying times it is very difficult for any Minister of Finance to produce a budget such as our Minister of Finance has produced.

Members would realize that I am not in the best of health today, but I would try to get through the points which I have been trying to put together since this budget debate started.

The Member for Couva North in his reply to the Minister of Finance compared the PNM of 30 years, as following the same sort of policies. He quoted from the policies of the PNM from 1956 and said that today we are on the same track.

I cannot help but remember the Member for St. Augustine who once boasted of “Once a PNM always a PNM,” stating that PNM has moved away from the origin of the PNM under the late great Dr. Eric Eustace Williams. I am saying that on the one hand, a Member of the Opposition says one thing and another Member of the same Opposition says something different.

Most of those policies are the vision that the PNM had since 1956, but are also realities today. They have just been modified over the years. Because of the population explosion, we have had changes in education, housing and in other ministries like health, sport, works and transport.

Members also spoke about the boom years. I had the opportunity, while in the St. George East County Council, to have purchased a book called *Accounting for the Petro Dollar*, and I am sure that most of us in this House are *au courant* with the presentation that was made at that time. Not once, since the publication of that document did anyone stand up and say that the figures in it were incorrect. I am saying that not a drum was heard at that time, but today the young people who did not know what happened in Trinidad since 1956 are being told that much money went down the drain.

If money on education is considered to have gone down the drain, I am satisfied, because I inherited from that policy of the PNM on education; I inherited housing from the policy of the PNM in the oil boom years. I acquired my home and two brand new motor cars during that period, and still saved for the rainy day so that today, when the economy is as it is, I still have something to lean on.

I am saying that at that time when the petrodollars were flowing, we made provisions. The infrastructure that is in place in Trinidad and Tobago today is second to none in any other Caribbean country, so that we can move forward in this day.

During 1987 to 1993, there were the dwindling unemployment relief programmes, whether it was called DEWD, Special Works, LIDP or now being called the URP, allocations decreased and we saw the results of those stringent measures which the last government took in 1990. In the year 1990, \$40 million was placed for unemployment relief. In 1991, because it was an election year, this figure went up to about \$180 million.

The People’s National Movement is not about implementing its policies for elections. We started off in 1992 with an allocation of \$90 million and because of the deficit of the previous year, we had to get \$40 million extra, so the figure went up to \$120 million. Out of that, \$40 million had to go to pay bills from the year

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before. This year, we were able to get an allocation of \$130 million into the programme, and out of that the reality is that we would receive \$122 million.

After getting that \$130 million, and we sat and prepared our budget for the Unemployment Relief Programme; we felt that we should have started before Carnival this year, work a fortnight, break for the carnival period and then break again one more time for a fortnight period during the year and go for 21 fortnights. Because of good financial management, we were able to go for 22 fortnights this year with \$8 million less and work within the \$122 million. We did not have any breaks this year.

Every Member who gets up and criticizes the Unemployment Relief Programme would agree with me that up to now, not one of them spoke about the productivity or the excellence of the programme. All the fight is that the labour is not being chosen right. If there are 100,000 persons unemployed in Trinidad, and URP is providing 8,000 at its peak in any given fortnight, then we are only providing about eight per cent of the unemployment relief.

There are other programmes which have been placed by the Government to take up the slack. We are providing 8,000 jobs at peak. People who work in the programme have been able to survive over that period, not in a way that we would like, but in a way that helps them to cope a little better. My statistics indicate that 160,804 jobs were created in this year. The programme ended last week Friday. Out of that, the number of persons who really worked was 69,160; and they averaged about 2.5 fortnights per person. For the age group under 25 years, 11,767 persons worked—8,950 males, 3,817 females.

**10.25 p.m.**

The age group between 25 and 35 years—and this is a critical bracket in the grouping, because the CSO's report states that this is the group which has the highest unemployment at this time in the history of the country—36,925 persons worked—28,143 males and 8,782 females. In the age group of 45 plus, 10,494 persons worked—5,489 males and 5,005 females. There is an unaccountable section comprising about 3,000 which was not punched into the computers so we could not come up with that data at this time.

The primary criterion for employment selection in the URP is economic need. These figures revealed that the programme satisfied the demand in this area. The greater need is definitely in the age bracket 25 to 35 years. In the normal child rearing period, it is noted that there is an absence of safety-net programmes for

this group. Family life was definitely enhanced by the benefits derived from the programme.

Before I go into what the programme did, there are some other matters which I would like to address. One has been speaking about old PNM, new PNM and real PNM. I am a second generation PNM. My father was a foundation member of the PNM in 1956. As a second generation PNM, I now have a third generation of PNM in my home.

While we were building generations of the People's National Movement, note, not old and new PNM, they started with PDP, DLP, WFP and there was ACD, ULF and alliances and parties until they had a club. Now there is the UNC. Maybe, by the end of the year there will be another club, Club 94 instead of Club 88. We are about the business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. When we cannot rule, we do not jump ship and do something else.

The Member for Chaguanas was vacationing in my constituency. She said that she enjoyed it. I hope that on her next occasion she will visit Lopinot. It is a better area of my constituency.

Flooding in Central. A certain person sat on the highway, a beautiful highway built by the PNM. When I got into that area with workers of the URP, we started to clean the St. Helena Hindu School. One person came up to me and told me instead of sitting on the highway, they could have brought those same people to help us clean our homes. It would have made more sense.

Madam Speaker, you would remember that two artistes, Kanchan and Babla visited Trinidad at that time. They went into the very areas and gave the people hope. They spoke to them and told them that part of the funds that they made in Trinidad from their shows would be given to help their situation. This is intelligence. When people think this way the country will go forward. Sitting by the wayside or sitting in drains would not make this country go forward, and it would not make any political inroads or political mileage for anyone. We are an educated nation and the people of Trinidad and Tobago expect that their representatives will represent them in a true way as Members of Parliament.

I am sorry that the Member for Siparia is not here; he quoted parts of the agreement stating that he was of the opinion that ability and experience should come before seniority. Almost everybody in this House agreed with him. This is why there are "trade unions" and trade unions. As I understood it, what he was trying to make right, is already right. It is written in this agreement. *The Collective Agreement on Wages and Conditions of Service of Government*,

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*Hourly, Daily and Weekly Rated Employees, 1990-1992*, at page 27 Article 18—Promotion Policy. It reads:

“All permanent positions should be filled by promotion from within the labour force except where their required skills are not available.

1. In determining suitability for promotion consideration shall be given to the undermentioned factors:
  - (a) Ability and experience and
  - (b) Seniority.”

It is not a question of having to change the agreement to have that position made that ability and experience must come before seniority. It was always so. It will always be so.

The county council at Siparia had to bring in persons who were not senior and they had to use other methods in getting promotion for people. But, while I was involved in the trade union movement, we always had that problem of seniority and this was resolved many years ago.

In case there are two persons with the same seniority, the agreement says that you can give them a written and oral test and ascertain who would be the better person to fill that position. He also spoke about task work. The agreement says:

“The principle of task work for the undermentioned types of work is accepted.”

It goes on to list cutlassing, weeding and edging, and the different types of work. This is written in the agreement, the principle of task work. The problem with task work is that one is expected to perform eight hours work in a shorter period. No one in this House can tell me that anyone can work for two hours and do eight hours work. That is where the problem lies. The union and everybody involved in local government have gotten away over the years from putting down a task schedule. How much work one should do for a task? A task is ascertained by the supervisor on a job.

When I started to work at the Botanic Gardens we used to have cutlassing task for 120 rods, 10 x 12. When I left it was about 40 rods. One can imagine what has evolved over the years. This is why they are getting away from setting that task schedule. One cannot sit down and work out a task schedule and go to work at 7 o'clock and leave at half past seven. Management and the union have to sit down and work that out.

**Mr. Haniff:** And the union is not doing it.

**Mr. J. Narine:** If the union is ready to do it, somewhere along the line somebody is stopping it. So we have a problem with this task schedule.

The Member for Princes Town does not know what trade unionism is all about. He does not know the agreement. Madam Speaker, it is probably wasting my time and your time at this time of the night to deal with him.

For 1993 a number of projects were completed last Friday by the programme.

Retaining walls	30,524 ft
Slipper drains	45,240 ft
Curb walls	29,432 ft
Pavement (Side walks)	88,130 ft
Box drains	56,587 ft
Drain base	12,046 ft
Road paving with oil sand, hot mix and cold mix	34,668 ft
Inverts	1,875 ft
Gabion basket	1,084 ft

**10.35 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, if you would follow me, the Member for Oropouche said he passed by the Cipero Roundabout and saw URP workers packing stones. Of course, they were packing stones. He passed in his car so he did not stay long enough to see where they were packing the stones. They were packing those stones in gabion baskets, in the Cipero River, so the Member for San Fernando West can now stand and say that he has solved the flooding problem in that area. Some more of what has been accomplished:

Steps in concrete	1,680 ft
Back walling	3,755 ft
Box culverts (5)	1,999 ft
Areas paved in concrete	530 ft
Hand rails	773 ft
Fencing	4,087 ft
Bridges (22)	33 ft
Bridge (1)	50 ft

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Recreation grounds, hard courts, playing fields (35)

We were able to maintain and do work on hard courts. We have done work on 25 community centres, where we have refurbished and started building new ones. We did all sorts of work on 77 schools, such as, refurbishing, partly painting, changing of flooring boards and roofs, and repairing benches.

I think that the Minister of Education is well satisfied during this year. One or two schools rebelled because of their condition. But we must bear in mind that there are hundreds of schools in Trinidad. Our programme was able to provide relief in every area in Trinidad. We maintain 334 schools. Last year we started with government schools and this year we have moved to denominational schools.

Three post offices were constructed; two of them started from ground level; one is at La Horquetta and the other is at Maloney. I assure the Member for Oropouche that by next year the post offices would be completed to the satisfaction of the Member for Arouca South, who said that because of the work done by the URP workers, he wanted them to do that work. They are now cast up to roof height and next year they would be completed very early in the programme.

One police station at Arouca was totally refurbished. It is very near to the prison. Ten police stations were repaired. We also had four fishing centres repaired. I can remember one at La Fillette, which the Deputy Speaker had the satisfaction of opening. It included a set of steps going down to the sea. The northern coast is a difficult area to get the pirogues up on the shoreline, so we have built a facility there to accommodate the fishermen of the La Fillette area.

Nine pan theatres were completed or construction work was started on them. As a matter of fact, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, with his prized band of the east, Cordettes, would be getting their pan theatre later next year. It was started this year.

The Caroni cremation site was an eyesore because it is under the regional corporation of Caroni. For eight years I was in that same council and I was in a position—

**Mr. Casimire:** The Member for Chaguanas was not born as yet.

**Mr. J. Narine:** Her age surprises me though. I thought she was younger than she is, for the stupidity that was going on. Probably we could ease up the Member for Couva North—he is a little old, probably burnt out with the years in politics, so we can “okay”—but the younger Members, we should not. They should know better than that.



We are extending the parking area at the cremation site. Sometimes there are three or four cremations in the afternoon and the traffic situation is chaotic. What happened is that nobody took the responsibility, neither the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, nor the Member of Parliament for the area. Who is the Member of Parliament for the area? They never did anything. Through the blessings of the Minister of Works and Transport who had accommodated us with \$150,000, we have built steps down to the Caroni River to get rid of the ash. We have built a walkway. We are now going to construct four areas to cremate the bodies and the entire car park would be extended to accommodate about 200 more vehicles. The URP workers did that.

Because of the extent of the programme throughout the country—and there are about 400 projects at its peak—we had to move from the Tunapuna area and we are now moving in to Region 3. We are putting the office at Mount Hope. I think that the Minister of Education would save some money from his allocation next year. He would have an office to move to at El Dorado Road and save the rental that he is paying at Tacrigua. We have done one office this year.

The Tapanawa wash plant is one which was to be sold by the last regime for \$2 million to Seereeram Brothers, to be taken up the islands, and we would not have had the opportunity for our people to export aggregate there. We had a feasibility study done on that plant and they came up with the figure of \$2.1 million to refurbish it totally. This plant was bought in 1978 at a cost of about \$15 million or \$17 million. To put that plant back on stream at this time costs over \$35 million. For \$2.1 million, we are now washing material at Tapanawa.

I am pleased to announce that some time in the new year the recommissioning of that plant will be done. You would have the opportunity to visit with us or see it on television. We are making plans for the boom that would start next year in the building industry. When that happens we would have problems to get aggregate. We have had our problems in this programme this year. Why? When National Quarries have their breakdown and out of the three plants only one is working, you have to line up there from 4 a.m. to collect aggregate, you get only one load per day, and \$450 is paid for that day.

It does not make sense. At this point we are hoping that in the new programme we would be self sufficient in aggregate because in our type of work, construction, we need aggregate, cement and steel, all local inputs. If we can produce our aggregate, not only for our programme, but also for the other ministries—I am telling my colleagues that it would be under the same system

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which worked under National Quarries. Pay upfront and you would draw down after. We are making this plant viable in order to make a profit.

**10.45 p.m.**

Last year the Minister of Works and Transport spoke about how much equipment was given away for \$30 million. I think approximately \$350 million worth of equipment was given away for the \$30 million which was owed to Cruz Valentino. We have refurbished all the old equipment which they could not move, but heavy equipment does not go that bad; some pieces have been vandalized, but we have repaired some. We have even helped Tobago with some so that we now have equipment such as backhoes, overloaders, and excavators that we are using in the programme.

Last year we inherited 26 estates in the LID Programme. We have taken the decision to bring that figure down to nine. We now have five state-owned estates and four private estates that the owners do not want to take back. We also have 17 cottages and malls.

The Unemployment Relief Programme with its moorings way back in 1958, started off as a crafts programme in the urban areas. It worked itself to the DEWD project and it ended up under the Ministry of Works and Transport. Over the years salaries went up and there was less money to spend on materials. The very thing happened to the DEWD programme; at one time money was spent only on wages and there was no money for materials. In 1988 it was closed down but I am happy to report that we have started to pay the old DEWD workers their severance benefits. The last Government did not pay off the people. Last year we paid about \$8 million and this year we paid about the same amount out of the very allocation, so you would understand the stringent management controls that have been placed on the Unemployment Relief Programme.

The URP is about people—the people of this country working together. URP is about raising the standard of living by providing employment opportunities, albeit temporary, to persons to whom, in many cases, employment would have been non-existent. To prove my point, I think that the Member for Couva South, although a decision was taken by his leader not to recommend anyone for employment, gives letters addressed “To Whom It May Concern.” These letters find themselves right back in the URP office in Couva.

You would understand that some persons are very smart. I used to be in the trade union movement at one time when they said that there should not be any go-slow. We got around it by saying that we were working to rule. The smarter ones

there survived. While the Member for Couva North stopped everybody from sending names, the Member for Couva South has found himself a way around it; he is sending recommendations. I have no problem with that. We are going to treat with everyone who comes to our programme in an honest way and see that they get something from it. It was meant for that.

Madam Speaker, you will recall that precious moment that I had with the Member for Couva North when he accused me in this Parliament of being a liar. Of course, you know what happened the week before. The author of the article went to England since then. I have not had the opportunity to be there recently. He sent me the *Independent* newspaper, dated Friday, February 5, 1993. The first headline that I saw was “Ministers Out of Step on Work for Dole Idea.” I would read just a short paragraph of this article:

“The Government is considering compelling some of the unemployed to undertake work, voluntary action, training or education, in return for benefits, the Prime Minister confirmed yesterday. But Mr. Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State of Employment, the key prime ministerial aide, spent the day repeatedly ruling out any form of universal ‘workfare’.

The prospect of work for dole came as Mr. Kenneth Clarke, the Home Secretary, last night conceded, for the first time according to Labour ...”

This year I had four persons from England—and Mr. Miller from the ILO in Geneva—who were here with us for about two weeks to check the records, which showed that Trinidad and Tobago had a long history of unemployment relief programmes better than any other Commonwealth country. We were the first country to start unemployment relief, with people working for the money they receive. That started way back in 1950. I am pleased to report that they saw our programme in action throughout Trinidad and they, too, were well pleased with the turn the programme has taken.

Mr. Miller had the opportunity to visit Trinidad before, in 1990, and he was amazed to know that in a matter of three years, how drastically the programme has changed to benefit the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am well pleased with this.

I should not like to keep us here too long, but I should like to itemize some of the things which took place this year. In region I—whether we work at Big Yard or St. Anthony’s College, and I am very proud of that wall which was built at St. Anthony’s College. The wall is about 300 feet long and 10 feet high. It was done

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with blue metal boulders and steel. That wall took seven fortnights to build. I am not criticizing anyone, but I have seen similar types of work which goes on year after year and is not completed. I must compliment workers of Region I for doing that work so quickly.

In Ross Lands, there is a hard-surface court with steps going to Fort George. Up on the Lady Young Road past the sharp corner near Hilton, there is a pan theatre, Players' Symphony which suffered for a number of years under one little shed; as a result of the programme last year, the band is now boasting of a pan theatre in Belmont second to none.

We also have the Bournes Road river works. We always had flooding problems in Bournes Road. We are continuing construction of that retaining wall which started last year much to the relief of the people who live in that area.

**10.55 p.m.**

I must also say at this point that when the disaster struck Maraval and the St. Ann's area, the URP workers worked through the weekend, through the night and through the day. What is more, they did not receive one single cent extra overtime on wages. They worked because they had that love for the people, and they were assisting to do something good. Unlike some of the other areas that were flooded, the residents in the St. Ann's/Maraval area welcomed the people into their home.

We found it difficult in the areas like Kelly Village and Frederick Settlement, where persons were not allowing you beyond their gates. What we did was clean the drain and so forth.

**Mr. Mohammed:** Why are you doing all this nonsense, what are you implying here? *[Interruption]* The URP workers were welcomed by the St. Ann's/Maraval area but were not welcomed in the Kelly Village and Frederick Settlement areas; what are you suggesting?

**Mr. J. Narine:** Madam Speaker, is the hon. Member asking a question?

**Mr. Mohammed:** Yes, explain it.

**Mr. J. Narine:** Madam Speaker, what I am saying is—and I would not like to have to explain this again because I am serious. When the floods occurred in the St. Ann's/Maraval area I worked there for the entire week, almost midnight, every night; it was a total mess and persons were more responsive to the URP workers coming into their homes than the people in the Kelly Village and Frederick Settlement area. I know that. I went there; I have family living in the area. They locked their gates. Not that they "run" anyone, but they said "We are taking care

of cleaning our place; we do not need your help.” I humbly submit that that is the truth, Madam Speaker. While the hon. Member was probably sailing around in the boats after the rains, that is where I was. This is the truth and I can go at the very people’s homes; I can even call names if you so desire.

Madam Speaker, we have a nice job going on in Mango Alley, Laventille. But I may probably have to skip some of these areas to deal with some of the areas where Members of the Opposition say that they have not seen anything done. *[Interruption]* No, I would like to talk about the Member’s area in Nariva.

I am sure that the people of Nariva over the years have not seen work done as has been done during the last year. The Plum Road quarry—you will remember that there was an article in one of the daily newspapers where the people were thanking the Member for Nariva for fixing the roads in the rice fields. We opened that quarry at Plum Road with the hon. Member’s help; he got the transport and we provided the materials. It was help for the farmers of his area.

Cumuto Retaining Wall near to Rabindranath Mathura’s residence was done in two fortnights. A footpath is also being built—you know who is Rabindranath Mathura, of Mastana Bahar fame—a footpath was put down in Cumuto and a box drain.

**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.*

**Mr. J. Narine:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and hon. Members of this House.

Cumuto footpath, Plum Mitan footpath and box drain, the Biche Community Centre—even at this present time Biche is getting a community centre from this programme. Mafeking footpath—Ortoire has another footpath being built, and there are two estates in that Nariva constituency, Madoo estate and Besson estate which are in Mayaro, and there is Alcalá estate in Cunaripo.

In 1994 we are going to build the Matapando bridge in Cumuto. The hon. Member could tell the residents that that bridge will be built next year. In Region 6—the Member for Couva South is always saying that he did not get any work done in his area, but I would like him to bear with me so I can set the record straight. I will call out some projects that were done in Region 6 and he can tell me if we did nothing. Freeport footpath. *[Interruption]* The hon. Member for

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Princes Town has a copy. Freeport footpath going up the Mission Road; we have the Chickland footpath *[Interruption]* I am talking and you should listen. *[Interruption]*

Lendore footpath, Longdenville footpath, Lakeside Farm, where we now have a concentration of *[Interruption]* Hasrat Road, where the Jerningham Government School is situated. That is an area where children could not walk the road safely; there is a new school built there and the footpath is now giving them safe access to the school. St. Mary's footpath, which started from St. Mary's Junction to reach Freeport. You know what area that is? Oh Christ! *[Interruption]*

Munroe Road, Caroni Savannah Road footpath, for the elderly people of Caroni Savannah. St. Mary's footpath, Perseverance, Carapichaima footpath. Nobody in Carapichaima has seen that? *[Interruption]* No, they are saying that they do not get anything. Bear with me. They always come here with questions, saying that they do not get anything, the Government does not treat them well, but I am telling them what was done. If they do not go into their constituencies, do not blame me. The footpaths are put down for the safety of the children in their constituency *[Interruption]*. When we build drains the roads will stand up; when we pave roads without drains they do not stand up; in a year's time we would have problems.

**11.05 p.m.**

I should just like to highlight some of the other projects. The Esperanza Community Centre was completed this year; Savonetta footpath, Balmain, Piparo, footpath. As a matter of fact, the Member for Tabaquite did not know that there were such wonderful footpaths in Piparo. The Member for Caroni East went up there with his Mastana Bahar show and he, too, was amazed at the work done right there at the community centre. Those works were done in 10 fortnights, good work, well executed which enhance the area, Bon Aventure, Tortuga, all footpaths.

The Mayo landslip recorded here is near the Mayo RC School, a school which was built at a cost of \$4.5 million by the last regime. The former Member for Tabaquite opened that school. It was built near a landslip. Because of the new technology in the programme, something called "tents" were brought in from America and that landslip was repaired at total cost of \$200,000; \$100,000 was for materials.

When we went to repair that landslip, was found a cesspit that had been there probably for 100 years or more, and this was causing the landslip. When the

excavators went down they found the problem and it has been solved, much to the satisfaction, not only of the church community in the area, but also of the children.

Camden, King Village, Waterloo, St. Mary's, Point Lisas Boulevard, Caparoe estate—this can go on and on. *[Interruption]* No, Madam Speaker, I think I have said sufficient to indicate to this honourable House—

**Mr. Haniff:** Madam Speaker, would the Member give way for a simple clarification? Can he tell us whether any work was done by the URP in the Laventille West constituency?

**Mr. J. Narine:** Madam Speaker, when I spoke about Mentor Alley—probably the Member does know, but I know all my projects in Trinidad—that is an Laventille West. Tokyo pan tent,—all those were in Laventille West. The Member also knows where all his projects are and how much work was done, because he, too, has a list like this.

I have done this because all the criticisms about URP come because somebody did not get a “10-days”. There is no criticism of the production on this programme; there is no criticism of the infrastructure of this programme; there is no criticism of the management of this programme. Taxpayers' money is being well spent, value for money. This is the only programme where you can go at 3.00 o'clock and find people still on the job. They do not leave at 9.00 or 10.00 o'clock; they work from 7.00 to 3.00 with one hour for lunch.

This is happening throughout the country. The people whom the Members opposite represent go home at 9.00 o'clock and do something else; the URP workers have to work. Some of their people come to us and say that they do not want a “10-days” on the road because they cannot work until 3.00 o'clock; they are accustomed working half day, so some of them are sent into the school programme.

What I am saying is that although the Minister of Finance has found it necessary to put a programme like this into place and give us \$130 million for the economic well-being of people throughout Trinidad and Tobago, we have been able to produce for the money that has been given to us in this programme. We will continue to produce and we will continue to improve the programme to the extent that it will be one of the best programmes that have ever been seen in a developed country.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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*Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Tuesday December, 7, 1993  
at 10.00 a.m. [Hon. K. Valley]*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 11.10 p.m.*